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# Five Wrong Views PART 3: All Governments Are Evil and Demonic



The Temptation of Jesus by Gustave Dore.

**M**ANY BELIEVERS HOLD FAST TO damaging misconceptions about government which often result in nonparticipation or inappropriate participation and, consequently, a weak witness for Christ. Unfortunately, many of these misconceptions begin in the pulpit of some churches that are not strong on biblical teaching. A clear understanding of what God's Word says about government will benefit you as you continue to mature in your faith and grow in your understanding of what God expects of you as a believer and a leader.

Ralph Drollinger

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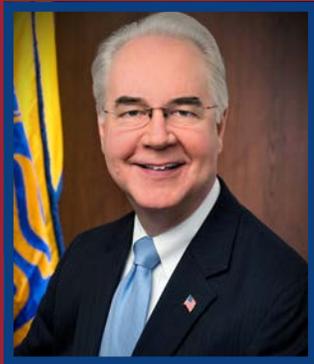
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## ■ ENDORSEMENT

## Dr. Tom Price



*“The United States is a very special place. It was founded upon a Judeo-Christian ethic and principles. The incredible importance of that foundation and continuing that foundation cannot be minimized. As President John Adams said, ‘Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.’*

*“This charges us with making certain that we encourage a religious and a moral people, a religious and moral society, and one of the ways I’ve seen that be more likely fulfilled is through the Bible studies I’ve been involved in with Capitol Ministries.”*

— Dr. Tom Price, Capitol Ministries Board Member; former Secretary of Health and Human Services; former U.S. Representative, Georgia, 6th Congressional District.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS WEEK WE WILL examine through the lens of Scripture the third of five wrong views regarding the relationship of Church and State. Last week we studied the second wrong view: Government should *exclude* religion. The week before we examined the false idea that government should *compel* religion (by that we meant becoming theocratic). This week we will study the following:

## II. WRONG VIEW NO. 3: ALL GOVERNMENT IS EVIL AND DEMONIC

The proponents of this view deduce that civil government is a front for the forces of evil. Such being inherently stricken by Satan himself, they believe that the institution is a pond of the devil. This idea is reasoned and concluded by the fact that governments inevitably resort to force: Since force is not the way of Jesus, government therefore, when it uses force is invoking the ways of the devil and the world (as in the biblical idea of being “worldly”). All is set in contrast to the ways of Jesus, who sought to love and serve with a patient and gentle demeanor. Said slightly differently, since the force of government is supposedly uncharacteristic of Jesus, government must be the opposite of Jesus. These are those who reason from Matthew 5:39 wherein Jesus taught His followers to “turn the other cheek.” We will drill down on a proper understanding of that passage later on. Often, supporters of this worldview believe it is always wrong to use police and military force. Conversely, one should build, show love, and manifest patience. The leading advocates of wrong view No. 3 are Wallis and Boyd.<sup>1</sup>

In the following outline, points A through C will examine the supposed scriptural basis of this understanding, and points D through H will examine at least five *results* stemming from an “All Government is Evil

and Demonic” position. One is tempted to title this camp with the word “pacifism” because that’s where this idea inevitably leads. Pacifism: “To allay the anger or agitation of; to calm somebody who is angry or agitated or soothe violent or angry feelings.” But one must refrain from this summary because not all pacifists believe all government is evil.

## A. This View is Based on a Misinterpretation of Satan’s Claims in Luke 4:6

The main passage for the supposed biblical basis of this way of thinking is Luke 4:5-7. Herein Jesus is being tempted by the Devil.

*And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.”*

Basic to Bible study is that whenever you read a *narrative* passage quoting Satan (i.e. Genesis 3), keep in mind what else Scripture says about him; note this in John 8:44 where Jesus says:

*“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

That’s to say this: In Luke 4 when Satan says to Jesus regarding worldly kingdoms, “*for it has been handed over to me,*” he is lying! God never handed government over to the devil, as much as the devil would like to think that! Therefore, to utilize Luke 4 as a pretext for Satan owning government is to fall for the same assumption-technique trick he tried to pull on Jesus! As a political



leader, you of all people know that just because someone says something it doesn't mean it is true! Such is the case in this narrative passage found in the Gospel of Luke.

### **NOWHERE IN SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY THAT SATAN IS THE RULER OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT <sup>2</sup>**

This is the error of former Minnesota pastor Greg Boyd, the leading representative of this position today.<sup>3</sup> Boyd errs in misunderstanding Luke 4. Satan thinks he can dupe people by saying things with authority.

#### **B. This View is Based on an Ignorant Understanding of Paul and Peter**

As witnessed in point A, in John 8 Jesus heralds that Satan is a liar. Accordingly, one should not build theology on the statements of Satan in narrative portions of Scripture. Notice now in contrast to that, who the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter state is the progenitor of civil government:

*Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.*

Three more times in Romans 13:1-6 (the above is verse 1) Paul states (my paraphrases): “[civil government] is God’s servant for your good.” “It is the servant of God.” “[Governmental] authorities are the ministers of God.” Paul is clear and redundant that God is the author and owner of the State. Further, note Peter in 1 Peter 2:13-14:

*Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of*

*those who do right.*

If all of civil government were controlled by evil and demonic forces, one would not think that the Apostle Peter would command believers to submit to it! (Cf. Colossians 1:16.)

It is important to clarify that Satan does have members of governments under his control—but such is quite different than saying Satan is the CEO of civil government as a whole. “The only verse in all of the Bible that says Satan has authority over all governments is spoken by the father of lies, and we should not believe it.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore there is no biblical basis to make the assertion that all government is evil and demonic. Rather, it is God’s instrument of restraining grace in a fallen world. It is not evil; it is a restrainer of evil. This represents a huge difference in understanding.

#### **C. This View is Based on an Impounded Understanding of Jesus**

In setting forth a false dichotomy between the righteousness of Jesus and the compelling, often forceful nature of civil government, the purveyors of this position ask, “When did Jesus ever act with the sword? Did Jesus ever teach that war was justified?” These are the queries proudly postulated by pacifists such as Boyd<sup>5</sup> and are commonly-held perceptions in today’s biblically-illiterate culture. Respectively, in Luke 22:36-38 Jesus did authorize the use of the sword (actually two swords!). And contextually, it was for the purposes of self-defense and protection against robbers:

*And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘And He WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which*

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

### **Romans 13:4**

*... it [civil government] is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*



*Civil government is a moralizing agent of God wherein He purposes, vests and manifests his restraining grace in a fallen world.*



John Witherspoon



*"[H]e is the best friend to American liberty who is the most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy of God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country."*

— John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence; ratifier of the U.S. Constitution; member of the Continental Congress; President of Princeton.

John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Reverend John Witherspoon* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1802), Vol. III, p. 42.

*refers to Me has its fulfillment." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."*

Secondly, what need be said relative to this point in the outline is that pacifists often appeal only to the life of Jesus, versus the whole of the Bible, to seemingly advance their arguments. They impound Jesus from the remainder of the Word. But Scripture is clear in its self-attestation that *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16). The whole of the Word is inspired by God, not just the teachings of Jesus. Remember, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us* (John 1:1; 14; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 19:13). Synonymous to the living Word is the written Word. It is fundamentally erroneous (and it should catch one's discerning eye), a hermeneutical violation, to attempt to isolate Christ from the remainder of *His* Scriptures. One cannot legitimately build theology on the back of Jesus' sayings only. When Paul declared to the Elders, *"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God"* (Acts 20:27), he wasn't referring just to Jesus.

The additional problem with using Jesus' words in the Bible as preeminent over the remainder of Scripture is the failure to differentiate between what Jesus states to individuals and what the whole of Scripture says is the purpose of the State: the biblical role of the State is by definition to quell evil.

Numerous passages in the Bible support the idea of government utilizing force to quell evil (cf. Genesis 9:5-6; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14). Critically important, one needs to keep in mind that the third member of the Trinity inspired the authors of each of those passages regarding

God's purpose for civil government! The supposed idea that the ways of Jesus are antithetical to the ways of civil government is a false dichotomy, a false dualism, that does not bear up under the scrutiny of good exegesis.

#### D. This View Results in a Moral Equivalence Between Good and Evil

What are the results of this understanding of the State? If every nation is evil, what should a person conclude when two nations go to war? Was Great Britain evil when it took on Hitler's Germany? Was America evil when it liberated Iraq from Saddam Hussein? Is it equally evil for a nation to defend itself against terrorist attacks? When one reasons that "All Governments Are Evil," all governments are put on the same moral level and evil is the nation that advances or defends against evil. Romans 13:4 states concisely to the contrary, *...it [civil government] is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil*. Nations and their actions are not patently evil according to God's Word. As a legislator or a member of the executive branch of government you should not feel guilty when waging a just war against evildoers.

#### E. This View Results in a Denial of Governmental Power Over Individuals

Boyd exhibits a pacifistic ideology when he states the following. (Note that in Boyd's vocabulary "the kingdom of the world" and "the power of the sword" are synonyms for describing "all governments are evil and demonic.")

Wherever a person or group exercises power over others . . . there is a version of the kingdom of the world. While it comes in many forms, the kingdom of the world is in essence a "power



over” kingdom . . . there have been democratic, socialist, communist, fascist, and totalitarian versions of the kingdom of the world, but they all share this distinctive characteristic: they exercise “power over” people.<sup>6</sup>

This is not a biblically-informed rationale. Boyd believes government should not coerce people by threatening them with punishment. Rather, he believes Scripture teaches via the life of Jesus a “power under” versus a “power over” view of the role of government. The former being emblematic of *“the kingdom of God”* versus the latter, “the kingdom of this world.” Another way he expresses this is “Lamb Power” versus “Lion Power.” “Coming under” he believes transforms people’s hearts versus using force. Again, Romans 13:4 need inform one’s total understanding of government; Romans 13:4 serves to discount Boyd’s postulations.

**CIVIL GOVERNMENT IS A  
MORALIZING AGENT OF GOD  
WHEREIN HE PURPOSES,  
VESTS AND MANIFESTS HIS  
RESTRAINING GRACE IN A  
FALLEN WORLD**

God’s design for civil government includes the idea of it containing corporal<sup>7</sup> power and force over people in order to compel righteousness. God intends for civil government to legislate morality.

**F. This View Results in Not  
Defending One’s Wife, Family  
or Country From Evil**

The natural conclusion of not using force, believing that such is supposedly “more spiritual” and supposedly in keeping with conformity to Christ, leads to one not defending against an attacker of his wife, family, friends, or nation. Pacifists tend to utilize the following verses to justify their point of view. A

closer investigation of each is in order.

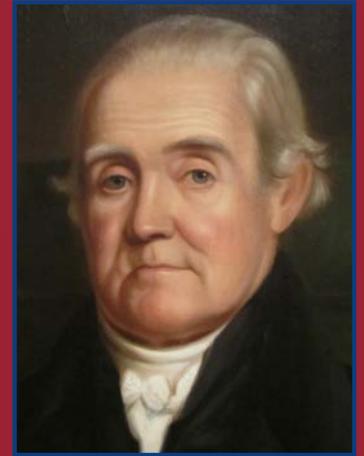
**1. “Never Pay Back Evil for Evil”  
Romans 12:17**

Contextually this passage is found in a summary listing of Christian virtues (after eleven chapters of doctrine, Paul reasons how therefore members of Jesus’ Church ought to *personally* live with others). Verses 9-21 depict the corpus of the believer’s attitudes in Christ. Importantly, the context pertains to how believers ought to live as members of the universal body of Christ, the Church. Contextually this is not a passage about the duties of policemen in the State or the duties of the military of the State. Eight verses later, (note verse 19 along the way!), Paul will contrast *never pay back evil for evil*, i.e., *personal* revenge with the concept of permissible *State* revenge: Romans 13:4 indicates that the State possesses the authority to use the sword: it is *an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil*. All that to say this: The context and contrast of the passage (Romans 12:13 with Romans 13:4) is critically important to understanding its meaning! Parachuting in on a passage and voiding it of surrounding context, as pacifists often do in their use of Romans 13:4, cloaks authorial intent.

The big picture of Romans 12 is this: Paul is preaching that Christ-likeness means believers are not vengeful people who are always looking to get even. If someone is being accosted in your presence, that is quite another matter outside of the intended scope of this passage’s instruction. Short of a policeman near the scene of a crime, an individual can invoke upon himself the power of the State in order to shoot a murderer, etc. Making a justifiable citizen’s arrest is noble; the said person is not *paying back evil for evil* in this case.

**2. “Love Your Enemies”  
Matthew 5:44**

Noah Webster



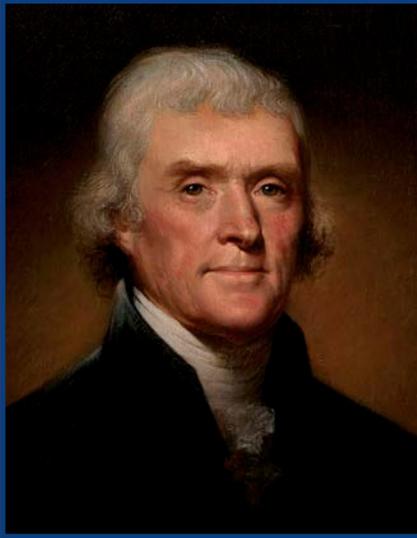
*“[T]he religion which has introduced civil liberty is the religion of Christ and His apostles . . . This is genuine Christianity and to this we owe our free constitutions of government.”*

— Noah Webster, revolutionary soldier; judge; legislator; educator; “Schoolmaster to America.”

Noah Webster, *History of the United States* (New Haven: Durrrie and Peck, 1832), p. 300, 578.



Thomas Jefferson



*“The practice of morality being necessary for the well-being of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral principles of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses.”*

— Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States; signer of the Declaration of Independence; diplomat; Governor of Virginia; Secretary of State.

Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Albert Ellery Bergh, editor (Washington D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), Vol. XII, p. 315, to James Fishback, September 27, 1809.

This passage is found in the midst of Jesus’ instruction in the Sermon on the Mount. A quick dispelling of a pacifistic misinterpretation of this passage is in order (as if loving your enemies means you would never punish them): It stands to reason that if one loves his enemies like he does his friends and family, then he will protect them from the onslaught of a murderer or an invading country. And, should one’s actual enemies attack you or your friends, is it loving to allow them to hurt others? Tough love applies to both friend and foe.

3. **“Turn the Other Cheek”**  
Matthew 5:39

To begin with, in its tightest meaning when Jesus’ choice of words is understood in their cultural setting, **“turn the other cheek”** means one should respond in self-control and humility when insulted by another. (Someday I’ll take a whole study to develop this biblical understanding of the passage.) For brevity’s sake, even personal pacifism is not in view here!

Add to this understanding of **turn the other cheek**, the aforementioned clarity between Jesus’ teachings regarding the demeanor of the individual believer and Jesus’ teachings regarding the purpose of the State. Herein in Matthew 5, Jesus is not talking about the responsibilities of civil government! Rather, He is portraying principles for individual conduct this side of heaven! Add to that, this specific portion of Scripture is not listing imperative commands but giving *general principle* illustrations (the OT Proverbs are principles) of what personal conduct should look like in the lives of His followers. To illustrate the contextual idea of this portion of Scripture, a few passages later Jesus states, **“give to one who begs of you”** (ESV). If this were a command in the Greek language, it wouldn’t be long until, conceivably, beggars could bankrupt churches. Conversely, God also calls us to

be good stewards of our resources just like He expects us to defend ourselves against evil wrongdoing.

**PACIFISM IS NOWHERE  
TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE**

The world is fallen, mankind is depraved, and sin is rampant (especially when government enforcement is weak). Strong police forces and militaries are necessary as a result. Such fosters civility. Importantly, this next point will help to institutionally contextualize the aforementioned passages.

G. **This View Results in a  
Blurring of the  
Institutional Purposes of  
Church and State**

The advocates of pacifism who invoke the love of Jesus to stylize their understanding of the conduct of civil government err in distinguishing separately the institution of the Church from the State. Whereas the Church is called to *evangelize* all citizens, the State is to *moralize* all citizens. God’s institutional purposes as well as His institutional methodologies for achieving His purposes are quite different. Whereas the former is confined to love and is not to wield the sword, the latter is to use it when and where necessary. It seems Boyd and Wallis have their institutional methodologies a bit mixed up. Jim Wallis is the President of *Sojourners* magazine. *Sojourners* is a long-time advocate of Christian pacifism. In their noble pursuit for a more loving world, they act as if the methods of the Church are the limits of the State.

**KEEP IN MIND  
“NEVER PAY BACK EVIL  
FOR EVIL,”  
“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES,”  
“TURN THE OTHER CHEEK”**



**ARE ADDRESSED TO BELIEVERS  
IN THE INSTITUTION OF  
THE CHURCH,  
NOT POLICEMEN OR MILITARY  
PERSONNEL WORKING IN OR  
FOR THE STATE**

In Scripture, Romans 13:4 and 7 speak specifically to those who work for the State (and not the Church!): The State is to *bear the sword*. The State is to *avenge*. The State is to be *feared*. These aforesaid passages should — in fact must — be applied in the context of the respective institution in view in Scripture.<sup>8</sup>

**H. This View Results in  
Pacifism and National  
Weakness**

The military force necessary to stop Hitler, based on this Bible study's scriptural analysis, was a good thing. The evil of American slavery came to an end through the use of force. That too was a good thing. Shooting a sniper perched in a school bell tower is a good thing. Hopefully no one would argue that today.

To posture however that these wars and battles would not be necessary had someone first loved like Jesus is to deny the reality that sin and evil exist in the world, that they always have and always will. Governmental restraint is not only necessary but God-ordained to curb its ever-presence (cf. Genesis 3:6-19; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23). Compelled by His restraining grace and love, God ordained this much-needed, valuable institution.

**III. SUMMARY**

The “All Governments are Evil” understanding of the State encourages believers to oppose the use of governmental force to quell evil. This is antithetical to the Bible's clear teaching in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 wherein Government wields God's

authority to use the sword with justice.

The picture of Neville Chamberlain investing endless hours negotiating with Hitler comes to mind, as well as a defenseless Dalai Lama in the hands of an aggressive China. Do not our present-day problems with North Korea and Iran stem from an encroaching pacifism in need of immediate correction? We must think biblically here. No longer should we tolerate unbiblical pacifistic thinking. One shudders to think what would happen worldwide if America continued in a pacifistic direction. What additional aggressive nations would take advantage?

Pacifism carries not personal favor with God. Think not that such attitudes win favor with the Almighty, as though one is more spiritual than his “aggressive” counterpart. *In fact, one is not more spiritual who embraces pacifism; one is less spiritual.* Proverbs describes them in stark contrast to wise people (1:20). They are called naïve or ignorant: *“How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded . . . . For the waywardness of the naïve will kill them”* (1:22, 32). Much to think about, beloved.

Next week we will examine the fourth wrong view of Church and State:

**DO EVANGELISM  
NOT POLITICS**

James McHenry



*“[P]ublic utility pleads most forcibly for the general distribution of the Holy Scriptures. Without the Bible, in vain do we increase penal laws and draw entrenchments around our institutions.”*

— James McHenry, Revolutionary Officer; Signer of the Constitution; Ratifier of the US Constitution; Secretary of War under Presidents George Washington and John Adams.

Bernard C. Steiner, *One Hundred and Ten Years of Bible Society Work in Maryland, 1810-1920* (Maryland Bible Society, 1921), p. 14.



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**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Wallis, Jim *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005). Boyd, Greg *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>Confer with Ephesians 6:12. No mention of governmental rule is listed in this main passage regarding the reign of the devil.

<sup>3</sup>Boyd, Greg *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). On page 21 he says that all civil government is demonic. On page 22 he states, "Functionally, Satan is the acting CEO of all earthly governments."

<sup>4</sup>Grudem, Wayne *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) p. 38. It is important for me to state often that I am following the outline of this book, with permission, in these complex studies.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. p. 59, 168, 91.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Corporal: Relating to or involving the physical body rather than the mind or spirit.

<sup>8</sup>More broadly biblical institutions have a variety of different respective descriptors beyond those listed herein. For instance, State leaders possess no biblically-explicit character qualifications necessary for holding office, whereas leaders in the Church do (cf. 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). It follows that since there are no biblical character qualifications or limitations for policemen or military personnel in Genesis 9, Romans 12, or 1 Peter 2, that Matthew 5 and Romans 12 cannot necessarily be applied to them as virtues that are essential to holding their position in civil government, especially as it relates to the dispatch of their God-given duties. This is not to say that it is impossible for a Christian to serve in the police or military.

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