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NOVEMBER 2, 2026

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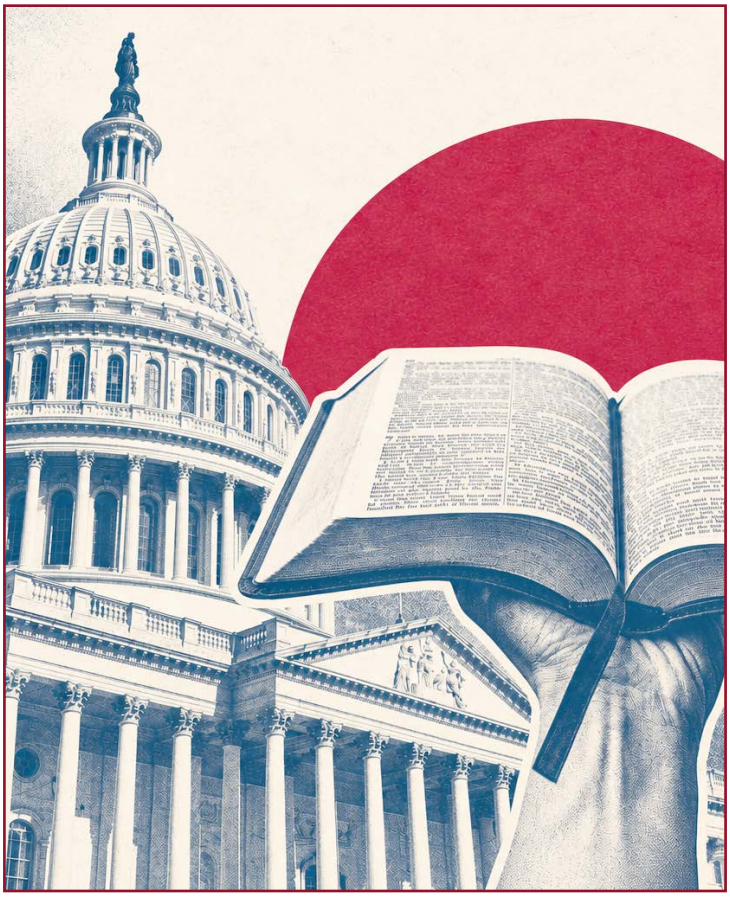
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PART 1 OF 5

Five Wrong Views About Christians and Government



There are four aberrant views of Church and State. In the coming weeks, we will discuss those views as we continue to examine the biblical position on Church and State, or as titled here, Christians and Government.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many fine Christian books pertain to what the Bible says about the believer and his or her marriage, his or her fam-

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet & Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served
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The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.

PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

Adam Schnelting

Missouri State Senator
District 23



"As a former pastor and current legislator, I can tell you that an often-overlooked ministry is the ministry to public officials. When many churches launch ministries of various kinds, they rarely think of politicians as individuals to whom the Word of God needs to be preached.

"The work that Matt is doing is exactly that. Matt has thought outside the box and beyond the conventional pulpit ministry to minister to those who are on the front lines of the culture war in America. I support Matt's important work ministering to those of us who minister as public officials."

Rep. Schnelting participates in the CapMin weekly Bible study to members of the Missouri Legislature that is led by Pastor Matt Goodsell.

ily, church, and employment, but very little conservative theology has been published regarding the believer's relationship to the state.[1] What does the Bible say about this? Furthermore, if Scripture gives guidelines for the proper functioning of the institutions of marriage, family, Church and commerce, then it must also speak to the proper functioning of the state, and it does! Since you, disciple of Jesus Christ in the political arena, are responsible for how the state functions, you should know about what the Good Book has to say about it! What follows is the first of four incorrect perspectives of how the Church should relate to the state.

II. WRONG VIEW NO. 1: GOVERNMENT SHOULD COMPEL RELIGION

Does the Bible teach that government should compel its citizenry to follow a particular religion? A bit of Church history is in order here in answering that. Since the Reformation was primarily about a revolution in soteriology,[2] that is, what the Bible teaches about how someone is saved, during that time of intense debate there was little room for discussion of anything else. A theological debate about the separation of the institution of the Church from the institution of the state would have to wait for another time (with the exception of the Anabaptist movement).[3] Accordingly, the Church and state remained institutionally undifferentiated in many Reformation countries, even to this date in countries such as Germany and England.[4] Post Reformation, it is not until the American experiment in government that an institutional differentiation does occur.[5] And this comes about in pragmatic reaction to theocratic England,[6] more than because of exegetical discovery. Theocratic nations, be they reformed, unreformed, Islamic, Hindu, or otherwise believe that government should compel religion. With the profligacy of theocratical constructs, the question remains: is such supported by Scripture?

A. JESUS DISTINGUISHED THE REALMS OF GOD AND OF CAESAR

The essential passage of Scripture that prescribes present-day differentiation between Church and state is Luke 20:25:

And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

Contextually this passage appears as Jesus is evading the trickery of His persecutors. His affirmative answer to their question, ***"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"*** (Luke 20:22) would suggest support for the hated Roman occupiers of Palestine. To say "no" would render Him a political revolutionary worthy of death. In answering, Jesus henceforth separates the Church Age from the theocratic Israel of the Old Covenant. Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–14 are classic New Testament (NT) passages that further elaborate the differentiation and separate purposes of the State and the Church. Accordingly, properly understood today, there is an institutional—but not

influential—separation of Church and state. In addition, in the Old Testament (OT), all members of theocratic Israel were called ***"'A kingdom of priests and a holy nation'"*** (Exodus 19:6-7), a designation reserved for members of the Church only in 1 Peter 2:9. Summarily, when Jesus said ***"render unto Caesar"*** He was "signal[ing] the endorsement of a different system."[7] The ***"things that are Caesar's"*** are not to be under the control of the Church—nor are the things that are the responsibility of the Church to be under the control of the State. Make no mistake: America has this right! And, counter to intuition, the Church flourishes when it is separate—institutionally speaking—from the State. This fact is historically illustrated by America.

Jefferson was biblically correct on this point:

> Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.[8]

In other countries, where government leaders read these Bible studies, take note: separating your government from ***"the things that are God's"*** is biblically proper! Such will help your country prosper! Government should not compel religion. Whenever the Church is tied to the state, history shows that it loses its doctrine, purpose, mission, and impact.

B. JESUS REFUSED TO TRY TO COMPEL PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM

Jesus is not coercive. To this day, if you personally are not a follower of Christ, don't expect Him to force you to submit to Himself. Unlike the Quran and the Islamic religion where the sword is advocated to compel submission to Allah in Islam's quest for world conquest, biblical Christianity knows nothing of this sort.

While 9-11 was in obedience to the Quran, the Crusades were in defiance of the Bible.

Notice the coercive strategy of Jesus' disciples in Luke 9:52–54 and what resulted:

And He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Luke 20:25

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The "things that are Caesar's" are not to be under the control of the Church—nor are the things that are the responsibility of the Church to be under the control of the State.

MINISTRY UPDATE

Capitol Ministries Directors Strategize to Advance the Gospel Across Nations



On October 5–7, Capitol Ministries regional directors representing ministries across five continents—North America, Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Asia—gathered in California for their annual strategic planning and leadership development meeting.

The caliber and diversity of men Capitol Ministries has recruited into its global leadership over the years is extraordinary. Among them are pastors who have endured persecution for their faith, former high-ranking political leaders, Baptist convention executives, accomplished businessmen, seasoned pastors, and experienced Bible teachers. Each brings a wealth of

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James and John thought they had come up with a brilliant formula to assure that Jesus would gain an immediate, broad following. But, as Luke 9:55 states, He turned and rebuked them. Not a good idea! Jesus never coerces. Nor should any believer coerce another to follow Christ.

C. GENUINE FAITH CANNOT BE FORCED

Many other NT passages illustrate the individual, voluntary nature tantamount to true saving faith. Two passages follow (Acts 28:23–24; Revelation 22:17).

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

If you are not a believer, remember this: genuine belief must be voluntary. In the same way, a government cannot force its citizenry to believe! This is a major problem in theocratic nations where infants are compelled to be baptized in order to become a part of the State—years before they can willingly reason, repent, and receive Jesus. Institutional collusion leads to individual confusion.

D. NOT A WORLDLY KINGDOM

John 18:36 states the following:

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm."

Until Jesus returns and sets up the earthly form of His kingdom (at the conclusion of the Church Age and the seven-year Great Tribulation period) when He will personally rule over this world (see Revelation 20:4-7), His present kingdom is definitively spiritual in nature.

His kingdom must never be connected to any political entity.

This isn't to say that His kingdom should not influence and transform the present physical world. It most certainly should (Matthew 5:13–16)! John 18 is not a prescription for spiritual isolationism, monasticism, or asceticism. Rather, it says this: His kingdom is to be manifest in heart change rather than physical might in various forms which compels people to believe. Since His ***"kingdom***

is not of this world," it follows that Jesus does not sanction present-day theocracy.

E. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF REJECTING THE "COMPEL RELIGION" VIEW

To the political leader, one application of this biblical precept is that lawmakers should work to uphold the First Amendment, the constitutional tenet of freedom of religion based on Scripture itself! All believers holding office should know the exegetical argument for religious freedom within society as the New Testament presents. Further, being able to elucidate the biblical principles in this study should go a long way in assuaging the fears of groups like the Center for American Progress and the Freedom from Religion Foundation who fear that believers holding office are espousing a return to theocracy. (If only these groups would read this study and quit beating you up from their ignorance!) Office holders should not only herald and pledge allegiance to the First Amendment, ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") but argue biblically for the genius and correctness of its existence!

F. WHAT ABOUT GIVING SOME TAX BENEFITS TO CHURCHES?

Additional implications of the state's not compelling religion pertain to governmental subsidies of religion:

1. Presently our government financially supports chaplaincy programs in the military and in capitols. This amounts to the subsidization of religion. Consequently, the biblical principles in this study demand that these expenditures be borne by religious entities and not the state. Such changes in governmental policy, pragmatically speaking, would actually lead to the furtherance of the Gospel.

2. This exegetical study further suggests that the state should not give tax dollars to churches, no matter the cause. The government has already classified these entities as not-for-profit institutions.

The practice of these implications[9] is meant to turn the status quo on its head: individuals are encouraged by the government to support the not-for-profit organizations' respective purposes via income tax-deduction incentives. This governmental incentive (versus institutional non-separation) is both biblically and constitutionally permissible. Such application is non-discriminatory, which is the spirit of the First Amendment. In this application of biblical principles, no denomination or religion receives preferential treatment by the state, and government is not compelling religion. At the same time, government incentivizes its citizens to compel religion—which is sheer genius because America's form of government is only tenable based on a religious people!

John Adams the signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights and our second President said: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly

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experience, spiritual maturity, and leadership expertise to the ministry's mission.

The gathering took place at the home of Capitol Ministries founders Ralph and Danielle Drollinger in California, which frequently serves as a venue for ministry training, fellowship dinners, and strategic planning meetings.

The directors developed plans for new ministry launches and regional training conferences from the Americas to Africa and from Europe to Asia that will equip additional men to establish discipleship Bible studies among political leaders.

The gathering was especially meaningful as Capitol Ministries marks its 30th anniversary in 2026. Founded in California in 1996, the ministry has grown from a single Bible study for state legislators into an international movement reaching political leaders around the world.

Now, with Capitol Ministries' work extending into nearly 100 nations, directors looked toward the future with excitement, envisioning what the ministry could accomplish over the next decade.

Such exponential growth requires more than expanding

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into new nations. It requires developing faithful leaders who can equip others to carry the ministry forward.

That is why an entire day was devoted to a particularly important objective: training the trainers.

Rather than relying on a small group of men to travel continually around the world to conduct training conferences, Capitol Ministries is preparing each regional director to become a trainer himself. This approach will enable directors to equip ministry leaders within their respective regions, multiplying the ministry's reach while establishing a sustainable foundation for future generations.

Throughout the gathering, directors shared experiences, encouraged one another, prayed together, and discussed strategies for strengthening existing ministries and expanding into new nations.

"We desire to build sustainable ministries that will stand the test of time. By equipping men to train others, we are laying a foundation for biblical discipleship that can continue for generations, long after today's leaders have passed the torch," said Danielle Drollinger, President of Capitol Ministries.

Continued on next page

inadequate to the government of any other."[10]

These clarifications are in keeping with the perspicuity of this study's exegesis and the proviso of the First Amendment. Plus, such clarity of policy positions do not muddy the waters, or needlessly fuel contempt from secularists.

G. THE SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE BEHIND THE 'COMPEL RELIGION' VIEW

Political leaders who espouse a "compel religion" view of Church and State are either biblically naïve or diabolically opposed to the Gospel's extension. Consider the following as an explanation.

1. Theocratic countries of other religions tend to persecute Christians by the use of their exclusive-religion laws. Such theocracies drive biblical Christianity out of their nations. One of the great victories of the war in Iraq was the formulation of a new constitution which encourages freedom of religion. Noting the presence of the underground Church in many hostile nations and God's ability to supernaturally promulgate His Church in such countries, the Gospel effectively competes above ground when there exists a level playing field with other religions. Theocracies greatly tilt the playing field.

2. This is worth repeating: "Christian states" too are misleading and are spiritually destructive overall. Why? When Christianity is compelled by the State, in the end, fewer people possess genuine faith. The Church side of the theocracy usually ends up being led by non-believers who render the Church spiritually dead and ineffective in the society. Such destroys the transforming power of the Gospel, and what remains in the end are empty, tax-supported edifices to a past faith.

III. CONCLUSION

For these two reasons, when a nation becomes a theocracy, the genuine work of God is stifled to some degree as a result. Theocracies don't propagate; rather they hinder the work of God to a large extent.

In the Christians and Government study series we explore

PART 1: Wrong View No. 1: Government Should Compel Religion

PART 2: Wrong View No. 2: Government Should Exclude Religion

PART 3: Wrong View No. 3: All Governments Are Evil and Demonic

PART 4: Wrong View No. 4: Believers Should Do Evangelism and Not Politics

PART 5: Right View: A Biblically-Reasoned Understanding of the Separation of Church and State

1. This study borrows from the tome *Politics According to the Bible* (Dr. Wayne Grudem, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2011). Dr. Grudem is a wonderful personal friend. Additional resources include *Christ and Culture Revisited* (D.A. Carson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) wherein he revisits Richard Niebuhr's sweeping cultural analysis of Church and state, a work that has proven to be a historically sustaining (albeit with a wandering hermeneutic) platform for reasoning and discussion on this subject. Another helpful theologically conservative book on this subject is *God and Government* (Charles Colson, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). This was previously published as *Kingdoms in Conflict*.

   Note that this study follows Grudem's outline with his permission, as he has outlined this vast study with his unusually gifted abilities.

2. The vast majority of the theses on the Wittenberg Door were soteriological in nature.

3. See Verduin, Leonard, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).

4. Verduin calls this the "sacral society" wherein the two institutions are not yet divided. The premise (which the American experiment in government proves false) is that "there must be unanimity at the shrine if there is to be tranquility in the square." Verduin, Leonard, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid; A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 16.

5. There exists a small component of American Evangelicalism today the purports theocratic non-differentiation that goes by the name "Christian Reconstructionism." Closely synonymous are "Theonomy" and "Dominion Theology." The chief advocates of these movements are Rousas John Rushdoony and Greg Bahnsen.

6. Many of the New England Pilgrims faced fines and imprisonment for failing to attend services in the Church of England.

7. Grudem, Wayne, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 25.

8. "The Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom" drafted by Thomas Jefferson in 1179, passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786.

9. Drucker, Peter, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

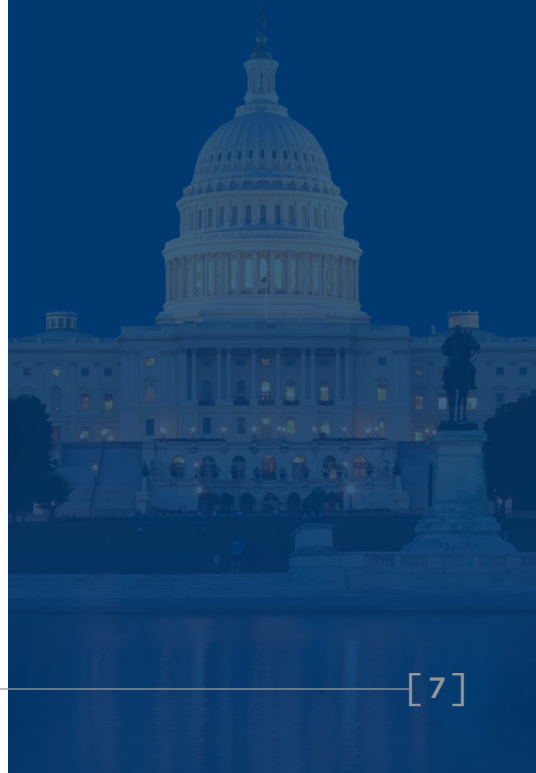
10. *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: With A Life of the Author by Charles Francis Adams*, Volume IX, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1854.

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The three-day gathering concluded with a meaningful time of prayer as directors laid hands on one another, asking God for wisdom, strength, and endurance in the work entrusted to them.

By Thursday, airplanes were carrying these men back to their countries, each returning to his respective mission field with renewed vision and commitment.

From a home in California to the halls of government around the world, the mission continues: making disciples of Jesus Christ in the political arena—throughout the world.



CAPITOL ministries®

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ in the Political Arena Throughout the World

Capitol Ministries® provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

Capitol Ministries®
Mail Processing Center
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