

GOD AND GOVERNMENT

A Biblical, Historical,
and Constitutional Perspective

The cover features a central silhouette of a man's torso. Overlaid on the silhouette is a golden sword with a red hilt and a decorative blade. The sword is surrounded by several golden keys and a golden chain or cord. The background is a dark blue gradient with two large, glowing, parchment-like shapes that resemble open books or documents, one on the left and one on the right, with faint, illegible text on them.

GARY DEMAR

The book series that helped shape the thinking of conservative Christians for decades and laid the foundations for the small-government revolution.

If the resurgent conservative movement is to make lasting progress, it must adopt the fundamental principles of government anchored in the pages of Scripture.

Christians don't want to set their beliefs aside so they can join yet another political organization. They want the lordship of Jesus Christ to be over all of life—family, church, business, economics, and even the dirty work of politics.

Gary DeMar saw the need for developing the biblical principles necessary to meet this demand. Over the course of five years, he dedicated himself to mining the Bible for the foundational principles of government. The result was the three volumes of *God and Government*.

Described as the "original operating philosophy of the New Christian Right," *God and Government* had a transforming effect on hundreds of thousands of Christians who began to realize that the Bible has a great deal to say about civil authority, thus laying the foundations for the recent rise in Christian, limited-government activism, as seen in the 2010 Tea Party rout of Congress.

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Self-Government and Family Government

What is government? When this question is asked, most people respond by equating government with politics. Even our language reflects the confusion: "Government? It's in Washington," or "The government will take care of its citizens through its many programs." Both of these statements reflect a misunderstanding of the true nature of government. They indicate that the only governing institution is a political one. Historically, however, the term "government" was always qualified in some way, unlike our present-day definitions.

Our educational system reflects the same confusion. A generation ago, high school classes dealing with government at the state level were given the title "Civics." The emphasis was on the function of government in *civil* matters. This is no longer the case. Such classes are now given the broad title of "Government" implying that the many governments are absorbed into one all-encompassing political government.

Before World War I, textbooks dealing with national government were qualified with the title "Civil." An example of this can be seen in a textbook used in 1903: *Elements of Civil Government*. According to its author, "The family . . . is a form of government, established for the good of children themselves, and the first government that each of us must obey."¹ The book continues by defining five areas of civil government: "the township or civil district, the village or the city, the county, the State, and the United States."² The term "government" as the older educational definition indicates, is broader than the State. Textbook writers were aware that

1. Alex L. Peterman, *Elements of Civil Government* (New York, NY: American Book Company, [1891] 1903), 5.

2. Peterman, *Elements of Civil Government*, 5.

there were personal (self), family, church, educational (under the direction of the family), and civil governments, each having a legitimate realm of authority. The State was seen as only one government among many.

To deny the validity of the many governments and the responsibilities that each has under God, would be to deny the authority that belongs to each of them in their designated realm of activity. If we as individuals neglect our personal governing duties, then we can expect the State to assume the role of all other legitimate governments and claim to be the sole government, while labeling all others as counterfeits. Therefore, to see the State as the only governing institution "is destructive of liberty and of life."³



The moral principles and precepts contained in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.

—Noah Webster

The concept of the multiplicity of governments is as old as our country because the principles were extracted from biblical principles. Noah Webster's definition of government in his *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) reflects the biblical concept of the diversity of governmental authority. Webster defined government in this way: "Direction; regulation. 'These precepts will serve for the government of our conduct.' Control; restraint. 'Men are apt to neglect the government of their temper and passions.'"

While Webster defined government in terms of personal self-control, most modern definitions largely limit government to the realm of institutions, especially civil or statist governments. This is made evident by the fact that the definition for *civil* government is placed first in modern

3. R. J. Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Vallejo, CA: Ross House Books, [1970] 1995), 332.

dictionaries. Nowhere are self- or family governments even listed. For example, *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1972) defines government in this way: "The exercise of authority over a state, district, organization, institution, etc."

In the older definition, Webster includes family government as part of the complete definition before he deals with the government of an individual state or nation. He defines family government as: "The exercise of authority by a parent or householder. 'Children are often ruined by a neglect of government in parents.'" According to the Bible, it is the duty of parents to govern in the home: "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). It is not the duty of civil government to interfere with the affairs of the family. Too often, however, parents neglect their God-given duty to raise their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." When this happens, we can expect the State to take an increasingly dominant role in family life. Such a role is detrimental to the family.

If generations continue to be indoctrinated with the modern definition of "government," they will neglect their own personal, family, church, and local governing duties. Each generation will become more dependent on the "benevolent" State for care and security. We are beginning to see such a trend. "Today, most Americans have lost their faith in Christ as Savior, and they expect civil government to be their savior. They have no desire for the responsibilities of self-government, and so they say to politicians, 'Do thou rule over us.' Instead of Jesus Christ as their good shepherd, they elect politicians to be their shepherds on a program of socialistic security for all."⁴

Government then, within our American Christian heritage which was formulated from biblical principles, begins with the individual and extends outward to include all institutions. Presently, however, most Americans are unaware of the varied nature of government. The civil government has assumed responsibility to be *the* government. It is sad that many Americans are thankful that Washington has relieved them from what they believe is the heavy burden of governing themselves, their families, churches, and schools. If the people of the United States do not once again establish self-

4. R. J. Rushdoony, *Law and Liberty* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1971] 2009), 77-78.

family, church, local, state, and national governments in their proper places of power and authority, our nation is doomed.

The central focus of all realms of government is the regenerating work of Jesus Christ. Institutions and civil governments are made up of people who are governed by the condition of their hearts. If the heart is in rebellion against God, we can expect undisciplined and ungovernable people. If the heart has been made new in Christ, we can expect a people who will govern their lives according to the governing principles of Scripture. A. A. Hodge speaks of the essence of the new heart, regeneration, as consist-



The civil government of the United States is decentralized. We are a single nation made up of a number of sovereign states. The many states created the single nation: *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one). The stability of all these governments is dependent upon the self-governed individual under God's government.

For decades, in the hands of countless teachers, parents, and students, *God and Government* educated minds young and old in the Christian history of America, the origin and foundation of government, the biblical principles of authority, and the basis and necessity of Christian political activism.

One of the most comprehensive studies of the topic ever published, *God and Government*—now thoroughly updated in this beautiful one-volume hardback—clearly explains the Bible's timeless principles for everything from self-government, family government, church government, and civil government to education, economics, poverty, and law.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Amid the rapid dissolution of the American moral fabric after *Roe v. Wade*, an old truth started gaining new life in America.

It was the truth that had once made America great, but one which she had forgotten—that the Bible is not a collection of disconnected moralisms for private application, but rather a comprehensive guide for all of life, a blueprint for the private and public conduct of all individuals and nations.

Relying on painstaking historical and biblical research, author Gary DeMar demonstrated how America became a "city on a hill" for millions of people around the world, and how she could be great again.

Now thirty years later, American Vision has thoroughly renovated, revised, and updated Gary DeMar's monumental work in this beautiful one-volume hardback.

With a fresh new look, including hundreds of antique prints, paintings, and engravings; extensive subject and Scripture indices; and an updated reading list, *God and Government* is ready to prepare a new generation to take on the political and religious battles confronting Christians today.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT GOD AND GOVERNMENT

"I am extremely grateful for Gary DeMar's *God and Government* series which is still a huge influence on my worldview. I rate *God and Government* as among the greatest homeschooling books ever written because of their Christ-centered scholarship. I love these books so much that I recently acquired an extra set to loan to a homeschooling family, and am encouraging them to use these books with their children. When I have a family of my own, I will use *God and Government* to homeschool my children because these books are among the very best."

—Jack H.

"We have placed your *God and Government* books in colleges all over Zambia. It was also our joy to re-supply numerous missionaries and evangelists with these books who have taken them across the border into communist Angola, the Congo, and Zimbabwe."

—Peter H.



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