
DR. GREGORY BOYD'S
**MYTH OF A
CHRISTIAN
NATION**

A REPLY, REFUTATION
AND **REBUTTAL**

— BY —

JOHN TELLER

TIME  BOOKS

Dr. Gregory Boyd's
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A Reply, Refutation and Rebuttal

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ABBREVIATIONS

English Translations of the Bible:

ASV.....	American Standard Version
BBE.....	Bible in Basic English
Darby.....	Darby Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
ISV	International Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
MKJV.....	Modern King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
RSV.....	Revised Standard Version

Books of the Bible:

1Ch.....	1 Chronicles
1Co.....	1 Corinthians
1Jn.....	1 John
1Ki.....	1 Kings
1Pe.....	1 Peter
1Sa.....	1 Samuel
1Th	1 Thessalonians
1Ti.....	1 Timothy
2Ch.....	2 Chronicles
2Co.....	2 Corinthians
2Jn.....	2 John
2Ki.....	2 Kings
2Pe.....	2 Peter
2Sa.....	2 Samuel
2Th	2 Thessalonians
2Ti.....	2 Timothy
3Jo.....	3 John
Acts	Book of Acts
Amos	Book of Amos
Col.....	Colossians

Dan	Daniel
Deu	Deuteronomy
Ecc.....	Ecclesiastes
Eph	Ephesians
Est	Esther
Exo	Exodus
Eze.....	Ezekiel
Ezr	Book of Ezra
Gal.....	Galatians
Gen.....	Genesis
Hab	Habakkuk
Hag	Haggai
Heb.....	Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa.....	Isaiah
Jas.....	James
Jer.....	Jeremiah
Job	Book of Job
Joel	Book of Joel
John.....	Gospel of John
Jon	Jonah
Jos	Joshua
Jude	Book of Jude
Jdg.....	Judges
Lam	Lamentations
Lev	Leviticus
Luke	Gospel of Luke
Mal	Malachi
Mark.....	Gospel of Mark
Mat	Gospel of Matthew
Mic	Micah
Nah.....	Nahum
Neh.....	Nehemiah
Num.....	Numbers
Oba.....	Obadiah
Phm	Philemon
Php	Philippians
Pro.....	Proverbs

Psa	Psalms
Rev	Revelation
Rom.....	Romans
Ruth.....	Book of Ruth
Son	Song of Solomon
Tit.....	Titus
Zec.....	Zechariah
Zep	Zephaniah

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In his best-selling book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, Dr. Gregory Boyd, a widely-respected theologian and pastor, argues that the church was established to serve the world with a Christ-like love that is diametrically opposed to the pursuit of political power. Christians are called to manifest a “kingdom of the cross” that impacts culture through self-sacrificial love, not the Romans 13 “kingdom of the sword” that impacts culture through coercive force.

Dr. Boyd’s radical separatism leaves committed Christians with no choice other than to abandon the civic realm. His is a call to effect change through spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, not by taking up the reins of government to exercise “power over” others. For Boyd, there is no room for Christians to serve in government or any of its arms, including the military or police.

At last—there is now a reply, refutation and rebuttal to Dr. Boyd’s treatise and conclusions, which result from misunderstandings of fundamental biblical principles and the selective treatment of Scripture. This volume, , the latest in Time Books’ *Reply, Refutation and Rebuttal Series*TM, systematically replies to each of Dr. Boyd’s arguments against Christians’ participation in civil government, the military and other civil institutions. This rebuttal to Dr. Boyd’s treatise shows that far from being called to eschew the “power over” kingdom of the sword, Christians are called to be God’s co-laborers in redeeming the kingdom of sword, just as they are called to transform every other aspect of the fallen creation.

The overall goal of this volume is to leave the reader with an understanding of God’s sovereignty and lordship over all of creation, as taught in the Scripture, and to call man to partner with God in restoring the brokenness of creation, eschewing Dr. Boyd’s radical separatism.

CHAPTER 2. CHRISTIAN PACIFISM AND NON-VIOLENCE

I. OUR LIFE PURPOSE IS TO LOVE, SERVE AND LOOK AFTER THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS

A. Dr. Boyd's Argument

Dr. Gregory Boyd begins by laying out as the central purpose of the Christian life doing all things in love. We must “do ‘nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than [our]selves.’ We are to ‘look not to [our] own interests, but to the interest of others” (Phil. 2:3-4) ... Following Jesus’ example, we are to find honor in washing people’s feet ..., in serving them in any way we can” (p. 31). Living in Calvary-like love “moment by moment, in all circumstances and in relation to all people, is the sole calling of those who are aligned with the kingdom that Jesus came to bring” (p. 32).

Any form of religion void of radical love is empty and useless. “[I]f we don’t look like Jesus Christ carrying his cross to Golgotha—sacrificing our time, energy, and resources for others—our rightness is merely religious noise ... However right we may be, without love we are simply displaying a religious version of the world, not the kingdom of God” (p. 49).

B. Rebuttal: War as Charity

The social thinker George Weigel notes that since St. Augustine, just-war thinking has been based on the “classic moral judgment” that legitimate public authorities have the moral obligation “to pursue justice ... even at risk to themselves and those for whom they are responsible” (George Weigel, “The Catholic Difference: Getting 'Just War' Straight”). Therefore, a just war can be an act of charity in pursuit of justice (see Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, “Just War Is an Obligation of Charity,” *National Catholic Register*, October 7-13, 2001, p. 8).

Some will point to God's commands to utterly destroy entire peoples, such as the Amorites and the Canaanites (Deu 7:1) cannot be an act of love or charity and therefore contradicts Christ's injunction to love one's neighbor. But it is precisely because the Bible cannot contradict itself that we are to understand the violence commanded by God as compatible with Christ's love. This violence may perhaps be understood as a means to prevent these peoples from breaking the most important commandment, forbidding the worship of other gods before God (Exo 20:30). This is why God later commands the Israelites to "destroy their altars, break down their sacred pillars and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire" (Deu 7:5). The punishment may also implemented to highlight the vastness of God's mercy, for it is only when the starkness of God's justice is illustrated that one comes to appreciate His mercy: though we are all deserving of the death that the Amorites and Canaanites suffered, we are given new life and forgiveness through Christ.

Given Christ's command to love one's neighbor *and one's enemy*, we can only conclude that the violence and war commanded of God in the Old Testament was meant to be carried out in a spirit of love—love for God, love for justice and love of neighbor. Just as a loving Christian should report a child-abusing neighbor to the police out of a love for justice, so too should he do it out of love for the neighbor, a love of seeing the neighbor reformed. The intervention of the civil authorities may bring an end to the neighbor's iniquity, either through detention or otherwise through deterrence. Such an intervention, whether it results in prosecution and imprisonment or even acquittal, may lead to the end of behavior which might otherwise continue or spiral out of control.

We must always remember that even the Old Testament commanded the love of enemies (consider Proverbs: If your enemy is in need of food, give him bread; if he is in need of drink, give him water. For so you will put coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will give you your reward (Pro 25:21-22). Therefore, if we are to accept that all of the Scripture is God-breathed (2Ti 3:16), we must read the commandments to destroy Israel's enemies as given in a spirit of love.

Some may argue that it was said in the Old Testament to hate one's enemies, since Jesus preached, "You have heard it said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy (Mat 5:43). However, "hate your enemy" was never commanded by any of the prophets. Fr. Cornelius a Lapide explains this by writing that "this saying was not in the Law, but was said by the Scribes who interpreted the Law. For they, because they found in Lev. xix. 18, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour,' or 'thy friend,' as the Vulgate translates, inferred from thence that they should hate their enemies. Wherefore Christ here corrects this interpretation of theirs, and explains the Law, that by neighbor or friend every man is meant, even a foreigner, a Gentile, and an enemy. For all men are neighbors, through their first forefather, Adam, and brethren one of another. We are also brethren through our second Father, Christ, through whom we have been born again, and, as it were, created anew in the likeness of God, and called to the common inheritance of God, our Father in heaven." Hence, Christ abolishes the false teachings and legal misinterpretations of the Scribes and restores the original meaning of the Scriptures.

One thus finds that love permeates the Old Testament law. The wars commanded of the Israelites can only be understood within this context, and must thus have been waged in accordance with the commandment of love.

For further discussion on how love for neighbor can warrant the just use of force, see J. Daryl Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition*, which discusses the Church's just-war teaching on the use of force to maintain or reestablish justice and answers many of the concerns of the pacifist position while deliberately avoiding the excesses of militarism.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD DOES NOT ADVANCE BY VIOLENCE; WE SHOULD EFFECT CHANGE THROUGH NONVIOLENCE

Boyd further bolsters his take on non-violence by discussing Jesus' reprimand to the misguided disciple who struck the ear off one of the soldiers that came to arrest him. Boyd writes (p. 28):

One of his misguided disciples even tried to fight like a kingdom-of-the-world participant, cutting off the ear of one of the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus. Jesus rebuked the disciple and demonstrated the nature of his unique heavenly kingdom by healing the soldier's ear (Luke 22:50-51), showing that his kingdom would advance not by destroying the enemy who seeks to destroy you, but by loving, serving, and hopefully transforming the enemy who seeks to destroy you.

Boyd lays out a division between the two kingdoms that Christians will find themselves immersed in: The kingdom of God to which Jesus calls us and the kingdom of the world, comprised of civil governments. As citizens of kingdoms of the world, Christians should always eschew violence and trust holy living and prayer over the power of the sword. He writes (p. 41):

Martin Luther King Jr. captured the heart of Jesus' ethic of loving one's enemy as he discussed the concept of nonviolent resistance advocated by Mahatma Gandhi (who himself was influenced by Christ's teachings). King wrote that the concept of *Satyagraha* (meaning 'power of love and truth') "avoids not only external physical violence but also violence of spirit. The nonviolent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but he also refuses to hate him." Later, King commented, 'Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives ... When put into practice ..., loving one's enemies and returning evil with good has a power to accomplish something the kingdom of the sword can never dream of: namely, freeing the enemy from his hatred and stopping the ceaseless cycle of violence that hatred fuels.

III. "DO NOT RESIST AN EVILDOER": VIOLENCE IS NOT JUSTIFIED EVEN IN SELF-DEFENSE

A. Boyd's Argument

Boyd quotes Jesus' teaching to not "resist an evildoer" (Mat 5:39) and St. Paul's teaching to never "repay anyone evil for evil" (Rom 12:17) and to "overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). It

would seem from Jesus' command to not "resist an evildoer" and to "turn the other cheek" (Mat 5:39) (p. 162), that Christians are to passively allow evil to take place. Yet even Boyd recognizes that this is not the case: "[T]he word Jesus uses for 'resist' (*antistenai*) doesn't imply passively allowing something to take place. It rather connotes resisting a forceful action with a similar forceful action" (p. 163). Applying Jesus' command, then, a Christian who is assaulted should not assault his attacker. It does not, however, mean that the Christian should not complain to the authorities or have his attacker arrested. A Christian who is stolen from should not steal from his thief. He is not, however, to be impeded from filing a suit against the thief. Jesus is forbidding "responding to violent action with *similar* violent action. He's teaching us not to take on the violence of the one who is acting violently toward us. He's teaching us to respond to evil in a way that is consistent with loving them. But he's not by any means saying *do nothing*" (p. 163).

For the Christian, this can take many forms. It can mean, for example, setting up an alarm system around one's home rather than sleeping with a loaded gun to respond to a potential robber. It may mean reasoning with someone who treated him unfairly rather than hating or bearing a grudge against him.

As Boyd concedes, "Jesus' teachings "aren't a set of pacifistic laws people are to merely obey" (p. 164). Rather, they are "descriptions of what life in God's domain looks like and prescriptions for how we are to cultivate this alternative form of life" (p. 164). Thus, for Boyd, Jesus is trying to get us to a place where we are radically transformed, such that we naturally respond to our enemies in a loving way. Boyd explains that a person transformed by Jesus' love (p. 165):

would *want* to do good to his attacker. This wouldn't be a matter of him trying to obey an irrational rule to "look for an alternative in extreme situations," for in extreme situations no one is thinking about obeying rules! Rather, it would be in the Christlike nature of this person to see nonviolent alternatives if they were present ... Perhaps they'd see that pleading with, startling, or distracting the attacker would be enough to save themselves and their family.

Moreover, the person's "day-by-day surrender to God would have cultivated a sensitivity to God's Spirit that would enable him to discern God's leading in the moment" (p. 165). However, Boyd concedes that there will be situations in which a follower of Jesus will find no way to save himself or his family except through harming the attacker. Because Jesus would in this situation choose nonviolence, so should a true disciple of Jesus.

B. Rebuttal: "Do Not Resist an Evildoer": Jesus *Really* Means Do not Return Violence with the Same Kind of Violence

Boyd recognizes that by "do not resist an evildoer" (Mat 5:39), Jesus means do not return violence with the same kind of violence (*i.e.*, do not resist "a forceful action with a similar forceful action" (p. 163)). Boyd concludes that a Christian is to search for a non-violent alternative when responding to an evildoer. If the only alternative that exists is a violent one, a Christian should choose not exercise it. This might result in allowing an attacker to harm oneself or one's family. Boyd concedes the difficulty in reconciling how this could be moral (p. 167), but concludes that his job is to obey Chris, not rationalize His commandments.

Perhaps the difficulty that Boyd cites is the voice of reason tempering his interpretation of the Scripture and showing that it would *not* be moral to allow such harm. Would God not prefer a man to use non-deadly force to strike an attacker unconscious over allowing that attacker to harm or even murder the man's wife and children? Would it not be more in line with the model of the good Samaritan to knock the man down, call the police and the ambulance and then minister to the criminal while he is in the custody of the police or hospital, than to allow the man to harm or murder him and his family and then continue onward in his wicked ways?

Sometimes, the most loving approach to an evildoer is physical violence, for sometimes, if temporarily handicapping the physical members carrying out sin, one can then minister to the more important, eternal part of the man—his soul. God can always raise up and heal a broken bone or wounded limb, but an unrepenting soul does not find salvation (2Co 7:10).

And so just as a Christian is to seek every alternative to impede evildoers without doing them physical harm, in situations where physical harm is necessary, it should be undertaken with the least amount of harm (*e.g.*, striking an attacker on the head with the butt of a gun rather than shooting him). And this is how police forces and militaries and other civil authorities in nations influenced by Christianity should act—always looking to do the most good to evildoers by using the least amount of violence. Judges and prosecutors should seek to imprison criminals in order to deter them from further crime. Police should never use force unless necessary and then only non-deadly force (*e.g.*, using a baton or, when using a gun, shooting at a limb and not towards vital organs). Militaries should seek to wage war in a way that results in the least amount of harm to persons and property—taking down an enemy’s radar stations, cratering runways and other targets that will incapacitate an enemy without causing loss of life or, where loss of life is necessary, protecting civilian populations and civilian objects such as hospitals, schools and places of religious worship. Yet in a nation that rejects Christian principles of love, none of these distinctions will have any place, nor will human life have any value as war is waged to produce the maximum amount of destruction to life and property.

IV. CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE ROMANS 13 “SWORD” OF GOVERNMENT IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE ROMANS 12 INJUNCTION TO LOVE YOUR ENEMY

A. Boyd’s Argument

As Boyd notes, “many have argued that they found grounds for a ‘just war’ exception to Jesus’ teaching in Romans 13,” which “grants that the authority of government ultimately comes from God and that God uses it to punish wrongdoers” (Rom 13:1-5) (p. 169). Yet Boyd argues that “while Paul encourages Christians to be *subject* to civil authority, he does not suggest that Christians should *participate* in the government’s sword-wielding activity.