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## A Scriptural and Scholarly Basis for Engaging the Political Arena

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## A Scriptural and Scholarly Basis for Engaging the Political Arena

### Cover Page Footnote

All inspiration, thoughts, and words for this paper, all diligence to research material, and to complete every key stroke and mouse click, and all commitment to excellence in the project, are utterly gifts from the Holy Spirit. This paper is dedicated to the glory of God in the name of Jesus Christ.

## Introduction

The notion that, biblical Christianity has no place in politics, is an aberration of the truth in the Bible, according to Richard Bauckham.<sup>1</sup> In sanctuaries, and in small group Bible studies, Christians lament the depravity of ungodly politicians and their politics. Most Christians lack a deeply rooted understanding of their faith to engage the political arena of culture.<sup>2</sup> Ted Rivera and Hugh Hewitt assert that, Christians are timid, and unprepared, to defend the faith against the opposition of non-Christian attitudes and beliefs outside church sanctuaries and small groups.<sup>3</sup>

Theologian Wayne Grudem asserts that, the Bible's teachings, when rightly understood, apply to all areas of life, including civil government, and the politics of governing.<sup>4</sup> Ted Rivera encourages Christians to engage politics, to courageously witness a biblical worldview from a cordially steadfast stance in any political arena.<sup>5</sup> Scripture and scholarly sources support this claim that, lifestyle witness, conversational and written witness that expresses biblical values and a biblical worldview, and the mere essence of a Christian's presence in politics, influence politicians. Christians must harness these three factors, and apply them by engaging in politics. By doing so, they will be a lamp that helps illuminate and radiate God's will in politics.

Richard Bauckham notes that the New Testament offers less Scripture basis for engaging politics than the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> Yet, he cites Matthew 10:18 as an expression of hope that Israel

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics, Second Edition: How to Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville, 2011), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant: A Small Group Study on Politics and Government for Christians* (Arlington: Townhall Press, 2009), xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ted Rivera, *Reforming Mercy Ministry: A Practical Guide to Loving Your Neighbor* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2014), 149-150; Hugh Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant: A Small Group Study on Politics and Government for Christians* (Arlington: Townhall Press, 2009), xi-xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 58.

<sup>5</sup> Rivera, *Reforming Mercy Ministry*, 145-146.

might impress political governing authorities by prophetic witness. Bauckham finds that, since Constantine, Christians have moved towards more direct political engagement, influence, and acceptance of their responsibility to engage politicians.<sup>7</sup>

A comprehensive study would include Old Testament historical basis for engaging the political arena of culture. Instead, this paper focuses on two passages from the New Testament that theologian Wayne Grudem cites as significant basis for the believer's relationship to, and role in government.<sup>8</sup> Relevant Old Testament Scripture is presented when it is cited by a research source, and it significantly contributes to the topic. Several contemporary scholar views that support Christians' political engagement are presented in context with some opposing views.

The church must reverse its separatist doctrine that it has no role in government. The false doctrine inhibits Christians from engaging, and being God's voice, in the political arena of culture.<sup>9</sup> Scripture challenges and motivates Christians to engage the arena.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Christian colleges and universities, and the church, must disciple Christians into political ministry like any other ministry. Wayne Grudem identifies Romans 13:1-7, and 1 Peter 2:13-15 as "*specific Bible passages*" that argue for "significant Christian influence" on government.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Gary Ball, "Course Project Report; Enter the Political Arena," Student Research Paper (Theology 415: Liberty University, March 12, 2021); Pastor Laybourne in Tom Minnery, *Why You Can't Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape Our Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Focus on the Family, 2002),13.

<sup>10</sup> Rivera, *Reforming Mercy Ministry*, 145-146.

<sup>11</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61. *Italics* and quoted terms are Wayne Grudem's emphasis.

### **Romans 13:1-7**<sup>12</sup>

James Dunn believes that Romans 13:1-7 establishes an important theological basis for the church-state relationship.<sup>13</sup> In the context of government and politicians, Paul defines governing politicians' relationship to, and authority from, God over His people (Rom 13:1-4). Verse five describes the consequence of not obeying governing authorities. Ambrosiaster writes that Paul clearly implies that politicians are obligated and responsible to God to provide for all aspects of the welfare of all God's people, for believers and non-believers alike.<sup>14</sup> Verses six and seven apply the Romans' responsibility to pay taxes to government as a specific example of honoring and respecting governing authorities.

#### Context

In Romans 2-8, Paul presents his discourse on the relationship of the law to sin. In Romans 9-12, he transitions to his unifying message of salvation for all in the Roman church, Jews and Gentiles, through belief in Christ. In Romans 13:1-7, nearing the end of his letter, Paul presents his theology on the relationship of the church to Roman governing authorities. Then, he transitions to themes related to Christ's exemplary teaching for us to love one another, and makes concluding remarks about visiting Rome. Grudem writes that, God's Word, through Paul in this passage, on the church's relationship to governing authorities, and how authorities are to govern, is instructive to Christians and the church today.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> All Scripture is cited from *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016) unless noted otherwise.

<sup>13</sup> James D. G. Dunn et al., *Romans 9-16, Volume 38B* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2014), 293-294, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=5397759>.

<sup>14</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary on the Pauline Epistles: Romans*, trans. Theodore S. de Bruyn, Stephen A. Cooper, and David G. Hunter (Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 234-236, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1wn0rtd.1>; Dunn et al., *Romans 9-16*, 293-294.

<sup>15</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61.

## Translation

In Romans 13:1b-2, Paul explains that, there is no authority except from God (ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ), and that, God has placed governing authorities over you (θεοῦ αἱ δὲ οὐσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν).<sup>16</sup> Frederick Danker and Walter Bauer think Paul may have had Wisdom 6:3, from the Septuagint, and similar Jewish Scriptures in mind.<sup>17</sup> Wisdom 6:3a states, “For power is given you of the Lord, and sovereignty from the Highest . . . .”<sup>18</sup> In verse two, Paul states, to resist or oppose (ἀντιτασσόμενος) God’s appointed governing authorities, is the same as opposing or resisting God (τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ ἀνθέστηκεν).<sup>19</sup> Louw and Nida translate the phrase as “... he opposed what God had ordered.”<sup>20</sup> The *English Standard Version* translation reads, “For there is no authority except from God, and those [governing authorities] that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed . . . .”<sup>21</sup> and therefore opposes God. In verse four, Paul further defines governing authorities as, servants of God (θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονος). Dunn notes Ambrosiaster’s claim that, by defining politicians’ authority as from God, and politicians as appointed servants of God, Paul

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<sup>16</sup> W. Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament (HLGE)* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2008), Accessed: Logos Bible Software; Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece (NA28)*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Accessed: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 13:1b in Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd Ed. (BDAG)* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), Accessed: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>18</sup> *The King James Version Apocrypha (KJVA)*, n.d., Accessed: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>19</sup> Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear*; Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*.

<sup>20</sup> J. Louw and E Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), vol. 1, 426, para. 33.326. The Greek reads: “τῆ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ ἀνθέστηκεν.”

<sup>21</sup> All English text Scripture translation is cited from *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016).

also clearly implies that politicians are obligated, and responsible to God to provide for all aspects of the welfare of all God's people, both believers and non-believers.<sup>22</sup>

On that basis, Paul defines the Roman Christians' civic responsibility to God regarding governing authorities. He states that, every person, must, subject or subordinate yourself to, those who govern you (Πᾶσα ψυχή ὑποτασσέσθω ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις) (Rom 13:1a).<sup>23</sup> In verse four, he repeats his rationale that, God has appointed those servants for your good (θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν). Paul explains that, subjection (ὑποτάσσεσθαι) to governing authorities not only avoids God's wrath (ὀργήν), but is also a matter of conscience (συνείδησιν). Then, Paul re-emphasizes that the [political governing] authorities are God's ministers (λειτουργοὶ γὰρ θεοῦ εἰσιν). Finally, he uses paying taxes as an example of how to respect and honor governing authorities (φόβον τὸν φόβον τῷ τὴν τιμὴν τὴν τιμὴν).<sup>24</sup>

### Theological Meaning

Paul defines politicians as authorities who are appointed by, and subject to, the rule of God to govern us (Rom 13:1). They are God's servants established by Him to provide for our welfare (Rom 13:4). Paul focuses on the Roman's responsibility to God to honor and submit to governing authorities (Rom 13:5-7). Ambrosiaster writes that, by defining politicians' authority as from God, Paul also clearly implies that politicians are obligated and responsible to God to provide for all aspects of the welfare of all God's people.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, D. A. Carson believes that, Paul gives us a Scriptural basis for engaging the political arena on the basis that God has

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<sup>22</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary*, 234-236; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 293-294.

<sup>23</sup> Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear*; Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ambrosiaster's Commentary*, 234-236; Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 293-294.

appointed politicians to act on His behalf to provide for our welfare. While God knows our needs (Mt 6:8), Carson emphasizes that, Christians must be a godly influence by our mere active presence in the arena to help shape political actions as God wills for us.<sup>26</sup>

Ed Dobson disagrees with Carson. Dobson, referring to this Romans 13 passage says, the priority for Christians is spreading the gospel, and living godly lives in culture. Although correct, he also erroneously implies that politics are not a segment of culture, and that, living a godly life in the political arena cannot be an effective Christian witness.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Cal Thomas states that, Christians should look to God and the Holy Spirit to do His will in culture, not to politics. Thus, Thomas, like Dobson, denies that the Holy Spirit can operate through the politically-engaged Christian.<sup>28</sup> Their bias as professional evangelists should not inhibit a believer's relational approach to witness.

Michael Schluter and John Ashcroft base Christian political engagement in Christ's relational life. The Bible is God's special revelation of the kind of relationship He desires with us. The Christian is responsible to witness and share God's revelation from a biblical worldview, even in the political sector of culture.<sup>29</sup> Carson asserts that, the doctrine that Christians do not need to engage in the political arenas overlooks this holistic relationship approach to Scripture.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Cambridge.: Eerdmans, 2013), cf. Ch. 5, <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1058481&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>27</sup> Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Why The Religious Right Can't Save America*, Second (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 112.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Schluter and John Ashcroft, eds., *Jubilee Manifesto: A Framework, Agenda & Strategy for Christian Social Reform* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 38-39 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, Ch. 5.



Because God has instructed His people to be subject to governing authorities, theologians find that Christians have an unequivocal imputed responsibility to hold those who govern them to God's standards of government. Wayne Grudem and Richard Neuhaus assert that, the Christian must engage the political arena of culture to fulfill this biblical responsibility.<sup>31</sup> Tom Minnery writes that, the First Amendment was not intended to separate church and state, but rather, to prevent one religion or faith from becoming confirmed as the national religion.<sup>32</sup>

Tom Minnery submits other Scriptures that, he claims, support Christians engaging the political arena of culture. For example, Jesus challenges believers to be a light in the world (Mt 5:14-15; Mk 4:21; Lk 8:16, 11:33; cf. Phil 2:15). Jesus's statement is inclusive; He does not exempt any areas of culture from the world. Jesus Himself did not avoid confrontation by the politically-oriented Sadducees (cf. Mt 3:7, 16:1, 22:23; Mk 12:18). The believer's world includes the political arenas of culture.<sup>33</sup> Minnery also cites our Second Great Commandment responsibility to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mk 12:31). To love our neighbor, we must engage in the political arenas of our culture to be God's voice, and presence, in those forums. We must steadfastly uphold biblical values by our lifestyle, and by sharing our biblical worldviews on the issues that will impact the welfare of our neighbor. We must engage, and not stay silent.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61; Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 63.

<sup>32</sup> Tom Minnery, *Why You Can't Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape Our Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Focus on the Family, 2002), 65-66.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 8, "What it Means to Love the World," 87-94. In the chapter, Minnery extensively cites New Testament Scriptures to support his argument that loving the world requires Christians to be God's voice in the politics that shape our culture.

Richard Neuhaus finds that, America's deep Christian roots strongly support Christian political engagement.<sup>35</sup> Christians are compelled to engage in politics to restore and maintain our founding godly democracy.<sup>36</sup> Political discussions in government forums are wrongly focused on right or wrong, and good or bad, rather than on sin. Our sinfulness as humanity transcends all partisan politics and must become the focus in government as in our Christian lives.<sup>37</sup> Neuhaus contends that churches that may challenge their believers to engage in the political arenas are right to do so. He believes that, engaging in politics also challenges our biblical worldviews, and thus refines our Christianity.<sup>38</sup> Neuhaus cites the examples of Christians John Calvin and Martin Luther who engaged the oppressive political governing authorities of their cultures.<sup>39</sup>

### **1 Peter 2:13-15**

#### Context

Peter writes primarily to Gentile believers in the dispersion in Asia Minor (1 Pt 2:1). In this passage, after giving them hope, he turns to address the church's relationship to governing authorities. His short letter continues with instructions on how to live a godly lifestyle. From a political perspective, Wayne Grudem believes that God intends for Christians to take the precepts in this passage to politicians to inform them on how God defines their roles and responsibilities. To fulfill this biblical responsibility, the Christian must engage the politician.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61.

### Translation

Louw and Nida write that, scholars are seriously divided on how to render this passage (1 Pt 2:13-15) due to the uncertainty of reference points in the Greek text.<sup>41</sup> Verse thirteen reads, Ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει διὰ τὸν κύριον εἴτε βασιλεῖ ὡς ὑπερέχοντι . *The Lexham* translation reads, Peter directs his audience to, “subject yourselves to every human governing system for the sake of the Lord because the king has supreme authority.”<sup>42</sup> Louw and Nida read the Greek object of the verse as “... to the king who is the one who controls.”<sup>43</sup> Verse thirteen has also been translated, “for the sake of the Lord, submit yourselves to every human authority,” and as, “be subject to every human institution on account of the Lord.”<sup>44</sup> In verse fourteen, Peter echoes Paul’s definition of governors as being sent by God, (ἡγεμόσιν ὡς δι’ αὐτοῦ πεμπομένοις εἰς) (cf. Rom 13:4). Peter explains in verse fifteen that, God’s will for us is to silence the foolish, ignorant people by our good behavior (φιμοῦν τὴν τῶν ἀφρόνων ἀνθρώπων ἀγνωσίαν).<sup>45</sup>

### Theological Meaning

Consistent with Paul’s instruction to the Romans (Rom 13:1), Peter also teaches us to submit to, meaning obey, the civil political authorities that govern us (1 Pt 2:13-15). Peter echoes Paul’s definition that politicians are God’s representatives, appointed to punish wrongful

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<sup>41</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, comment, “The meaning of 1 Pet 2:13 [*sic*] is by no means certain. Scholarly opinion is seriously divided in view of the obscurity of [the] reference. The verse may also imply “authorized institution” or “authority.”” Cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, 477, para. 37.43, note 3.

<sup>42</sup> Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear*; Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*.

<sup>43</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, 474, para. 37.17.

<sup>44</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, 474, para. 37.1; 477, para. 37.43, note 3; and 514-515, para. 42.39. Louw and Nida comment, “The meaning of 1 Pet 2:13 [*sic*] is by no means certain. Scholarly opinion is seriously divided in view of the obscurity of [the] reference. The verse may also imply “authorized institution” or “authority.”” Cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, 477, para. 37.43, note 3.

<sup>45</sup> Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear*; Nestle, *Nestle-Aland*.

behavior and to reward positive behaviors (cf. Dn 2:21). In his *1 Peter* commentary, Wayne Grudem cites 1 Timothy 2:1-4 that, Christians are to pray and intercede for politicians, as an argument for the Christians' responsibility to influence government by engaging politicians that are set up by God to act according to God's will for our welfare.<sup>46</sup>

As D. A. Carson writes, to silence politicians foolish behavior (1 Pt 2:15), Christians must be a visible presence, and godly behavior model, in government.<sup>47</sup> Our politicians today, indeed politicians in all recorded history, have exhibited deplorable, sinful, and sexually-inappropriate behavior.<sup>48</sup> Christian colleges, universities, churches, and Christian individuals have apparently failed to unanimously object based upon biblical values. If Christians had bravely mustered unanimous nationwide public objection to any ungodly behaviors by politicians, their voices would not likely have been ignored by today's liberal media.<sup>49</sup>

Evangelist John MacArthur disagrees. He reads 1 Peter 2:13 literally. He writes that, a Christian lifestyle, lived outside the political arena, is a sufficient godly response to ungodly

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<sup>46</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 126-129, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=2030122>.

<sup>47</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, Ch. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Four examples of ungodly politician behavior include President Kennedy's relationship with Marilyn Monroe, President Clinton's relationship to Monica Lewinsky, President Trump's relationship to Stormy Daniels, and images of President Biden inappropriately touching women. Accounts of these behaviors have been widely published in news media and books. Research presumes these accounts are general knowledge. The facts are difficult to discern, and reporting may not be accurate. Therefore, no specific source is cited for them. The biblical world was devoid of media. Yet, accounts of ungodly behaviors are recorded in Scripture. As in the biblical world, the public today also presumes some truth to such public reporting. It is research opinion that, any public servant must avoid any behavior that might imply, suggest, or reveal an underlying ungodly influence or mindset. To behave in a way that might be associated with, or constitute, ungodly behavior, regardless of intent, demonstrates a gross and unacceptable lack of ethics, maturity, moral values, and judgement that irreparably undermines public trust. In such cases, the governed believer must confront politicians from a biblical worldview to silence and correct them.

<sup>49</sup> This author presumes this opinion is reasonable considering that, the generally acknowledged secular media bias which seems to oppose Christian values would likely have publicized such a Christian response.

politics.<sup>50</sup> MacArthur admits that, there are “... some notable examples ...” in the Old and New Testaments that illustrate direct believer engagement in politics. But, he contends that, faith in God is more powerful than political engagement.<sup>51</sup> While MacArthur is faithfully correct, his stance denies the Holy Spirit access to politicians through believer presence. The Holy Spirit operates through the engaged believer’s lifestyle witness, conversational and written biblical worldview witness, and the mere essence of a Christian’s presence in politics. The disengaged believer denies the Holy Spirit physical access to this political impact. MacArthur’s view also conflicts with God’s Word that, believers plant, and God produces the fruit (1 Cor 3:5-10), and with Jesus’s teaching, applied from Matthew 13:1-23, that, a biblical worldview, sown in the political arenas of culture can, with the Holy Spirit’s help, land on fertile ground.

For example, Tom Minnery credits a Vermont pastor’s political engagement for the defeat of seventeen liberal politicians who voted an ungodly proposition into law. The defeats gave godly conservatives control in Vermont’s government for the first time in fourteen years.<sup>52</sup> If today’s Christian individuals, small groups, churches, and Christian organizations, would courageously engage their political arenas, we would have many such contemporary examples to echo the politically engaging influences of Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and Ester to cite just a few.<sup>53</sup>

Peter explains in 1 Peter 2:15 that, God’s will for us is to silence the foolish by our godly behavior. The Christian responds by godly Supreme Court justice nominees Brett Kavanaugh

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<sup>50</sup> John F. MacArthur, *Why Government Can’t Save You: An Alternative To Political Activism*, Unabridged Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 87.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Minnery, *Why You Can’t Stay Silent*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 60-61. Exegesis of these Old Testament examples is outside the scope of this thesis.

and Amy Coney Barrett during their confirmation hearings exemplify lifestyle witness.<sup>54</sup> When Christians are slandered, falsely accused, or otherwise mistreated by politicians, God's will demands exemplary Christian lifestyles, and replies, that exhibit agape love for our accusers. Following 1 Peter 2:15, their responses silenced the foolish, malicious, political accusations against their godly character and values as indicated by their confirmations.<sup>55</sup>

Oliver O'Donovan shares his conviction of the Christian's responsibility to engage the political-cultural arena. We live in a politically formed and governed culture. O'Donovan aligns with previous scholars; our concept of government must originate in Scripture as it did for America's founders.<sup>56</sup> Bauckham cites biblical and political ethics as support for Christian engagement.<sup>57</sup> Richard Hays finds Scripture basis to engage in Matthew 4:12-17; God announces He will politically liberate the Jews in Galilee. Hays also cites Jesus's sovereignty over all nations (Mt 28:16-20) implying a scriptural basis for His presence in politics.<sup>58</sup> Richard Niebuhr envisions *Christ and Culture* as a both-and, rather than as an either-or, relationship. He synthesizes early church fathers' writings with Scripture. He believes the church must nurture a harmonious presence in government as in all other arenas of secular culture.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> No source citation is provided because the author presumes that the reader is familiar with the highly publicized Senate hearings which the author believes were characterized by inflammatory and antagonistic liberal attacks on the godly moral characters of the nominees.

<sup>55</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 130; Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations; Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2014), 12-16.

<sup>57</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics*, 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 176.

<sup>59</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 120-141. Niebuhr cites support from Matthew 5:17-19, 22:21, 23:2; and Romans 12. The cited Romans 12 verse numbers are illegible on the printed page 123.

Hugh Hewitt has written a format for a small group study on politics and government for Christians. The study confronts group members to face and discuss twenty-six of the most highly controversial topics of today, one week at a time. Hewitt affirms that, it is crucial for the engaging believer to be able to witness their belief confidently and steadfastly in the gospel. The engaged believer must possess an unwavering conviction of faith, and a practiced testimony of precisely how the gospel informs every behavior, choice, and decision in their lives. Hewitt cites Matthew 22:21, and 37-39, as scriptural support for Christians to engage their political arenas.<sup>60</sup>

Christians that complete a Hewitt small group study will be firmly rooted in their faith. By firmly rooted, Hewitt refers to the Christian that can formally<sup>61</sup> defend his faith in the gospel when confronted by such non-believers as agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, and other beliefs that do not profess the gospel. Although focused on Scripture, a firmly rooted Christian, also reads about other beliefs, faiths, and religions, and embraces the challenge to confront, examine, and mature his faith in his own intellect.<sup>62</sup>

Nick Spencer and Jonathan Chaplain write that, this caliber Christian brings a distinctive understanding of Scripture, and its application, into the political arena of culture. In political debates, the firmly rooted Christian welcomes being alongside advocates of other worldviews. The firmly rooted Christian confidently and bravely shares his biblical worldview from a well-

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<sup>60</sup> Hugh Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant: A Small Group Study on Politics and Government for Christians* (Arlington: Townhall Press, 2009) vii-viii, 21-23, and back of the book.

<sup>61</sup> “Formally” (also “formal”) in this paper refers to a theological apologetic defense of the faith. Cf: Josh Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant*, 21-23.

informed, steadfast, formal<sup>63</sup> stance that has been “smelted” in the fire of a Hewitt small group, and further refined by his own independent study of alternative and opposing worldviews.<sup>64</sup>

Today’s Christians are mostly sanctuary and home group Christians. They are sorely timid and grossly unprepared to defend the faith against the gale force opposition of non-Christian attitudes and beliefs outside the church sanctuary or small home group communities. Most have only a superficial understanding of their faith. For this reason, these “church community believers” lament over our democracy and politics within their clusters and fail to act by engaging politicians. Our Christian founded democracy is adrift, unfocused, and unanchored in the truth and transcendent values that only the Bible provides.<sup>65</sup>

Witness is a lifestyle that includes the political arena of culture. James Kennedy believes that both the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20) and Deuteronomy (Dt 6:7) call us to witness in all walks of our everyday lives and situations.<sup>66</sup> Kennedy’s *Evangelism Explosion* would be a fine reference to support discipling Christians to engage in politics.<sup>67</sup>

Ned Ryun in his 2019 book *Restoring Our Republic* faithfully cites Romans 1:18-20 and Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 among lessons from Jerusalem, Hebrews, Greeks, and the Anglican Church which shaped the formation of our fundamentally Christian democracy. His repeated

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<sup>63</sup> “Formal” refers to a Christian apologetic response. Cf. Note 61.

<sup>64</sup> Nick Spencer and Jonathan Chaplain, eds., *God and Government* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009), 205-211. Cf. Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant*, vii-viii, 21-23.

<sup>65</sup> For detailed treatment of our drifting democracy see Ned Ryun, *Restoring Our Republic; The Making of the Republic and How We Reclaim It Before It’s Too Late* (Unspecified Place: Independently Published, 2019), esp. 246-268. Cf. Charles W. Colson, *God & Government* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), esp. 259.

<sup>66</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion : Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1996), 19.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Hewitt, *The Good and Faithful Servant*; also Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*. The full contents of both books validate preparing Christians to engage in politics through participation in small group dialog that confronts believers to find Christian apologetics responses to issues from Scripture, their own exegesis, and intellect.



references to Scripture, and godly scholars' writings, underpin his thesis that Christians must engage the political arenas to influence restoring our founders' biblical values in our democracy.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Phyllis Schlafly concludes her book, *A Choice Not an Echo*, with a plea to her readers to defend the "Creator-endowed rights" of every American to life and liberty that are the core of our Declaration of Independence. Our Creator and Father God calls us to engage and be His presence in our political arenas.<sup>69</sup>

### Summary

The traditional, separatist church-state doctrine inhibits Christians from engaging and being God's voice and presence in the political arenas of culture.<sup>70</sup> Rather than evangelist preaching at the lecterns of governments, this thesis promotes lifestyle witness, conversational and written biblical worldview witness, and a mere Christian essence presence witness.

Paul and Peter give us their original theologies on the church-state relationship in which contemporary theologians and scholars find clear support for a both-and homogeneous presence of believers in politics. Paul's theology (Romans 13:1-7) and Peter's stance (1 Peter 2:13-15) give the contemporary believer unequivocal basis for engaging in the political arena as a cultural forum to witness Christ in their lives and influence political policies.

Believer presence in the political arena is also a reasonable and appropriate extension of the believers' presence in the non-political arenas of culture. The significance of believer lifestyle witness in other sectors of culture is generally acknowledged and encouraged by the ecumenical church. Tom Minnery's example of a Vermont pastor's initiative that radically

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<sup>68</sup> Ryun, *Restoring Our Republic*, 9-32, 246-268.

<sup>69</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo*, Fiftieth Anniversary (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2014), 267.

<sup>70</sup> Ball, "Course Project Report; Pastor Laybourne in Minnery, *Why You Can't Stay Silent*, 13.

shifted state government from a liberal to a conservative majority proves that Christians can significantly influence change in government. The confirmation hearings responses by godly Supreme Court justice nominees Kavanaugh and Barrett exemplify lifestyle witness in politics.

Although Ed Dobson, John MacArthur, and Cal Thomas favor evangelism over political witness, theologian Wayne Grudem offers a formal defense for, and encourages, Christian engagement in the political arenas of culture.<sup>71</sup> D.A. Carson contends that engaging in the political arenas demonstrates a holistic approach to the teaching of Scripture.<sup>72</sup> Richard Bauckham encourages Christians toward more direct political engagement.<sup>73</sup> Richard Neuhaus believes Christians are compelled by the Christianity of our American founders to engage their political arenas.<sup>74</sup> Oliver O'Donovan believes that political theology dictates Christian responsibility to engage in the arena.<sup>75</sup> Richard Hays reads a Scripture basis in Matthew for engaging politics.<sup>76</sup> Ned Ryun and Phyllis Schlafly find compelling basis for Christians to engage politics in the foundation history of our democracy.<sup>77</sup>

### Conclusion

This thesis presents substantial unequivocal basis in the New Testament for Christians to engage the political arena of culture. A considerable population of contemporary theologians and

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<sup>71</sup> Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, 60-61. Grudem's book is in the style of a Christian apologetic. Cf. Note 93.

<sup>72</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, Ch. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics*, 3-4.

<sup>74</sup> Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 21.

<sup>75</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 12-16.

<sup>76</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 176.

<sup>77</sup> Ryun, *Restoring Our Republic*, 9-32, 246-268; Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo*, 267.

Christian scholars echo their support for engaging the political arena from Scripture, and from other theological rationale. These arguments are not presented as conclusive. Further research should address issues that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Romans 13:1-7, and 1 Peter 2:13-15 were selected for exegesis for their most significant New Testament contributions to the research thesis. The research neither claims, implies, nor suggests that, they are the only New Testament basis for Christians engaging in the political segment of culture. Further research might evaluate other possible New Testament examples.

The substantial Old Testament examples of godly personalities engaging the political people of their cultures were delimited from the research. The reader is presumed to be knowledgeable of such examples as Moses engaging Pharaoh, Joseph serving Pharaoh, Esther engaging King Ahasuerus, and Daniel engaging Nebuchadnezzar. This thesis must be considered inconclusive and incomplete pending further research on Old Testament examples.

Ed Dobson, John MacArthur, and Cal Thomas are just three authors who oppose Christians engaging in politics. A comprehensive study would examine a much larger, and more representative sample of opposing views. Finally, this research has mentioned political theology, and biblical-political ethics. Further research should address the impact of, and the relationship of, those disciplines to Christians engaging in the political arenas of culture. This concludes this Holy Spirit led research and submits the work to the glory of God in the name of Jesus Christ.

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