

Biblical Duty and Government

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Introduction

Today many Americans are tired of government and politics and want nothing to do with it. From a Christian perspective, there are many discussions on the idea of submitting to government and what that looks like, especially in the sense of how involved one should get in government as a Christian. Some Christians believe or at least imply that it does not matter whether one is involved in government and that one should mainly focus on submitting to government rather than advocating for change. However, is that the correct Biblical view? Should Christians be more involved, or should they really not be involved?¹

Research Question

The main research question that will be used for the paper is this: Is there a Biblical duty to be involved in government? With the many questions circulating among Christians, this paper seeks to clarify what the Biblical duty, if any, is for Christians dealing with government. In addition, the answer to this question has effects for how a Christian is to act, which would affect the future of life in America.²

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this paper is that the research will demonstrate that there is indeed a Biblical duty to be involved in government.³

Methods and Perspective

The method used is qualitative research with a focus on historical documents, including the Bible, primary sources, and scholarly sources. As implied earlier, the approach to this research will be taken from a Biblical worldview.⁴

In the paper, the definition of “duty” and the different meanings from the Biblical, ancient, modern, conservative, and progressive viewpoints will be discussed. Because of this, the political philosophers of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero for their ideas of duty as well as historical and modern pastors’ and theologians’ ideas, the American Founding Father’s views, and the ideas of Locke and Blackstone.⁵

Literature Review

The Biblical definition by most of the theologians ancient and modern researched is that “duty” does not entail being involved in government in the sense of becoming a government official. For example, John MacArthur of Grace Community Church in California says that Christian duty is focused on being a Godly Christian person, which entails submitting to the government, except in cases where government is forcing one to go against Scripture.⁶ Looking at Plato’s *Republic*, he argued that the legislator has a duty to work for the good of the whole society and not for himself.⁷ Plato’s characters in the book said at one point that they had a duty to choose good authorities.^{8,9}

¹ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John MacArthur, “Christian Duty in a Pagan Culture,” Grace to You, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A122/christian-duty-in-a-pagan-culture>.

⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, (Warsaw: Ktocyta.pl, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6124448>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

In Cicero's *On Duties*, the references currently focus on government's duty, except for a part about citizens cooperating with each other and looking for honor and tranquility in the commonwealth.¹⁰ Additionally, John Locke advocates that one has a moral duty to obey laws. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, he advocates that the citizens have a duty to throw off tyrannical governments.^{11,12}

Furthermore, the Founding Fathers of America, such as John Quincy Adams, advocated for citizen duty to be involved in government, especially when he said, "Duty is ours, results are God's."¹³ Even the Declaration of Independence implies that there is citizen duty to be involved in government when it talks about "it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and provide New Guards for their future security."^{14,15}

On the contrary, there seems to be no evidence in the Bible that citizens are obligated to participate in government (Romans 13:1-7, New International Version, 1984). There seems to be a Biblical argument between one "should" do something versus one "must" do something. However, a Biblical duty to be involved in government might depend on the form of government; therefore, if the type of government requires citizens' participation, then Christians would have a duty to participate because it would be in "submission" to the government.¹⁶

Contrasting the Biblical view with another idea of "duty," the Progressive view advocates for citizen involvement in the sense of letting government know what one desires or wants in regards to anything in life.^{17,18} Therefore, citizens' involvement is not about serving others, but allowing government to take care of its citizens.^{19,20} This implies that Progressives urge citizens

¹⁰ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Benjamin Patrick Newton, ed. Thomas L. Pangle and Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY, or London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4648709&ppg=1>.

¹¹ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), The Project Gutenberg eBook, released January 1, 2005, updated December 21, 2021, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7370/pg7370-images.html>.

¹² Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

¹³ John Quincy Adams quoted in "'Duty is Ours: Results are God's'" by Debbie Wuthnow, iVoterGuide, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://ivoterguide.com/news/Post-Election-2022>.

¹⁴ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

¹⁵ The Declaration of Independence, in *The Declaration of Independence* (MI: Hillsdale College, 2022).

¹⁶ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

¹⁷ William Schambra and Thomas West, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics," The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2007, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-american-politics>.

¹⁸ "5. The Philosophy of Progressive Values," Public Leadership Institute, "Messaging Guide," accessed December 7, 2023, <https://publicleadershipinstitute.org/messaging-guide/5-the-philosophy-of-progressive-values/>.

¹⁹ "5. The Philosophy of Progressive Values," Public Leadership Institute, "Messaging Guide," accessed December 7, 2023, <https://publicleadershipinstitute.org/messaging-guide/5-the-philosophy-of-progressive-values/>.

²⁰ William Schambra and Thomas West, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics," The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2007, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-american-politics>.

to be involved in order for the government to do what the citizen wants.^{21,22} This puts all the responsibility on government for a good life.^{23,24,25}

The initial idea of the conservative viewpoint on duty before more research is conducted is that they will be close to the American founders' views, where citizens have a duty to be involved in government.²⁶

Biblical Background

To begin the discussion of the biblical perspective on duty it is important to look at what the Bible literally says before looking at theologians and pastors. This will help set the foundation of the argument. Since the Bible is God's Word according to true Christians, the Bible has the ultimate authority for how Christians live their lives. Therefore, the answers to what the biblical duty to government is would be found in the Bible.

Determining what Biblical duty is starts in the book of Genesis with Adam and Eve. God gave them one rule to follow, which established His authority and their obligation to obey (Genesis 2). There were no human governments yet on earth. In fact, the Bible does not appear to mention humans being the inventors of government, but rather God. As it can be seen in Genesis 9:8-17; 12; 15; 25:23; and 28, God established covenants with Noah and Abraham, which established God's authority to govern their lives and required them to follow all of His ways. Furthermore, those verses point out that God was the One who created the nation of Israel and Edom (Genesis 9:8-17; 12; 15; 25:23; and 28). He also directed the line of descendants by guiding marriages between people (Genesis 9:8-17; 12; 15; 25:23; and 28). Therefore, the main point seems to be that God was and is the government. Noah, Abraham, Israel, and Edom did not choose to be selected by God, rather God exercised His authority as God and Creator to glorify Himself by calling them to a certain position in life (Genesis 9:8-17; 12; 15; 25:23; and 28).

Moreover, God initiated rules to govern people. He established the moral standard for all humans, which basically sets the role or duty humans must follow. Humans have always been subject to an authority. If it is not from another human being, then it is from God. In addition, just like there are scientific rules and laws that cannot be broken, there is a standard for people to live by, which if broken, brings serious consequences. Furthermore, everyone has those laws written on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). Consequently, everyone has a basic knowledge of their duty to follow those laws.

However, the difference between nature and humans is that humans have intelligence (Genesis 1:27), and they can choose to not follow those laws. Nature, if it could go against the laws and rules of science, would be destroyed or not survive; therefore, those laws hold nature from being destroyed. Similarly, humans have consequences if they go against the laws

²¹ William Schambra and Thomas West, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics," The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2007, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-american-politics>.

²² "5. The Philosophy of Progressive Values," Public Leadership Institute, "Messaging Guide," accessed December 7, 2023, <https://publicleadershipinstitute.org/messaging-guide/5-the-philosophy-of-progressive-values/>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

²⁵ William Schambra and Thomas West, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics," The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2007, <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-american-politics>.

²⁶ Katherine Musgrove (speech on research paper in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, November 29, 2023).

established for them, which like nature, is ultimately destruction.²⁷ It is then in their best interest to follow the laws that were established for them.²⁸ However, because those laws were imbedded into humans, it is mainly their role or duty to follow them.²⁹

Returning to the previous conversation, God created the universe, which included the human race; therefore, He established the laws of nature and the laws that are for humans (Genesis 1). He has the ultimate authority. In addition, if humans break the laws given for them, then God can allow or implement the consequences (Romans 6:23). In Genesis 19, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness demonstrating that there is a moral standard and duty to follow them. Again, in Genesis 28, God is the complete sovereign over the nation of Israel. The people just had to trust, obey, and follow (Exodus). Their duty was to represent the Lord, His ways, and His Word as perfectly as they could because God chose them for that purpose (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The duty for humans was obedience from the beginning.

Now that the most basic duty of Christians has been established, the origin of human government and authority needs to be discussed before looking into the combination of human duty to government. Again, human government and authority was established and given by God (Genesis). Joseph was put in charge by God (Genesis 41). He did not choose to be taken to Egypt to eventually become second in command (Genesis 41:41-46). God had to put him there (Genesis). Moreover, in Exodus 3, God called Moses to lead Israel. Again, God was the One who put someone in a leadership role over a people. However, God was still the One who was passing the laws for the Israelites (Exodus 20:1-21). For example, God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-21) and the Levitical rules to follow in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Later in Israel's history, leadership declined, but God continued to choose leaders to keep order and justice (Judges). However, in Judges 21:25, it says, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." Even though God had already given them the laws and rules they should follow, the Israelites rebelled and there were essentially no laws or human authority to implement them (Judges). Nevertheless, in 1 Samuel 3, Samuel is chosen by God to lead the Israelites as priest. In Samuel 7-9, Samuel was Israel's judge and appointed his sons as the next in line as judges over Israel. However, the elders of Israel decided to ask for a king to rule them instead (1 Samuel 8:1-5). Despite Samuel's protests that they were denying the authority of God as their King, God chose a human king for Israel (1 Samuel 8-10). This is essentially the first instance where God allows a human to take upon themselves more authority in directing the lives of people. Nonetheless, it was still of God's choosing (1 Samuel 8-10).

Furthermore, the government officials God puts in place do not have unlimited authority to implement whatever their heart desires. As Proverbs 21:1 states, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." Therefore, the decisions of government officials are only allowed, if God allows them (Proverbs 21:1). Additionally, in John 19:10-11, it says, "'Do you refuse to speak to me?' Pilate said. 'Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.'" This clearly explains that even though one is put into a position of power, they only receive their amount of power from God (John 19:10-11). Proverbs 8:15-16 also confirms

²⁷ Zane Richer (lecture in GOVT 200 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Fall 2021).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

this idea very explicitly saying, “By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth.” Even though the context of this passage is a personification of wisdom talking, at another point in Proverbs, it explains that wisdom comes from God (Proverbs 2:6). God is clearly the One with ultimate authority.

With this in mind, government authorities also have Biblical duties (Romans 13:1-7). Obviously, because they are humans, they still have to abide by the moral standard discussed earlier (Exodus 20:1-21). However, there are passages of scripture that specifically talk about government authorities. The book of Proverbs has many clear examples about how kings should conduct themselves as well as what conduct they should avoid. The principles seen in these passages can also be applied to anyone in a government position. In Proverbs 11:14; 12:24; 14:34; 15:22; 16:32-33; 17:15, 26; 20:8, 26, 28; 21:15; 25:28; 28:3, 5, 12, 15-16, 28; 29:2, 4, 12, 14; and 31:3-5, 8-9, the verses include principles such as staying away from alcoholic beverages, standing up for the oppressed, administering justice, seeking righteousness, having self-control, getting rid of evil, not punishing the innocent, being patient, relying on God for outcomes, seeking counsel, and being diligent. These give a glimpse of the duty of government officials.

Moreover, in Romans 13, government authorities have a duty to do good, punish evil, and reward good (Romans 13:3-4). This passage suggests that rulers are held to a higher standard in the sense that they have to punish evil; therefore, if they have to punish evil, then they cannot be performing evil (Romans 13:3-4). Furthermore, they are “God’s servant” (Romans 13:4). If they are “God’s servant,” then they have to obey whatever God requires of them (Romans 13:4). Therefore, rulers cannot do whatever they want or wield their power for selfish desires. Their duty is to serve God and others (Romans 13:3-4).

Theologians and Pastors on Duty and Government

Now that government officials’ duties as well as what the biblical background for duty has been discussed, theologians and pastors will be examined to see their opinion on biblical duty. Because they have researched the Bible and likely its original languages and context, it will be helpful to look at their investigation even though the Bible is God’s word. This paper will look at biblical scholars from a broad range of history to give a wide overview of biblical thought.

Augustine who lived in the 300s and 400s A.D. is one of the most famous biblical scholars who greatly affected Christianity.³⁰ In a journal article by Paul Cornish, he compares Augustine and Cicero, especially in their works *City of God* and *De Republica*.³¹ Apparently, Augustine had some similar views to Cicero in regards to political involvement, but also changed some of Cicero’s views.³² Cornish writes, “Though Augustine shows little concern about the nature of a model statesman, he makes it clear that he believed that the prudent man was driven by natural necessity to engage in public service, even though it would cause him to suffer.”³³ This demonstrates that Augustine does think that it is wise to be involved in government;

³⁰ Christian Tornau, “Saint Augustine,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, published September 25, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/#Life>.

³¹ Paul Cornish, “Augustine’s Contribution to the Republican Tradition,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 19, no. 2 (2010): 133-148, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885109338002> or Grand Valley State University, ScholarWorks@GVSU, https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=pls_articles.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

however, it is not conclusive that he thinks it is one's duty.³⁴ In addition, it is interesting that Augustine created a "rule" that had guidelines to live in a Christian manner for a community to follow, which somewhat shows that he thought Christians should live in a morally good way.³⁵

On another note, Martin Luther, who lived around the 1500s and essentially started the Protestant Reformation, was another highly influential theologian.³⁶ His view of Christian duty to government was mainly of submission to a rightful authority even if it is despotic.³⁷ He also held the belief that Christians could resist authority when the authority goes against God; however, he was against insurrection.³⁸ Additionally, he advocated that all areas of life should be pursuing the glorification of God.³⁹ Luther seems to argue that the Christian's duty is to obey God and through that, obey the government.^{40,41}

John Calvin was another theologian during the 1500s.⁴² His views of Christian duty to government mainly revolve around the idea of submission to governmental authorities.⁴³ This is similar to Luther mentioned above.⁴⁴ Calvin advocates for complete obedience to legitimate civil authorities, even if they are tyrannical because God is the One who puts people into place and takes them out of office.⁴⁵

Ulrich Zwingli who lived during the Protestant Reformation, also advocated for obedience to government authorities.⁴⁶ He saw all institutions (government, church, etc.) having the same goal to glorify God.⁴⁷ Therefore, the institutions had separate roles, but also worked together towards the main goal of honoring God.⁴⁸ He also argued that tyrants could be resisted

³⁴ Paul Cornish, "Augustine's Contribution to the Republican Tradition," *European Journal of Political Theory* 19, no. 2 (2010): 133-148, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885109338002> or Grand Valley State University, ScholarWorks@GVSU, https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=pls_articles.

³⁵ Robert Russell, "Chapters of the Rule," Villanova University: Mission & Ministry, Brothers of the Order of Hermits of Saint Augustine, Inc., 1976, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/mission/campusministry/RegularSpiritualPractices/resources/spirituality/about/rule/chapters.html>.

³⁶ David Morris, "Martin Luther as Priest, Heretic and Outlaw: An overview of the early Reformation after Martin Luther's posting of his Ninety-five Theses using items from the Library's collections," "Introduction," Library of Congress, "Research Guides," updated December 6, 2023, <https://guides.loc.gov/martin-luther-priest-heretic-outlaw/>.

³⁷ J. Michael Raley, "Martin Luther on the Legitimacy of Resisting the Emperor," *Journal of Law and Religion* 37, no. 1 (2022): 96-132, doi:10.1017/jlr.2021.83.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ A. Brian Flamme, "The Table of Duties," Lutheran Reformation.org, posted February 23, 2017, <https://lutheranreformation.org/theology/the-table-of-duties/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ J. Michael Raley, "Martin Luther on the Legitimacy of Resisting the Emperor," *Journal of Law and Religion* 37, no. 1 (2022): 96-132, doi:10.1017/jlr.2021.83.

⁴² R. Ward Holder, "John Calvin (1509-1564)," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/john-calvin/>.

⁴³ John T. McNeill, "JOHN CALVIN ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 42, no. 2 (1964): 71-91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325924>.

⁴⁴ J. Michael Raley, "Martin Luther on the Legitimacy of Resisting the Emperor," *Journal of Law and Religion* 37, no. 1 (2022): 96-132, doi:10.1017/jlr.2021.83.

⁴⁵ John T. McNeill, "JOHN CALVIN ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT," *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 42, no. 2 (1964): 71-91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325924>.

⁴⁶ W.P. Stephens, "12 The State," "Zwingli: An introduction to His Thought," Oxford Academic, (1994): 123-137, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198263630.003.0013>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

and taken out of office if done in a nonviolent way, especially by vote or consent by the people.⁴⁹ This is different view from the previous reformers.

Moving towards the nineteenth century, Charles Spurgeon seemed to be more involved in the political conversation.⁵⁰ He writes in his biblical commentary on Romans 13 that Christians have four duties towards government, which are: paying direct taxes, paying indirect taxes, fearing the authorities in the sense of not desiring to disobey and get punishment, and honoring the authorities.⁵¹ Moreover, he advocates that being involved politically is not a sin, and if one “dissents” from an authority from the perspective of continuing to follow the Lord, then the person is completely in the right.⁵² However, he does not appear to argue that a believer has an obligation to participate in government in the sense of becoming a government official.^{53,54}

Now looking at modern theologians and pastors, John MacArthur, who is a well-known pastor in California, he says, “Submit to the government and pay your taxes. That’s our duty. Beyond that, you ought to be busy in the kingdom.”⁵⁵ He argues that Christians should not make it a priority to be involved in government or advocate for change in government.⁵⁶ Rather, Christians should focus on God’s kingdom and obeying God. Jesus did not overturn the Roman government; therefore, MacArthur argues that Christians should not make that their goal.⁵⁷ He says, “There is no biblical mandate for us to spend time, money, and energy in politicking or engaging in the matters of civil government.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, he preaches that a Christian’s duty involves “Submission and obedience,” “Readiness for Good Works,” “Respectful in Speech,” “Peaceful and Gentle,” and “Consideration for Others.”⁵⁹ Therefore, it is clear that MacArthur’s view on biblical duty does not seem to require political involvement.^{60,61}

⁴⁹ W.P. Stephens, “12 The State,” “Zwingli: An introduction to His Thought,” Oxford Academic, (1994): 123-137, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198263630.003.0013>.

⁵⁰ Phillip Ort, “Who is Charles Haddon Spurgeon?,” *The Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching at Midwestern Seminary* (blog entry), June 6, 2018, <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/who-is-charles-haddon-spurgeon/>.

⁵¹ C.H. Spurgeon, “C.H. Spurgeon on Romans 13 – Commentary,” Romans 13 Revival (JL Fuller), accessed December 6, 2023, <https://r13r.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Romans-13-commentary-spurgeon.pdf>.

⁵² C.H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and Trowel: 1873* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1873), 45-48, quoted in “Spurgeon on Politics and Defending Religious Liberty,” *Prince On Preaching* (blog), February 26, 2016, <https://www.davidprince.com/2016/02/26/spurgeon-on-politics-and-defending-religious-liberty/>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ C.H. Spurgeon, “C.H. Spurgeon on Romans 13 – Commentary,” Romans 13 Revival (JL Fuller), accessed December 6, 2023, <https://r13r.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Romans-13-commentary-spurgeon.pdf>.

⁵⁵ John MacArthur, “The Christian’s Responsibility to Government, Part 1,” Grace To You, sermon transcript, January 6, 1985, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-97/the-christians-responsibility-to-government-part-1>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ John MacArthur, “The Christian’s Responsibility to Government, Part 1,” Grace To You, sermon transcript, January 6, 1985, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-97/the-christians-responsibility-to-government-part-1>.

⁵⁹ John MacArthur, “Christian Duty in a Pagan Culture,” Grace To You, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A122/christian-duty-in-a-pagan-culture>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John MacArthur, “The Christian’s Responsibility to Government, Part 1,” Grace To You, sermon transcript, January 6, 1985, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/45-97/the-christians-responsibility-to-government-part-1>.

Theologian Carl Henry, on the other hand, contends that Christians should be involved in government as part of our duty to the kingdom of God.⁶² He asserts that there should be a balance of evangelism and social involvement because the connotation of “kingdom” means all aspects of life.⁶³ There should be a resurrection not just of the individual, but other areas of life as well.⁶⁴ Carl Henry definitely advocates for political involvement.^{65,66}

Moreover, Tom Pennington, who is a pastor in Texas, reasons that “The focus of your response to government needs to be Romans 13 and those places where you learn that you are to submit, to pray for your leaders, to pay your taxes, to respect and honor those in positions of authority.”⁶⁷ Pastor Pennington basically argues that there is a more balanced view of resisting government and submitting; however, he does not seem to say that there is an obligation to be involved.^{68,69}

Lastly, theologian Charles Colson claims that Christian duty is to live out and share the gospel.^{70,71} He does not seem to advocate that Christians must be involved in government.^{72,73} However, his main point is basically that the gospel is the one that changes society.^{74,75}

Ancient Political Philosophers on Duty and Government

When looking at ancient political philosophers, Marcus Tullius Cicero, who wrote many philosophical works, such as *On Duties*, did not seem to hold the view that citizens have to be involved in government.⁷⁶ However, he strongly advocated for citizen involvement in government as a means to a better life and society.⁷⁷ Cicero says, “Still, the life more profitable to the human race, and more fitting to renown and greatness, is that of those who devote

⁶² Russell Moore, “THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOCIAL ETHICS OF CARL F. H. HENRY: A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EVANGELICAL REAPPRAISAL,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 2 (2012): 377-97, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/55/55-2/JETS%2055-2_377-397_Moore.pdf.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Andrew T. Walker, “Carl Henry on Social Justice and Christian Responsibility to the Social Order,” Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement, August 29, 2018, <https://www.henryinstitute.org/countermoves/2021/2/11/carl-henry-on-social-justice-and-christian-responsibility-to-the-social-order>.

⁶⁷ Tom Pennington, “A Gospel Response to Government – Part 1,” Countryside Bible Church, sermon transcript, May 31, 2020, <https://countrysidebible.org/sermons/20200531a-108024>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tom Pennington, “A Gospel Response to Government – Part 6,” Countryside Bible Church, sermon transcript, July 12, 2020, <https://countrysidebible.org/sermons/20200712a-107995>.

⁷⁰ Owen Strachan, “How the Gospel Creates Ethics,” The Gospel Coalition, July 28, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-the-gospel-creates-ethics-chuck-colson/?amp>.

⁷¹ Brett McCracken, “Biola, Colson ‘Do the Right Thing,’” Biola Magazine, Biola University, “Blogs & Podcasts,” April 7, 2011, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/biola-magazine/2011/biola-colson-do-the-right-thing>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Owen Strachan, “How the Gospel Creates Ethics,” The Gospel Coalition, July 28, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-the-gospel-creates-ethics-chuck-colson/?amp>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Brett McCracken, “Biola, Colson ‘Do the Right Thing,’” Biola Magazine, Biola University, “Blogs & Podcasts,” April 7, 2011, <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/biola-magazine/2011/biola-colson-do-the-right-thing>.

⁷⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Benjamin Patrick Newton, ed. Thomas L. Pangle and Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY, or London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4648709&ppg=1>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

themselves to public affairs and the performance of great deeds.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he does caveat his encouragement towards going into public office by giving a cautionary statement:

He who undertakes such administration, however, must take heed not only to consider how honorable the work is, but also whether he has the ability to perform it. In this very performance, he must give careful thought neither to despair rashly out of cowardice, nor to exhibit excessive confidence out of longing. In short, before undertaking any endeavor, careful preparation must be made.⁷⁹

This demonstrates the idea that not everyone is even fit for office, or they at least need extra work to be ready for office.⁸⁰

Plato also wrote many political works, which also advocate for political involvement while not necessarily requiring it.⁸¹ He appeared in his *Republic* to not be in favor of a pure democracy as well as a tyrannical form of government.⁸² He was basically in favor of anything that would give true freedom without turning around and being a different form of slavery.⁸³ Additionally, Plato was in favor of some involvement in politics as long as it was from the educated.^{84,85,86} Both Plato and Cicero seem to recommend that it is necessary for a free and prosperous society for citizens to take part in political matters, but they did not force people to become involved.

Modern Political Philosophers on Duty and Government

John Locke is considered a primary influencer on political philosophy for the modern limited and republican form of government.⁸⁷ One of his most famous works is *The Second Treatise of Government*, which discusses duty towards government, consent, natural law, and limited government.⁸⁸ According to Locke, people have a moral obligation to obey moral laws, but they have to give their consent to human governmental authority.⁸⁹ In addition, he seems to argue that everyone that has consented to live in a community has a duty to protect the property.⁹⁰ Therefore, one has a duty to be involved in government because the people are the basis of the government since one would consent to having its authority over them to create a

⁷⁸ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Benjamin Patrick Newton, ed. Thomas L. Pangle and Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY, or London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/reader.action?docID=4648709&ppg=1>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Plato, *The Republic*, (Warsaw: Ktocyta.pl, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6124448>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, (Warsaw: Ktocyta.pl, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6124448>.

⁸⁵ Aydin Topaloglu, “The Politics of Plato and His Objection to Democracy,” *Annals from Mayis University*, 21, no. 1 (2014): 73-83, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/235268902.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Mary Prentice (lectures in GOVT 490 001: Political Theory at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Fall 2023).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), The Project Gutenberg eBook, released January 1, 2005, updated December 21, 2021, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7370/pg7370-images.html>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

society.⁹¹ For the protection of property in light of the moral and natural laws, political involvement is necessary and unavoidable to maintain a free and prosperous community.⁹²

Furthermore, William Blackstone, who was a famous English jurist, wrote *The Commentaries on the Laws of England*.⁹³ Blackstone appears to present the idea that people have the authority over the earth and have to agree with other humans to order themselves for the sake of preserving life and property.⁹⁴ He also advocates that people have the ability to disobey and overthrow the government if it becomes corrupt and tyrannical.⁹⁵ Both Locke and Blackstone seem to urge humans that it is their duty as a part of life to be involved politically in order to care for the earth and each other.^{96,97}

The American Founding Fathers' Perspective

Continuing the dialogue by regarding some American Founding Fathers' ideas on duty towards government, George Washington is a prime example. In his Farewell Address, Washington clearly states that it is required for Americans to take part in the government because that is how the U.S. system was set up and because that is one of the ways to preserve freedom.⁹⁸ Washington declared:

The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.⁹⁹

Furthermore, even though it was in context of urging the strengthening of the militia, George Washington again affirms that people have to be involved in protecting a free nation if they like or prefer “a free government.”¹⁰⁰ One has to give “...his personal services to the defense of it...”¹⁰¹ George Washington definitely seemed to hold to the view that there was not a

⁹¹ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), The Project Gutenberg eBook, released January 1, 2005, updated December 21, 2021, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7370/pg7370-images.html>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the laws of England*, vol. 2 (Dublin: printed for John Exshaw, Boulter Grierson, Henry Saunders, Samuel Watson, Elizabeth Lynch, and James Williams, 1769), Gale Primary Sources: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, accessed February 20, 2024, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0124197956/ECCO?u=vic_liberty&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=fca9fcd7&pg=1.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), The Project Gutenberg eBook, released January 1, 2005, updated December 21, 2021, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7370/pg7370-images.html>.

⁹⁸ George Washington, “Washington’s Farewell Address 1796,” The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Lillian Goldman Law Library: in memory of Sol Goldman, Yale Law School, accessed February 20, 2024, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ George Washington, “Washington’s Sentiments on a Peace Establishment, 1 May 1783,” Washington Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed February 20, 2024, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202#document_page.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

choice of whether or not one should be involved in government, rather, everyone has to participate in order to live a better life.¹⁰²

As mentioned earlier, John Quincy Adams said, “‘Duty is ours; results are God’s,’” which essentially highlights the belief that citizens do have basically a moral obligation to take part in politics.¹⁰³ Moreover, Thomas Jefferson mentioned in a letter that “...every man is under the natural duty of contributing to the necessities of the society.”¹⁰⁴ He also appears to agree that people have to be active in government.¹⁰⁵

The U.S. Constitution states in its Preamble, “We the People of the United States...”¹⁰⁶ This automatically displays the consensual view among the Founding Fathers of America that the United States government is based on the citizens.¹⁰⁷ Even the Declaration of Independence demonstrates the idea that citizens should at least have a voice in their government.¹⁰⁸ While there is definitely encouragement toward and the sense of obligation to politics, there is not necessarily anyone stopping one from sitting on the sidelines. However, there is a legitimate warning that freedom cannot be maintained without an active citizenry in the affairs of state.^{109,110}

The American Form of Government and Duty of Citizens

There are multiple forms of government that have been implemented over the centuries. These different forms affect how people relate to their governments, and the type of government also determines how much citizens have to obey, or rather how much freedom citizens have. As implied above, America is a constitutional republic, which means it has representatives of the people who make decisions while conforming to a constitution that is the “Law of the Land.”¹¹¹ Besides a constitutional republic, some more kinds of political structures are monarchies, communist governments, and despotic governments.

While Christians are supposed to obey governments, but do not seem to be required to be actively involved in the governmental process, it appears to depend on the type of political structure for how much involvement is demanded (Romans 13:1-7). For example, in the U.S. system of a constitutional republic, citizens are the underlying basis of government, and they

¹⁰² George Washington, “Washington’s Sentiments on a Peace Establishment, 1 May 1783,” Washington Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed February 20, 2024, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202#document_page.

¹⁰³ John Quincy Adams quoted in “‘Duty is Ours: Results are God’s’” by Debbie Wuthnow, iVoterGuide, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://ivoterguide.com/news/Post-Election-2022>.

¹⁰⁴ “Thomas Jefferson to Francis W. Gilmer, 7 June 1816,” Jefferson Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-10-02-0081>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Const. pmbl., in *The Constitution of the United States with Index, and The Declaration of Independence* (U.S.: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2022).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The Declaration of Independence, in *The Declaration of Independence* (MI: Hillsdale College, 2022).

¹⁰⁹ George Washington, “Washington’s Sentiments on a Peace Establishment, 1 May 1783,” Washington Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed February 20, 2024, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202#document_page.

¹¹⁰ George Washington, “Washington’s Farewell Address 1796,” The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Lillian Goldman Law Library: in memory of Sol Goldman, Yale Law School, accessed February 20, 2024, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.

¹¹¹ U.S. Const. art. VI, in *The Constitution of the United States with Index, and The Declaration of Independence* (U.S.: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2022).

have the right to vote.¹¹² However, it is the responsibility of each citizen to understand that they are the basis and have the ability to vote. None of these actions are punishable by the state if not carried out. The only consequence would be a potential forfeit of freedom.¹¹³

On the other hand, in a despotic form of government with a tyrant as the leader of a nation, citizens usually do not have the privilege of being involved in the process of government. Nonetheless, citizens typically have to obey many more rules, and there can be deadly consequences if any rule is not followed precisely. Citizens can also be required to serve in the military or as servants to the leader.¹¹⁴ Therefore, a despotic government might require more of its citizens than a constitutional republic. Even though this is the case, Christians are involved by obeying government (Romans 13:1-7). However, it hinges on what type of government a Christian is living under, as well as what the Lord's will is, to determine how much choice a Christian has in participating in politics or not.

Conclusion

From the Bible to ancient, modern, and historical philosophers and figures, there has been much debate on the relationship between government and the people. When specifically discussing from the biblical perspective, Christians are to obey God first and then obey different authorities in their life, such as governmental authorities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14). However, the ordering of society can take many forms; therefore, it varies on how much a government requires of its citizens. Christians take part in governmental affairs by obeying government as well as choosing to get involved depending on the freedom of choice available to them (Romans 13:1-7). In addition, if God selects someone to go into politics, it will happen, and that person has the obligation to obey God by going into that field (1 Samuel 9-10). Believers also have to consider living their entire lives in submission to God and His Word, which consequently, includes how to approach government (1 Corinthians 10:31).¹¹⁵ Christians should seek to glorify God and spread the Gospel in every area of life.¹¹⁶ While government might not be an exciting topic to some, it is an aspect of life that should not be ignored, especially by Christians. Christians do not have a duty to be involved in government, but they do have a duty to obey government and God, which could entail participating in political matters (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:31).¹¹⁷

¹¹² U.S. Constitution, in *The Constitution of the United States with Index, and The Declaration of Independence* (U.S.: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 2022).

¹¹³ George Washington, "Washington's Sentiments on a Peace Establishment, 1 May 1783," Washington Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, accessed February 20, 2024, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202#document_page.

¹¹⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, (Warsaw: Ktocyta.pl, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 20, 2024, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6124448>.

¹¹⁵ Zane Richer (lectures in GOVT 200 003 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2024).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

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