The Two Kingdoms, Christian Vocation, The Constitution, and a Virus

Rev. Craig S. Stanford

"So Pilate said to Him, 'You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'" (John 19:10-11)

Christians and the Christian church in the United States of America find themselves in a rather unprecedented set of circumstances. I am not referring here to the fact that there is a virus caused epidemic on the loose. The church has lived, survived, and even provided much needed aid in many such epidemics and pandemics throughout history. Epidemics and pandemics are far from rare. They are part of the curse on sin and common.[1]

This, though is the first time that the visible church has been ordered by governments in the United States of America on a large scale to cease all "non-essential services." During WWI and WWII some church services were monitored by the government to determine which side German congregations were on, but they were not shut down. A wide spread shut down of church services is something we have never seen America. That in itself ought to tell us something about the danger we now find ourselves in. Not long ago it would have likely been understood as an infringement on the Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution and considered the third rail in American politics.

Yet, it is almost shocking just how comfortable a large portion of the American population is with the complete shut down of church services and the prohibition against the free exercise of religion and the freedom to assemble peaceably. Perhaps this lack of concern (even among Lutherans) is just another sign of how spiritually ignorant and impoverished Christians have become. They simply do not understand what the church is and how essential participation in a faithful church is to spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical well-being, let alone eternal life.

The more faithful and insightful Christian desires a return to the church and normal services. They want to be where Christ Jesus promises to be and to receive from the mouth and hand of a called and ordained servant what Christ gives to repentant sinners.

There is also confusion over the legality of

[1]. Prehistoric epidemic: Circa 3000 B.C., Plague of Justinian: A.D. 541-542, The Black Death: 1346-1353, Black Plague & Great Plague 16th & 17th Centuries Europe, Russian Plague 1770 A.D. Flu pandemic: 1889-1890, American polio epidemic: 1916, Spanish Flu: 1918-1920, Asian Flu: 1957-1958, AIDS pandemic and epidemic: 1981-present day, SARS 2003, H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic: 2009-2010, Ebola epidemic: 2014-2016, & Seasonal influenza, 2018, just to name a few.

the orders and how a Christian should respond to the same. Can a governor just ban church services across the board? How long can such a thing last? Why aren't there all kinds of lawsuits challenging such orders?

What follows is an attempt to teach Christians how we ought to think and act as Christians in our current rather complex set of circumstances. In order to help make theological, constitutional, legal, and political sense of it all, I will treat this matter in three parts. They are as follows:

I. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms.
II. Constitutional Rights & Court Rulings–Precedence.
III. Christian Vocation, the Free Exercise of Religion, and the Body Politic

I. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

The Bible teaches that God works through two kingdoms/realms. To understand the relationship, we need to keep in mind at least two sets of Bible passages. One set contains verses like Romans 13:1-5, which summarizes the purpose of government and the Christian's relationship to it. ***"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. . . Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing...."***

"It [the civil government] belongs to God's created order, that is to the order which God gave His fallen creation. [Its creation belongs under the first article of the creeds. "God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth."] It stands independent from the religious confession of men who exercise it...This acknowledgment of the governing authority as a universal created order reflects exactly the doctrine of the New Testament. The church at the time of the Apostles had acknowledged the Roman Government as the governing authority established by God, in so far as it fulfilled the functions of a governing authority, in so far as it was the shield of justice and peace. The church rendered it obedience so far as it could do so without sin and as long as the pagan authorities remained within their proper legal sphere.

It is through the kingdom of the "left hand of God" (the state) that God provides

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." 1 Peter 2:13-15

protection, safety, and an economy[2] that enables people to eat and live in relative safety. It came into being as God's way to hold at bay the evil that is in the world. The principle task of the government is to punish evil doers and protect the innocent.[3] As such we are to be law abiding citizens. Titus 3:1 ***"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed."***

> "The Word of God does not exempt any person from being subject to an earthly government. It speaks rather plainly on this matter and demands of all men that they should take their citizenship seriously. The believers, in particular, are to measure up to the highest standards of loyalty to their country. The Apostle tells the Christians that, because they are citizens of heaven, they should be model citizens of the nation to which they belong. (1 Peter 2: 13-15).
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> God regards all men as citizens of a country. The Old Testament speaks of men and nations as under civil government. Jesus was enrolled at His birth as a subject of the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus. St. Paul made good use of his Roman citizenship. The Savior acknowledged the authority of the Roman government. The Apostles repeatedly reminded the Christians that they were to be subject to the civil authorities.[4]

We are Lutherans. We are Christians who adhere to teachings of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions (because they are a correct summary of the Bible's teachings). We acknowledge God ordained authorities. As such, we are by and large a law abiding lot, paying tribute to whom tribute is due and honor to whom honor is due. We are not hostile to government authority. If anything we have historically been a bit too passive in regard to governments that promote evil and punish the good (as we are seeing in our own country and time).

Jesus acknowledged these two kingdoms in Luke 20:24-25 when Jesus replied to trick question about supporting a pagan government through taxes. Jesus replied, ***"'Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?' They said,***

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[2]. "Economy" means more than just the exchange of money, a "this for that." It is a word denoting the whole process, the careful management of resources and the ability of people to earn and secure what they need for daily life/daily bread.

[3].The Social Doctrine of the Augsburg Confession and Its Significance for he Present, Hermann Sasse, "The Lonely Way" 1927-1939, Vol. 1" C.P.H.

[4]. *The Christian A Citizen of Two Kingdoms*, by J. M. Weidenschilling, M.A., S.T.D. From Christian Citizenship, Originally published in 1953 by C.P.H.

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

We also learn from the Bible that when the kingdom of the left, the state oversteps its God given limitations and tries to stop the work of the kingdom of the right, the church we are to follow the example set forth by Peter in Acts 5:27b-29 ***"They stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"***

What's the bottom line? The government is one of God's good gifts, established and ordered for our good. Secular governments and the church have their respective realms and duties. The church preaches God's Law and Gospel, speaks for and absolves sinners in the stead and by the command of Jesus Christ, and administers the sacraments according to His instruction. All this it does for the spiritual and eternal welfare of those who God calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies in His holy Christian Church.

The church is God's instrument of grace, forgiveness, faith, and eternal life. The state is God's instrument to provide order and relative safety in a fallen world so the people (and the church) can go about their daily business.

Thus as Christians, we are to be subject to our leaders because God has placed them over us for our good, while at the same time serve God and our neighbor in both body and soul through the work of the church AND in our respective vocations as Christian neighbors to our neighbors and fellow citizens.

II. Constitutional Rights & Court Rulings– Precedence

The Bible and the Lutheran Confessions are clear about what Christians owe our country and its duly constituted authorities. Unfortunately, the legal situation is not as clear and simple as the Bible's teaching on this subject. Yes, I admit a plain reading of the First Amendment seems clear enough;

> **Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**

We have the clear words of the First Amendment. We also have the Illinois governor's (and other government officials throughout the U.S.) guidelines and executive orders that mandate "any for-profit, non-profit, or educational entities, regardless of the nature of the service, the

function it performs, or its corporate or entity structure"[5] to cease providing their respective services unless they are exempt from the order as a declared "essential business" (which only a very few states have done). States are shutting down churches and other "houses of faith." Seems simple enough.

Not really. It's pretty complicated. Let's start with a common sense axiom that was codified into law, namely a person cannot shout falsely "fire" in a crowded theater. The statement is a paraphrase of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.'s opinion the Supreme Court case *Schenck v. United States*, 1919, which held that the defendant's speech in opposition to the draft during World War I was not protected under the First Amendment because the Court had determined *at the time* to be a clear and present danger to the public good. In 1969 the Court replaced the "clear and present danger" standard of the Holmes court with the "imminent lawless action" test.[6] Beneath these two particular rulings is the principle that no right is absolute.

No right is total and absolute. All rights are tempered by other rights and concerns. In our system it falls to the courts to provide clarification, limitations, and the application of our God given and constitutionally protected rights and laws. Enter the courts and legal precedence.

The Supreme Court's first decision concerning the "Free Exercise Clause" of the constitution arose as a result of the federal government's campaign in the late 19th century against the practice of polygamy among members of the Mormon Church. In *Reynolds v. United States* (1879), the court upheld the criminal prosecution of a prominent Mormon, George Reynolds, for practicing bigamy in Utah. The court concluded that while the Free Exercise Clause guarantees freedom of religious belief, it does not protect religiously motivated actions – such as polygamy – if those actions conflict with the law. In other words, the government cannot mandate or control religious beliefs, but it can regulate conduct even if motivated by religious belief. In its first "free exercise of religion" case, the Supreme Court established a "belief-action distinction," which allowed government regulation over the later, while protecting freedom for the former. Sounds like a good idea doesn't it? Well, not so fast.

The following paragraph is a summary the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings over the past 150 years on the "Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The Free Exercise Clause...

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[5]. Executive Order In Response to Covid-19 (Covid-19, Order NO. 8, p. 5 sec. 11 JB Pritzker, Governor of Illinois)

[6]. In *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444 (1969).

withdraws from legislative power, state and federal, the exertion of any restraint on the free exercise of religion. Its purpose is to secure religious liberty in the individual by prohibiting any invasions there by civil authority." *(Braunfeld v. Brown*, 366 U.S. 599, 607 (1961)). It bars "governmental regulation of religious beliefs as such,"(*Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S 398, 402 (1963)) prohibiting misuse of secular governmental programs "to impede the observance of one or all religions or... to discriminate invidiously between religions... even though the burden may be characterized as being only indirect." (*Braunfeld v. Brown*, 366 U.S. 599, 607 (1961)) Freedom of conscience is the basis of the Free Exercise Clause, and government may not penalize or discriminate against an individual or a group of individuals because of their religious views nor may it compel persons to affirm any particular beliefs. (*Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S 398, 402 (1963); *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 U.S. 488 (1961))

Interpretation is complicated, however, by the fact that exercise of religion usually entails ritual or other practices that constitute "conduct" rather than pure "belief." When it comes to protecting conduct as free exercise, the Court has been inconsistent. (*E.g., Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1879); *Jacobson v. Massachusetts,* 197 U.S. 11 (1905)). It has long been held that the Free Exercise Clause does not necessarily prevent the government from requiring the doing of some act or forbidding the doing of some act merely because religious beliefs underlie the conduct in question. **What has changed over the years is the Court's willingness to hold that some religiously motivated conduct is protected from generally applicable prohibitions.**"[7] [emphasis added]

In other words, as the Court waded through one case after another over time, it built on and clarified the precedents that came before. As case law evolved both religious belief and its practice (conduct) came to be protected. While religious practice became freer, the state's ability to regulate and interfere with religious conduct became more difficult. In order to regulate religious practice the state had to meet a very high standard (the "compelling interest with the least restrictive, or least burdensome regulation").

The Free Exercise Clause "embraces two concepts—freedom to believe and freedom to act. The first is absolute, but in the nature of things, the second cannot be." (*Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 304,1940). As cases came before the Court the standard between belief and conduct based on one's religious belief began to shift. "The Court began to balance the secular interest asserted by the government against the claim of religious liberty asserted by the person affected; only if the governmental interest was 'compelling' and if no alternative forms of regulation would serve that interest was the claimant required to yield. (*Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398,

[7]. Free Exercise of Religion, Justia Us Law, https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-01/03-free-exercise-of-religion

403, 406–09, 1963.) Thus, although freedom to engage in religious practices was not absolute, it was entitled to considerable protection."[8]

As strange as it sounds, this shift to the legal standard of "compelling interest" came in large measure from cases centered on unemployment claims. Over time the Court took up cases wherein an individual(s) had been terminated or quit a job for religious reasons. The most notable of those cases (until the case of *Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872, 1990) was the landmark case of *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 3 1963. "The Court examined whether the state of South Carolina violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment in denying unemployment benefits to a person for turning down a job, because it required him or her to work on the Sabbath. The Court ruled 7-2 that the South Carolina statute did impede a person's right to freely exercise religion, in violation of the Free Exercise Clause."[9]

As case after case came before the Supreme Court, precedent was establishing a standard which favored a strong application of the Free Exercise Clause, while balancing the Establish Clause; "congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Belief and its practice/conduct were protected under the Constitution, unless (in regard to the later) the state could meet the "compelling interest with the least burdensome regulation" standard. Then came the 1990 ruling in *Division v. Smith*.

> "Before Smith, religious Americans could invoke the First Amendment to seek relief from laws or regulations that substantially burdened the **practice of their faith** [emphasis added]. Government could not deny religious exemptions without demonstrating a compelling state interest – and showing that it has pursued that interest in the manner least restrictive, or least burdensome, to religion.
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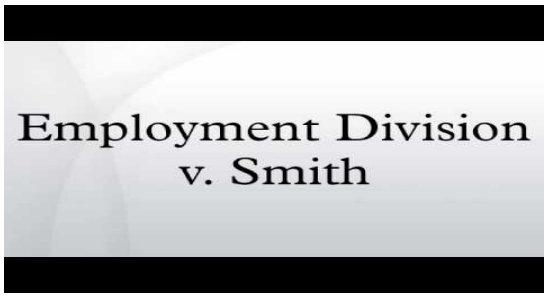
> Under this "compelling state interest" test – fully articulated in the 1963 Supreme Court decision *Sherbert v. Verner* – religious individuals enjoyed a high level of protection for the freedom to practice their faith openly and freely without governmental interference."



[That was then. This is now.]

In the Smith decision, Justice Scalia, joined by four other justices, radically re-interpreted the Free Exercise clause by ruling that burdens on religious freedom no longer had to be justified by a compelling state interest. Although the government cannot pass laws targeting religious practice, it can

[8]. Free Exercise of Religion, Justia Us Law,

[9]. Religious Liberty: Landmark Supreme Court Cases, Bill of Rights Institute, https://billofrightsinstitute.org/cases

pass laws that burden religious exercise if the law is "neutral" and "generally applicable."[10]

The question at issue in the *Oregon Unemployment Division v. Smith* case was the state's ban on the use of the peyote (a cactus with hallucinogenic properties) without having a religious exemption in the law that would allow the Native American Church to ingest small amounts of peyote in worship ceremonies. Two Native Americans were fired from their jobs[11] and subsequently denied unemployment benefits because their use of peyote in their religious practice. Sounds reasonable right? After all, how does a case about unemployment benefits being denied to two men who were using a hallucinogenic change how freedom of religion would be understood in America? Precedent and the principle.

At the time most legal experts expected the outcome to turn on whether or not Oregon could show a compelling reason for prohibiting the use of peyote without religious exceptions. But the majority sided with Justice Scalia, who authored the opinion, which sharply restricted the use of the long-standing free-exercise compelling interest test.

The government no longer has to show a compelling state interest in denying religious exemptions so long as the state applies the law in question generally to everyone. Religious practices and organization cannot be singled out for inequitable treatment, but it is also not entitled to exemptions from the same.

> Scalia's opinion explicitly hearkened back to the reasoning in Reynolds, the first polygamy case. The Free Exercise Clause protects religious beliefs, he wrote, but it does not insulate religiously motivated actions from laws, unless the laws single out religion for disfavored treatment.
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> Such nondiscriminatory, general laws should be evaluated, the court ruled, under the "rational basis" standard. Under this standard, which is much more deferential to the government than the compelling interest test, a law is constitutional as long as there is a rational or legitimate reason for it; it does not need to further an important or compelling government interest."[12]

Justice Scalia authored the opinion that sharply restricted the use of the long-standing free-exercise compelling interest test.

As precedent stands now, as along as governments can demonstrate a rational basis that is nondiscriminatory and equitable, governments need not rely on a compelling state interest. *Division v. Smith*

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[10]. Justice Scalia's Disastrous Decision On Religious Freedom, Charles C. Haynes, Religious Freedom Center, 2/18/2016, www.religiousfreedomcenter.org.

[11]. As drug counselors.

[12]. *A Delicate Balance, The Free Exercise Clause and the Supreme Court*. The Smith Decision, Pew Research Center, 10/2007, www.pewforum.org

did open up a new legal path for religious organizations to be treated equitably in regard to government programs and benefits. *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer,* 582 U.S. (2017) is but one example.[13] As the 1969 Court replaced the "clear and present danger" standard of the Holmes court with the "imminent lawless action" test, so the 1990 court under Scalia replaced the "compelling interest" test with "rational basis" standard and equitable treatment test.

In our current situation wherein we are under state of emergency declarations for reasons of public health, the state could likely make a rather strong "compelling interest" argument, but under the former complete standard the state would have to show that the order to close churches was the least burdensome solution to the problem and that might have been the challenging part.[14]

Division v. Smith has proven devastating to the Free Exercise Clause. Some have argued (an argument with which I agree) that the Scalia opinion has hollowed out the right to the free exercise of religion in America. (We have the right to gather for worship when the state says we do). Organizations from the ACLU on the left to conservative Christian legal organizations on the right have sharply criticized the decision. As one legal scholar wrote. This is "a messy, divisive arrangement that puts matters of conscience up for a vote."

The current confusion and contention surrounding the meaning of "free exercise of religion" is the fallout from Justice Scalia's decision in Smith. Scalia himself in his opinion opined that perhaps the best place to seek First Amendment religious protections and accommodations is through the political process. This is little comfort at a time when traditional (biblical) religious practices and moral convictions are under attack by much of the ruling class.

III. The Doctrine of Vocation and the Free Exercise of Religion (The Body Politic)

In an essay titled "The Christian A Citizen of Two Kingdoms," written by J. M. Weidenschilling, M.A., S.T.D. originally published in 1953 by C.P.H. the author wrote, "Lutherans have not always been as great a blessing to their country as they should have been. They may, in general, be decent and law-abiding citizens, but they are often not active enough in making their influence felt for the betterment of politics and civil life." Sadly, the observation is as true today of us as it was 70 years ago.

There is nothing in our formal doctrine that would contribute to our collective political and civil passivism. To the contrary, the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions urge all faithful Christians to be good citizens, to care for one's own family and to care for and protect our neighbors in all their bodily needs.

The Augsburg Confession
Article XVI: Of Civil Affairs

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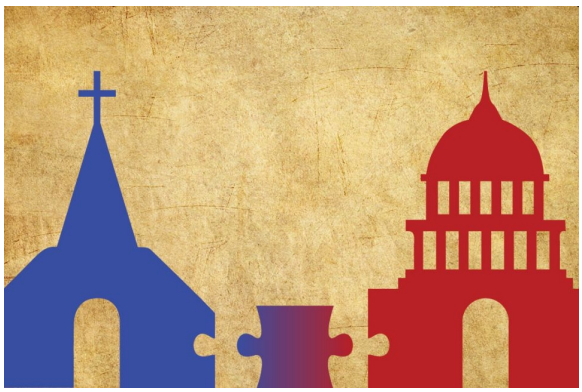
[13]. In the Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer case the Court held that the State of Missouri's decision to exclude an otherwise qualified church from a government grant program on the basis of the church's religious status violated the Free Exercise Clause.

[14]. E.g., a church could likely argue that it could hold church services and observe the best practices of social distancing, sanitizing, and mask guidelines, thus engaging the least burdensome solution.

Of Civil Affairs they teach tha lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates, to marry a wife, to be given in marriage.

The kingdom of Christ is spiritual, to wit, beginning in the heart the knowledge of God, the fear of God and faith, eternal righteousness, and eternal life. Meanwhile it permits us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it permits us to use medicine, or the art of building, or food, drink, air. Neither does the Gospel bring new laws concerning the civil state, but commands that we obey present laws, whether they have been framed by heathen or by others, and that in this obedience we should exercise love. (The Apology, Art. XVI, Trigl. 331.)



Here the Lutheran Confessions teach that Christians are citizens of two kingdoms. One is the kingdom of this world. We are born into it. We sustain our bodies, do our work, and serve our neighbors in it. The other is the Christian Church, in which we have become members by our second birth, holy baptism and true Christian faith. In it we do our spiritual work. We receive God's gifts, pray, and serve and support the Church. This is the purpose for which we have been placed on earth.

As we learned in the Catechisms' treatment of the Ten Commandments, there is a negative and a positive side to each command. In the Second Table of the Law, (4-10) the Lord God not only teaches that we are to do no harm to our neighbors (not lying, not stealing, not killing, etc.), we are also bound by love and the Commandments to do good and protect our neighbor, his/her property, reputation, and life. This is not only done directly, but indirectly as well by doing what is within our authority/power to do. This includes the use of the state.

Dr. Theodore Graebner was a Lutheran theologian in the first half of the 20th century. In 1937 he wrote an essay titled, "Christian Citizenship." In it he wrote the following;

> Whatever the profession may be, whatever the field in which educated men and women affect the lives of their fellow-citizens, our Church has an interest in it. And for this reason our Church has an interest in the field of local and national politics. . . If the Church is not interested in politics, the Christian should be, and this from a twofold point of view.

> In the first place, the disciple of Christ is to be a light and a salt, Matt. 5,13-14. Such statements should be as comprehensive to us as where we find them in the record of Christ's utterances. The record of the Christian centuries shows all too plainly the decay of human values, of the very foundations of society, where the Christian world-view has been isolated from the life of the people....
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> But the Christian individual, the church- member as a citizen, has a duty to make his influence as a life-giving light, as a preservative, as a moral antiseptic, to be felt throughout the political body. It is true that, when we speak of the government to which we owe allegiance and obedience in agreement with the New Testament Scriptures (Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2,13; Titus 3,1), we have in mind the magistrates who sit in the courts of law and the executives who administer the law in community, State, and nation. Yet we cannot forget that the power which these officers wield is delegated to them under a constitution by the citizens. We elect our rulers and we elect our lawgivers, and we consider this privilege of the American citizen one of the greatest temporal gifts. This gives peculiar meaning to the texts which describe rulers as they ought to be.

Professor Herman Sasse was one of 20th century's best Lutheran theologians. He grew up and came into his own as Nazis Germany began to take shape. He lived during the rise of fascism, communism, and Hitler's Nazism. He escaped Germany and spent the balance of his life in Australia. In 1930 he wrote in "The Lonely Way" the following.[15]

> It is precisely for the sake of love that the Christian must also carry out these duties within the bounds of his office, "and in such offices demonstrate Christian love and justice, good works, each according to his calling" [AC XVI 5, German text]. In so far as he performs his duty within the orders of creation he serves the kingdom of Christ.
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> For the secular and the spiritual are indeed to be clearly distinguished and must not be mixed one with the other, but as good gifts of God, as true orders given by God, they belong together, just as creation and redemption belong together as works of God. The orders of nature and law, through which God maintains his fallen world, are the presupposition for redemption and the order of redemption for the church and the kingdom of God."

In our current situation, we are not being prohibited from preaching the Law and Gospel. Pastors and churches across the country have taken to the internet as they attempt to carry on the work of Christ among His people. An infringement on our First Amendment Free Exercise Clause?

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[15]. "The Social Doctrine of the Augsburg Confession and Its Significance for the Present, copyright C.P.H. 2001

Perhaps, a violation of the Free Exercise Clause as the founders intended. In that sense, it is unconstitutional, but in our present circumstance its legal. Unconstitutional, but legal summarizes the problem. The same problem we face in *Roe v. Wade.*

Dr. Luther, giving the cup of life during the Black Plague.

In our own state of Illinois, the state statute governing the declaration of emergency and the governor's authority during it says:

> In the event of a disaster, as defined in Section 4, the Governor may, by proclamation declare that a disaster exists. Upon such proclamation, the Governor shall have and may exercise **for a period not to exceed 30 days**[16] the following emergency powers; provided, however, that the lapse of the emergency powers shall not, as regards any act or acts occurring or committed within the 30-day period, deprive any person, firm, corporation, political subdivision, or body politic of any right or rights to compensation or reimbursement which he, she, it, or they may have under the provisions of this Act.

As citizens of the United States and of the commonwealth of Illinois, we ought not sit idly by and allow the church, our families, and our fellow citizens to be denied their right to worship, their right to their property, and their right to live as free people. Legal challenges have begun. Protests are beginning to pop up here and there. Social media is filled with debates on all things Covid-19. Like it or not, participating in such things is part of our Christian duty as citizens of these United States and our particular commonwealths.

We are not to do this recklessly. Rather, we should employ the best practices, take the proper safety measures to keep harm from our neighbors and families and our neighbors and families from harm.

Rarely does life in this sinful world present us with a binary choice, either "this or that." Life is filled with trade offs, the lesser of two evils, or the better of two goods. Protect one another from infection? Yes! Rob our fellow citizens and those who come after us of freedom? May it never be!

Legal challenges should be undertaken, but as we know obtaining clarification and relief will take years. So we are left with the only

[16]. As of the publication of this article, we have exceeded the 30 days by nearly three weeks and the governor is going to extend it another 30 days.

option Justice Scalia and the majority left us. The body politic. It is therefore incumbent on Christians (that means you!) to contact their elected officials, to advocate for a better way in our personal and public conversations, to support all peaceful and legal actions to challenge the rulers who "overreach" wherever and whenever that happens, and protect our neighbor in his/her body from infection, while also protecting his, her's, and their freedoms.

Let us not fall prey to the kind of passivism that marked churches and Christians in Europe and America in the first half of the 20th century. Rather, let us live out our faith toward God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit trusting that He will work His will through us, while at the same time loving and giving ourselves in service to our country and neighbors.

Rev. Craig S. Stanford is the pastor of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, East Peoria, IL. He holds a B.A. Religion and B.S. Philosophy from Concordia College Moorhead MN., M.Div. from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne IN., is a certified paralegal, former adjunct instructor of philosophy and ethics at Illinois Central College. He has also authored the books, The Death of the Lutheran Reformation and The Oracles and the Jewels, The Academy, Vol. I.