



Governance by Decree

During this awful pandemic, State authorities ought to remember that the people of the State of Michigan are citizens of a Republic, not subjects of a Monarchy. In 1887 Lord Acton observed that *“power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”* Unfortunately, the State’s exercise of absolute power in response to our terrible ordeal, proves the rule rather than the exception.

Executive edicts by the Governor exponentially restrict personal autonomy and interfere with constitutionally protected liberty. The only thing more contagious than the virus is abuse of power. Emboldened by the State’s draconian decrees, some in Michigan’s judiciary unapologetically issue general warrants, broadly authorizing police to arrest anyone suspected of being sick. All these government actions substantially infringe upon numerous liberty interests protected under the U.S. and Michigan Constitutions.

Government actions must not violate constitutional provisions protecting individual rights and liberty. One of the State’s most egregious constitutional violations is its restriction on the free exercise of religious conscience. Dismissively, the State claims current health and safety concerns justify its infringement of this cherished constitutional liberty.

Rather than identifying what is safe and what is not during the pandemic, however, State authorities deem for us, in their view, what is essential. Thus, the State considers abortion clinics, marijuana distribution sites and liquor stores essential, while churches and synagogues are not. They say listen to science, yet, science tells us that the unborn child in a mother’s womb is a human being, that marijuana adversely affects your brain cells, and that alcohol impairs your judgement. Yet, due to political considerations, that science is ignored.

Churches and synagogues provide an essential service to many. Ironically, perhaps at a time when we need God the most, the State considers the Church’s work non-essential. The State’s decree expressly prohibits *“all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring among persons not part of a single household.”* Thus, the executive edict expressly makes it a crime for anyone

meet at a church to worship, or even to gather a few staff to livestream a religious message. Under the disingenuous pretense of protecting an individual's religious liberty, the edict offers a fictitious religious exemption that, by its express terms, does not apply to any religious person.

Why all the hostility toward religious people? Studies from some of our most prestigious universities show that great benefits come from prayer, meditation, and fellowship with God and others who follow Him. It strengthens our immune system and brightens our emotional state. It prevents terrible outcomes like suicide.

Our state government, and parts of the medical establishment, fail to understand that we consist of more than a physical body. Both the U.S. and Michigan constitutions clearly understand the import of this truth. Both guarantee that all citizens hold a God-given right to worship and assemble. Listen to the words of Thomas Jefferson *"Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis?"* Or Teddy Roosevelt who wrote *"In this actual world, a churchless community where men have abandoned or scoffed at or ignored their religious needs is a community on the rapid downgrade."* The State's shutdown of churches is dangerous and unconstitutional. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is essential. Will our government's response to the pandemic destroy our most precious freedom? Ben Franklin said *"If you give up essential liberty for temporary safety you deserve neither."*

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