
A Statement from LCC's Leadership: Faith, Government, and the Challenge of Bill C-9

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Introduction: A Biblical Reflection on Civil Authority and Faith

Throughout history, there have been times when God's design for the world and the prevailing laws of the land have stood opposed to one another. In the Old Testament we hear of men like Daniel, and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (perhaps better known by their Persian names: Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego) who were confronted with a civil call to idolatry and refused to bow. In the New Testament, Christians faced not only opposition but persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom as they carried the Gospel into a world around them that opposed Christ and His word of truth.

From those Biblical times up to ours today, the relationship between the Christian Church and civil governments has waxed and waned, and it can be tempting to believe that this relationship is adversarial by its very nature. But it's our Lord Himself who has given civil government for His purposes, as the Apostle Paul teaches us in Romans 13. All civil authority is given by God so that good would be rewarded and evil restrained and punished. Being that these civil authorities (which include parents in the home as well as governments of all levels) are given by God for these purposes, Christians are to honour them, serve them, obey them, and hold them in love and esteem.

The Tension Between Faith and Civil Law: The Challenge of Bill C-9

And yet, we're faced with a tension: in our day and country, there are so many examples of civil authorities opposing God's Word and limiting—either by ignorance or design—the proclamation of truth in accordance with it. One recent high-profile example is Bill C-9, currently before the House of Commons and, as of this writing, soon to make its way to third reading. This bill seeks to articulate a legal definition of hatred and more clearly protect people from hatred. How well it accomplishes that is a matter of great debate and concern. There has been much criticism as the bill continues to be developed, centred primarily around the proposed removal of a long-standing legal defense in section 319 of the Criminal Code known as the "good faith religious defense", which explicitly protects

people from being charged with a crime simply for making a statement from a religious text or expressing an opinion based on it.

It's always of concern to us Christians when government officials purport to know more about our doctrine, practices, and motives than we do and therefore attempt to define faithful Biblical teaching in a way that might even be considered a crime under Canadian law. Assurances are being given by legislators that this is not happening, and it's understandable that these may not be well-received by citizens. There is also no small amount of fear that should Bill C-9 become law as currently worded, the ministry of the Christian Church may be hindered and our freedom to teach God's Word faithfully may be infringed.

Responding in Faith: Trusting God in Uncertain Times

It may be tempting to either despair on the one hand or to aggressively fight for our rights on the other. However, as in all situations, we are compelled to hear God's Word and pray that He would guide and direct our hearts, words, and actions according to it.

Firstly, our Lord teaches us that "it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes" (Psalm 118:9). There is no salvation in the rulers of this world but only in Jesus Christ crucified for sinners. Our true hope and comfort come to us not in any civil law (or lack thereof) but in the precious Gospel that we have the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life in Christ. And whether or not any civil government seeks to curtail the proclamation of that Word, it will still accomplish the purposes for which He sends it (Isaiah 55:10-11). Therefore we will take our refuge in the pure proclamation of God's Word and the right administration of the Sacraments, as pastors continue to deliver these gifts of God and people continue to gather to receive them with thanksgiving and praise.

Secondly, our Lord urges "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Timothy 2:1b-2). Since civil governments are rightly God's servants whether they acknowledge it or not, we uphold the Fourth Commandment and keep their members in prayer.

Engaging Politically: Fulfilling Our Vocations as Citizens

Thirdly, we seek to fulfill our vocations as citizens and serve our neighbours by engaging in our civil processes in a godly way. For those concerned about Bill C-9, become educated on

the bill and its potential impacts, and then reach out to your MP's office to let your voice be heard within your vocation. Offer them specific feedback that gives witness to the truth of God's Word. Though time is short for feedback on this particular bill, there is still opportunity. Once again, though, it must be said: "trust not in princes...in whom there is no salvation" (Psalm 146:3).

Final Encouragement: Trusting God's Protection and Care

Finally, our Lord comforts us that we need not fear "those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28). When Jesus sent out His Apostles, He prepared them for the difficulties that would come as a result of their work in His name and also comforted them with His provision for them (read all of Matthew 10). We also hear in John 17 of His prayer for them who are not of this world and for us who have believed through their testimony. We know that the Father has given Him authority over all flesh, and has given us eternal life in Him. Though the world around us does not know Him, He knows us and does not forsake us.

And so, as in all things, we continue to call out to our almighty and gracious God in faith: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. As you continue to call out, you may wish to have this petition included within the public Prayer of the Church:

Almighty God, all authority in heaven and on earth is yours. Guide our federal representatives in their vocation as your servants for the common good of all and for the free reign of Your Word to be proclaimed. Strengthen us to fulfill our own vocations of service as citizens so that we may act with wisdom and live godly and dignified lives that bear faithful witness to Your authority and power in all things. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.