The Tyranny of Compulsory Education

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Introduction

The cornerstone of every state's public school is either a compulsory education or a compulsory attendance law. For instance, the law in Michigan which governs compulsory attendance basically requires a parent, having charge of a child age six to eighteen, to send the child to school during the entire school year. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, sending the child to a state approved, nonpublic school or educating the child at home in an organized educational program. Children, therefore, do not attend any school voluntarily like they would attend a movie or baseball game. They either attend school or their parents face the threat of civil punishment.

Are compulsory education laws sinful? Are they tyrannical? Are they sinful because such laws usurp God's authority over the human mind? Are they tyrannical because such laws use coercion and force to compel attendance, mandate curriculum, license teachers and finance it all?

Compulsory Attendance

Education in every State is built upon force and compulsion. I do not say public education, but rather education itself. For all public education of minor children is built on the idea that the state can compel it or punish failure to comply. Thus, there is no freedom in American education, only degrees of state and local government control and coercion. Public and charter schools are the most controlled. Private and Christian non-public schools are less controlled. Home schools are least controlled. But all are controlled.

Enforcement and the Attendance Officer

How is this control implemented? How is compulsory attendance, the cornerstone of this control enforced? It is enforced by coercion, not by a voluntary act of love or compassion. Here is what coercion looks like. Attendance officers are employed by a school district. The attendance officer has the powers of a deputy sheriff within the school district while performing official duties and pursues cases of reported nonattendance. The attendance officer must give written notice to the parent requiring the child to appear at school on the next regular school day and to continue in regular and consecutive attendance in school.

What if the parent fails to obey the notice? Is their non-compliance obtained by force or by voluntarily means? If the parent or legal guardian fails to comply with the notice, the attendance officer must make a legal complaint against that individual in the proper court for refusal or neglect to send the child to school. Most cases are heard in the local District Court. More serious charges of parental neglect are filed in the circuit courts. The court then issues warrant and proceeds to hear and make a determination in the case. In Michigan, a parent or legal guardian who fails to comply with the compulsory school attendance section of the Revised School Code is guilty of a misdemeanor. See MCL §§ 380.1571- 380.1599.

Coercion or Consent?

Question: how does the state ensure compulsory attendance of children at a public school? What process does the state employ? Does the state merely offer public education and leave it to parents to decide what is best? Does the state simply establish a public school and invite parents to send their children for education? Is attendance voluntary? Or is attendance mandatory—a mandate based on force, coercion, and ultimately fines and imprisonment?

In short, does the law rely upon consent or coercion, volition or force in controlling its schools? MCL 380.1599 provides us the answer. The law is titled "Noncompliance of parent as misdemeanor; penalty." Here is what it says: "A parent or other person in parental relation who fails to comply with this part is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not less than $5.00 nor more than $50.00, or imprisonment for not less than 2 nor more than 90 days, or both."

The state compels the education of our children with the threat of a criminal misdemeanor conviction, imposing up to a $50 fine and 90 days in jail. Given this, we must conclude that the cornerstone of public education is compulsion, fines, incarceration and ultimately removal of your children from your home.

Does God Have an Opinion on the Use of Force to Compel Exposure to Ideas?

Now the question is, does God have an opinion on the exercise of such a power for the purpose of education? Note, I state "for the purpose of education." We are not talking about the power of civil government in general, only in this instance concerning education. A second question is, should we support or oppose this educational system based on compulsion, fines, incarceration and loss of parental rights? Finally, if you are a Christian, the question is whether this system is compatible with the teachings of Jesus.

While you are thinking about those questions, let us look more closely at the breadth and scope of compulsion imposed by the state. It does not merely apply at the last stage where the parent is threatened with conviction of a misdemeanor, fined and jailed. No, coercion is used at every step along the way. First, it applies to the requirement that children must attend a government approved school, a state approved nonpublic school, or a state regulated homeschool.

A State Regulated Homeschool

You may think it odd to refer to a thing called a "state regulated homeschool," but a review of the statute in Michigan makes it clear that a child being educated by his or her parent in the child's home must be educated "in an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar." The requirement of an organized educational program is imposed by the state legislature. A child educated at home by his or her parent who does not educate according to an "organized educational program," is not in compliance with the law. If the parent is found guilty, the parent may be punished by a fine and imprisoned. The state also compels what must be taught: "reading, spelling,

mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar." A child educated at home by his or her parent who does not teach these subjects is not in compliance with the law. Such a parent is subject to punishment.

A State Approved Nonpublic School

Likewise, a state approved nonpublic school requires "regular attendance" and must teach subjects "comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade . . . ." See MCL §§ 380.1561(3)(a) & (f). The requirements of regular attendance and comparable curriculum are imposed by the state legislature. The child educated in a non-public school which fails to ensure regular attendance of teach comparable subjects, is not in compliance with the statute. A parent that sends their children to such a school is subject to punishment by a $50 fine, 90 days imprisonment, or both.

Now you say, "Sure, we know this, but no one goes to jail these days. What's the fuss?" Do you see that the reason few are legally charged is precisely because our home-schools and private schools closely follow what the legislature has already imposed upon us? What we are really saying is that we have already conformed to the will of our Lansing and local school board masters. What's the fuss? We already obey our governmental masters. But do we serve our God? Do we serve our neighbor? Do we serve our children by our compliance with the state's demands?

Or you may say," Well, all those subjects are good and I as a parent would choose to implement them if the choice was mine." I say, "Good for you." But the law applies to all parents, not just you. What you may choose to do, I may choose not to do. How can you say a law forcing me as a parent to teach this or that mandatory subject is good, just because you would voluntarily teach those subjects?Am I your servant? Is my family now also subject to your will? No. I teach as I desire, and you teach as you desire. Don't tell me what choices are best for my children or you imitate the state in its impious presumption.

Educational Freedom or Slavery?

We have to understand there is no such thing as real educational freedom in any state. There are only degrees of government control, oversight and regulation. There are only degrees of slavery. Think about that. The entire system is built on one overriding principle—the use of criminal punishment to compel exposure to government approved ideas by government approved teachers at government mandated hours for a period of 12 years.

And what does it mean to be found guilty of a criminal misdemeanor? It means you have a criminal record. It means you must disclose convictions on job applications. What does it mean to pay a fine? It means your money is not available for other purposes. Your money must be paid to the government through the courts. And if you refuse to pay the fine, it means that you may be held in contempt of court. It means that the court may order you to jail for refusing to pay the fine.

What does it mean to be punished by 90 days imprisonment? It means that you must report to jail

to serve your sentence. It means that if you fail to report to jail to serve your sentence that the court can direct the Police Department to come to your house. And if the police come to your house and you refuse to answer the door, it means they can kick the door down. Yes, your local police department can do this. And if they kick the door down and you resist, it means they can handcuff you and they can drag you out of your home. In the process they will probably shoot your dog because it is barking as you resist. And if you resist some more, it means they can throw you to the ground, put their knee in your back, taser you, punch you, hit you with a nightstick, yell and swear at you in front of your children and neighbors, and then throw you into police cruiser, then a jail cell. They can and will incarcerate you by force and by violence. That us what they do to parents who resist. Don't be naive and think that the nice police officer who attends your church will act differently when ordered to do so.

So, I ask you what is God's position on this? What does Jesus teach? What would He do if a parent said: "I am going to educate my children at home but I am not going to teach 'in an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar. I may teach some, but not all of these subjects." Would God resort to physical threats and violence? Would Jesus handcuff you, hit you with a nightstick, and throw you into a cell? I ask you.

What do your favorite Christian state legislators say? Their law authorizes physical force against you. They will use force, not love.

The Nightstick, the Machine Gun, and the Jailhouse

In other words, what I am saying is that our system of government-controlled education is ultimately based on the authority of the nightstick, the machine gun, and the jailhouse--the handcuff and taser, too. What I am saying is that none of these means are authorized or encouraged by God in order to ensure your children are taught "in an organized educational program." God does not even use force to compel exposure to His own superior ideas. How is it then that puny Caesar claims any legitimate power to compel exposure to the inferior ideas of man?

God alone is Lord of the mind. He has said it should be free from compulsion. He has not empowered the civil government to compel a child to be forcibly exposed to government approved ideas. God has not authorized the People to grant any civil government power to compel a child to be forcibly exposed to its versions of an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar. Nor does the state have authority to compel a child to be in "regular attendance" or to force exposure to subjects "comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade . . . ." MCL §§ 380.1561 and other similar state laws in your state must be repealed. It must be repealed by the active will Christians who do not think God has given civil government the authority to use force and violence and coercion to educate children–your children. If God does not exercise such a power, it is an impious presumption of the state legislature to do so.

What Are the Indirect Effects of State Coercion on the Family?

Let us say, however, you just don't care. Public schools work just fine for you and your lifestyle. Your mother or sister teaches in the public school. They are good people. The school provides summers off and a decent retirement plan. They get to go on mission trips in the summer to serve the Lord. Your Pastor says being a public-school teacher is a good Christian calling. You have a degree in education from your Christian College. You personably know great Christian leaders in the legislature who are protecting your religious liberty and think criminalizing non-attendance of your dead-beat lousy-parent neighbors is a dandy idea. Who wants to oppose the teacher Union's legislatively mandated teacher job security anyway?

Perhaps, force and coercion are just fine with you because, after all some parents neglect their children's education and deserve to be charged, fined or thrown in jail. Of course, you never ask what about the children who graduate from public school but can neither read nor write. Maybe your mother or sister, that child's teacher or you son or daughter that taught the child should be fined, charged or thrown in jail for their failures too?

While you are trying to find an exception for your teacher friends and family, yet justify applying the full measure of the law to those bad parents, consider the indirect effects of the state's system of coercion on your own family? I mean you're not philosophical about this matter, right? Why cloud your mind with all this anyway? "Tell me something practical." OK, let me spell out just a few practical things to consider.

Even from a purely pragmatic approach, consider the typical compulsory attendance law requiring 180 days in attendance. By implication, this law dictates when the child is not in school. It confines the length of any summer break parents have with their children to a specific number of limited months and days. The compulsory attendance laws force families to vacation during very limited weeks and months in the summer. Families lose the freedom to travel at their discretion. You must now only plan family vacations at times the government does not require the attendance of your children at government-controlled buildings. You family plays second fiddle to the government's schedule.

Moreover, requiring children to be in school, say at 8 am, essentially dictates to the family what time the child shall arise from sleep. The government dictates when the child shall arise, not the parents. They lose control. And if the child shall arise at x hour to be in school on time at y hour, so too must parents arise according to the government's schedule so as to ensure that their children are in school at the appointed hour. The choice every family otherwise enjoys to arise and retire based on its own familial objectives and domestic goals are made to serve the state's time schedule. The state becomes your time master.

Further, if the child must arise at a specific time, so too must the child retire the evening before at a time which will ensure sufficient sleep. Thus, the school's compulsory starting time has the indirect consequence of also dictating the child's bedtime. These times are indirectly dictated by the state without regard to the purposes of the family in choosing a bedtime. Thus, the parents say: "Go

to bed at this time as you have school in the morning." rather than "Go to bed at x time as tomorrow you must do so and so according to my will."

Not only does the family lose control over when their children shall arise and retire for sleep, as well as the parents themselves to the degree necessary to ensure the attendance of their child lest the parents be charged with a misdemeanor, but the family may also lose control of what clothes the child shall wear. Government Dress codes dictate what a child shall wear. Moreover, student codes dictate how a child shall act, what he or she may bring to school or possess at school. Parents are expected to dress their children according to the government's dictates, not the desires of parents.

Homework also exerts control over the family and household operations. Rather than evenings spent attending to the family's goals, parents are enlisted to ensure that their children complete homework--work assigned and controlled by the state, not the parents. The family and home are converted to serve as unpaid auxiliaries of state schools. Do this or else.

Parents also lose control over with whom their children shall associate, their choice of friends, and their daily conduct. They lose control over the ideas that are placed before the child, and the ideas which the child is barred from hearing.

It is clear from the foregoing that the home and family now revolve entirely and completely around the government school, not the other way around. The loss of parental control over the child's education and educational schedule is severe. But compulsory attendance laws also mean the parents lose control over the operation of their own households and its most basic operations--When shall we arise? What shall we do today? With whom shall we do it? How long shall we devote to it? Where shall it be done? When shall we retire? *How then shall we live?* Very little is left of the family's authority concerning these basic decisions.

Are you still comfortable with serving your state master in these matters? Do you think your family time is really yours to decide? The military's boot camp and the governments' prison camps tell you when to arise and when to retire, what and when to read and hear and what you shall wear and eat. Has it ever occurred to you that your family functions very similar to the operation of a boot camp or a prison? Have you ever wondered why you never heard a sermon about something as basic to the authority of Parents to direct the education of their own children free from state interference, regulation and control? Why does your pastor lack understanding about the reality of government control of education and never speaks out against it or its indirect negative effect on your family?

An Unalienable Parental Right

There is another choice than this servitude—a better choice. There is another way--a right way. Parents must reacquire their authority and rights. God gave them children. It is their duty to God to oversee the education and upbringing of their own children. They must understand, and the state legislature must be made to understand, that the education of every child must be left to the conviction and conscience of their parents during the child's infancy and youth. It is the right of every parent to exercise it, solely as they may dictate. This right is in its nature, an unalienable right.

The education of a child can only be directed by reason and conviction, not by force or violence. A child's education should not be forced to follow the dictates of any governmental official, high or low, or those who sit in the state legislature or upon local school boards and whose means of enforcement are the tools of legal force and physical violence. Force, threats of force and violence have no place in a system of education—a system which, at its heart, deals in ideas.

Barna Group 2013 Polling

Let's take a detour for a moment. Let's rest our brain from talk about force and violence, from unalienable rights and freedom and slavery. If you need a break, this is a good place to put this paper down and let it all sink in. You will also need some time to start building a case in your mind why none of what you have read can be true. None of your good Christian friends talk this way, right?

But when you come back, let's talk about where people are at—where they stand on public schools. Did you know that more than 80 percent of Christian parents send their children to government-regulated, State-run schools? They do so for a variety of reasons. For instance, they themselves attended a public school and it was good enough for them so it's good enough for their children. The school is tuition free and they cannot afford a private school. Their children's friends all go to the school. They know Christian teachers who teach at the school. The school has a good educational rating. They want their children in sports programs offered by the school.

A 2013 Barna Group nationwide study asked Americans what they think about the country's public education. Here is what their research showed. The survey found that nearly all Protestant pastors (95%) believe Christians should get involved in *helping* public schools. Now what can be wrong with that? I mean can 95% of pastors be wrong. Well that is a good question. Of course, I am not saying they are *just wrong*. That is too low a standard. I am saying something even more direct. I am saying they are not teaching you dear parents, the duty which God has placed in your hand and for which you are accountable to God Almighty. That duty is to direct the education and upbringing of your own children under your own authority, being accountable to God (not the government) for those ideas you place before your child's mind.

Let me put that into even sharper perspective. "Helping public schools" means supporting a system that criminalizes the parents of truant children, that employs coercion, force and violence to compel attendance, that indirectly controls when the family arises and retires, when they eat, what the child wears, who the child shall associate with during the school day, what the child shall learn (meaning a curriculum built on the idea that God is not relevant to education), and when the family is free to vacation as a family. This is what these naive pastors do not understand when they claim God wants Christians to "help" government schools.

Barna also found that more than eight out of 10 churchgoing Christians, across denominations and levels of spiritual devotion, agree that Christians *should be involved* in public schools. Among practicing Christians, three reasons for involvement stand out:

1) the belief that improving public education is important to demonstrate Christian concern for the wider community;

2) the belief that doing so is part of Christians' responsibility to help the poor and needy;

3) The belief that sending their children to a public school is being "salt-and-light"-- that public schools are a mission field and their children are a witness for Christ.

According to Barna's polling, nearly half of the nation's public educators are practicing Christians—people who attend church at least monthly and say their faith is very important in their life. Practicing Christians are more likely to volunteer for their local public school than are non-Christians. Among volunteers at public schools, two-thirds (65%) attend church. About one-quarter of churches offer mentoring or after-school program for kids or youth.

Rationales for Support of Public Schools

Let us closely examine these three rationales. Earlier I said that if you are a Christian, the question is whether this system is compatible with God's view of education or more particularly, the teachings of Jesus. So, are these rationales for support of the current system consistent with Jesus's teaching on the subject? That would be an important question for a Christian. Is it one you are willing to consider being open minded as you are? In the context of public schools, how would Jesus demonstrate Christian concern for the community? How would Jesus demonstrate responsibility to help the poor and needy? How would Jesus want his disciples to be salt and light and a witness for himself?

Would Jesus approve of coercion? Would he demonstrate concern for the community by using a nightstick? Would he help the poor and needy by fines and jail for non-compliance? Would he advance his kingdom or be salt and light by compulsion? In the final analysis does Jesus love his neighbor, reach out to the poor and needy, and evangelize the unbeliever by reliance upon state misdemeanor laws such as MCL § 380.1599, imposing a fine of not more than $50 or imprisonment of not more than 90 days, or both? Is that whom Jesus is, some type of SWAT Commando who uses force and violence to "love" his neighbor?

Is the use of force, coercion and violence part of your own personal Christian ministry? If you are a public-school administrator or teacher and you think "Well, God has given me this great opportunity," I encourage you to think again. You sir, you madam, are the beneficiary of the taser and nightstick. Your mission field is brought to you by force of law or their parents go to jail. Perhaps if your pastor persuaded the legislature to force parishioners to attend *his* church it would also be a good idea? Oh, but you have religious freedom!

Does Christ really want us to advance his kingdom by the sword of Caesar? Or to put it in modern English, does Christ really want us to advance his kingdom, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to care for the poor and needy and to evangelize our neighbor, by using the state's coercive power,

enforced by the handgun, tax levies and incarceration? Are these the means which God has placed at our disposal to accomplish these Christian goals?

George Barna tells us that over 90% of pastors see no problem with this arrangement. He also reports that 80% of Christians think this is a good idea and is worthy of our support. He says that 50% of all schoolteachers are Christians and appear to have no reservations about the fact that the students which sit before them every day are present, because in the final analysis, their parents will encounter the police handcuffing them at gunpoint and fining them or locking them in an iron cage if they do not obey the state.

Christian Concern for the Wider Community

Barna observed that among practicing Christians, 34% thought that improving public education is important in order to demonstrate Christian concern for the wider community. If demonstrating concern for the wider community pertains to widows and orphans, we are told in James 1:27 that "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." James says nothing about a $50 fine or imprisonment for up to 90 days to show Christian concern.

If demonstrating Christian concern for the wider community has some relationship to Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself," as stated in Mark 12:31, then which among us would consider that such love would be expressed under any circumstances that would involve a fine or imprisonment? Indeed, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 13:10, that: "love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law." Yet, would we accept threatening our neighbor with fines and imprisonment, if she or he will not serve as the involuntary object of our charity? Is this how we express love—forcing others to receive it?

Christians' Responsibility to Help the Poor and Needy

Barna observed that among practicing Christians 33% thought that improving public education is important to fulfill a Christians' responsibility to help the poor and needy. Far from employing the handgun, tax levies and incarceration to fulfill a Christian's responsibility to help the poor and needy, Jesus offered this advice in Matthew 19:21, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Jesus proposed that helping the poor was a matter of personal sacrifice and voluntary conduct. It was a matter of individual choice, not coercion by the government.

Jesus *did not say*: "If you would be perfect in helping the poor, ask Caesar to send the truant officer out to the parents' home and threaten them with fines and jail." In fact, Jesus observed in Mark 14:7 "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me." In other words, we can help the poor when we choose to do so at our discretion and at our expense. Jesus did not say: "for you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want you can force others to do good for them through a coercive system of taxation." Let us not forget also that Zacchaeas voluntarily gave half of his goods to the poor as an act of love

and obedience to Jesus. See Luke 19:8. Yet, the teacher' unions demand the state government take more and more of our money by force. Can we call taxation love?

"Salt-and-Light"

Finally, among practicing Christians, many send their children to a public school so that their children, not the parents themselves, can be "salt-and-light" and fulfill the Great Commission. How does such a child to child ministry actually work? In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." When our children are sent to a public school to witness, is there an opportunity for them to teach others all that Jesus has commanded? Jesus said "all." Is that opportunity present? Are our children free to have a discourse on any subject which they please? Is your fourth grader even competent to do so? Is the public school a free and open debating club about the virtues and truth of Christianity? I ask you.

Jesus also said in Matthew 19:14: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." When parents send their children to a public school to witness, are they letting their children come to Jesus? Or are they hindering their children from coming to Jesus? When a child is taught for 12 years in a government regulated school that teaches, if God exists, He is irrelevant to every subject taught, how will a parent be able to convince Jesus that they did not "hinder" their children? Are we hindering our own children coming to Jesus by sending them to a school that will have nothing to do with Him? Or do we say: "Well my child is already a Christian, so I am not hindering."

Ok, good for you. Now I ask you this: "Is coming to Jesus limited to salvation or does it have something to do with your child's mind too?" Paul says in Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." Does participation in a coercive atheist system of education lead to conformity with the world or transformation in Christ? Do public schools help your child test what is "good, pleasing, and perfect?" When your child comes home, and you ask, "What did you learn today in school?" can you reasonably expect your high schooler to say she learned the "will of God" in second hour? Don't be naive.

It is not God's will that our children be consistently taught for 12 years that if God exists, He is irrelevant to every subject and class. It is not God's will that your good Christian friend and teacher serve his or her state master teaching for 12 years that if God exists, He is irrelevant to every subject and class. What does this really mean when we say your child is taught for 12 years that if God exists, He is irrelevant to every subject and class?

My friend, this is ultimately the teaching of spiritual death. The fact that your child's public school teacher is your best friend, the pastor's spouse, or a Proverbs 31 Woman, and promises you on Sunday that he or she "Will look out for your little angel in school," cannot redeem what is actually

happening to your child's mind and spirit Monday through Friday. Don't be shocked when your child grows up and goes away to the University (your good old Alma Mater, is it?) and "loses" their faith. Friend, they are merely completing the final steps of the 12-year journey you initiated for them when they started kindergarten. The fact that your child may have an opportunity to evangelize all those years does not change God's will or redeem spiritual death.

Indeed, if the state compelled you to spend 12 *days* in a reeducation camp or go to jail, would you say: "Oh great, a chance to be salt and light to the guards?" The Israelites never praised their compulsory servitude in Pharaoh's mud pits because it gave them a chance to "share their faith." Friend don't be a blind guide to your very own children. Don't let your pastor be either. This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?

We Evangelize Those Who Are Free to Walk Away

Christian support of government controlled schools, based on the belief that such a system provides a venue by which we may love our neighbor, care for the poor or evangelize others, is based on pure fiction because the government controlled school is based on pure force. It is based on pure violence. It is based on pure coercion. It is based on the handgun wielded by the police for those who refuse to conform. It is based on the tax lien. It is based on incarceration. It is not a venue grounded on love.

None of these tools--force, violence, coercion, or incarceration--are the tools of Christianity. They are not the tools of true education. They are the tools of a system of official propaganda Comrade. None of these tools ought to be used to further the work of the Christian, the teacher, the school Administrator, the obligations of parents, or the ministry of the church. The tools which God has placed at our disposal are reason, persuasion, voluntary conduct, and freely giving of our time, talent and money to those persons whose views we would convert to our own. We evangelize those who are free to walk away. We do not evangelize those whose parents go to jail if they walk away.

To employ compulsory education as an engine of religious policy is an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation. To employ compulsory education as an engine of secular policy is to deny that God made the mind to be free of coercion in matters of exposure to ideas. It is also a claim that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Truth, an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of civil rulers in all ages.

What Does this Mean for You?

What does this mean for Christian pastors? What does this mean for Christian parents? What does this mean for Christian public school teachers? What does this mean to the Christian lobbyist, pro-family organization or the state legislator? What does this mean for the Christian police officer and judge? Indeed, what does this mean for you?

It means that the use of force in American education is both sinful and tyrannical. To criminalize non-attendance offends God and wrongs our neighbor. For the state legislature to mandate and

impose a curriculum, destroys the unalienable right of parents to direct the education of their own children. For the state legislature to require teacher certification is to make teachers servants of the state to whom they must look for approval. For the state legislature to tax my income or property to pay for the secular or religious education of my neighbor's child is as immoral and unlawful as taxing my income or property to pay for the religious education of my neighbor's child. It is wrong not because the purpose of education is to advance secularism or religion. It is wrong because it forces me to pay for ideas which I disbelieve or deprives me of the liberty of freely choosing to promote those ideas which I do believe.

We are not saying civil government has no power to use force. It is rather to say that the civil government has no power to use force in connection with a system of education. Education is unique. It deals with the mind. It deals with ideas. It deals with knowledge. Who is the state legislature to dictate ideas to our children? Who is the state legislature to tell our children what is official knowledge? Who is the state legislature to tell us what our children's minds shall be forcibly made to consider?

The state legislature is an organization of people. It is neither filled with demons nor angels. No member of the state government has any special ability to declare what is true and what is false in the realm of ideas for the rest of us.

Members of the state legislature or local school board are not competent Judges of Truth. When they write or enforce a state law that demands students be taught this or that subject, or mandate this or that curriculum, it is an arrogant pretension. There is no justification for a system which compels children to be forcibly exposed to government approved ideas. The government calls forcible exposure to government approved ideas, a "curriculum." The system also compels children to be forcibly taught only by approved teachers. The government calls it "certification." It is a system that compels children to be so exposed and taught according to a government mandated timetable six hours a day and for 12 years of the child's life. The government calls this "attendance."

In free countries and among right-thinking people, such a system would be forced propaganda by the state. It would be called government control of the mind. It would be called tyranny. In America, however, it is called "freedom." It is called "a right." It is called everything except that which it is.

Mistake 1: Making the System of Coercion Good—Better Curriculum

Let us drive the stake home, right into the heart of the problem. Are you ready? We are on the final roll.

For the last 70 years, Christians have fought to reinvigorate Biblical and religious ideas into the public curriculum. I have read that the public schools started to go down in 1963 when prayer was removed. That is utter nonsense. Public schools started to go down when the government began to use force and coercion to fund them, to compel attendance, and to control curriculum and teachers. We have fought to require schools to teach creationism, opt out of sex education and now

avoid indoctrination into a homosexual way of life. We have sought to make the public schools "good" by reclaiming the curriculum or allowing "opt out" as a fallback position.

Yet, our focus on "what" is taught has obscured the fact that whatever is taught, is taught in the context of coercion. It is taught in the context of the criminalization of non-attendance. As a movement, making the curriculum good, where the curriculum is mandated by law and forced upon children, regardless of the consent or opposition of their parents, is misguided. That misguided idea is that we should use the sword of Caesar to advance any ideas, to advance any curriculum, to advance any knowledge.

Mistake 2: Making the System of Coercion Good—Christian Teachers

We've also sought to fill the ranks of government schools with Christian teachers. We have hoped that they would be a witness. We have hoped that they would shelter our children and watch out for them. We have hoped they would have some Christian influence.

Let us rightly understand that hoping to evangelize or to be salt and light by teaching in a public school or serving as an administrator, is an illusion. It is living in the Matrix. Perhaps you teach in a public school or are a public-school administrator and you believe you are called by God to that position. Good. But do you also believe that God wants the children in your classroom to be present by force and coercion, or by threats of fines and imprisonment of those children's parents? Has God called you to a prison ministry? You teach and administer a system in which your salaries are paid to promote government approved ideas, at government approved and controlled times and days, in government approved, controlled and regulated locations. You teach or administer a system in which children are held captive. Their presence is mandated as a matter of law.

Is this the operative model for your evangelism? Is this the context in which we fulfill Christ's command to love our neighbor? Is this what Jesus meant when he said, "do not hinder the little children from coming unto me?" Did he really mean that Caesar should set up a system that compels children to come to you so that you could be salt and light, or evangelize them in the hallway between classes, or at approved Bible clubs?

The point is that being "salt and light" and evangelism, presupposes a context of voluntary associations. It presupposes that the hearer, as well is the speaker, come together voluntarily--that they both wish to be present for the purpose of hearing what one may have to say. None of this is present in the public-school context. It is legally prohibited. You are fooling yourself if you refuse to see it. The public-school context is not a voluntary association. It is not a place where teachers and students get together by their free consent. It is a place where, if the student fails to attend, their parents may be fined, incarcerated and risk having their children taken from them by force and violence.

It does no good to say "Well, this is the hand we are dealt. Let us make the most of it." Making the most of it should seek to abolish this system, rather than working within it, becoming financially dependent upon it, and looking to it for a pension. Over the years the attraction of it will override

every objection and make one blind to see that the system of force and violence against your neighbor and his children has nothing whatsoever to do with love, freedom or voluntary association.

No Man Can Serve Two Masters

We might also observe that Jesus said in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." Whom does a public-school teacher serve? To whom is an Administrator loyal? I ask you—who does your child's public-school teacher serve? Do you know? Do they serve the child's parents regarding what their children should be learning and not learning? And if there are 30 students, do they serve all 60 parents for each hour of the school day? If they serve parents, how can they serve their masters in Lansing or other State capitals in this country? How can they serve their masters in the union? How can they serve their masters on the school board too?

Jesus says neither you nor I can serve two masters, but perhaps you say different? And when push comes to legal shove will we serve the curriculum mandated by the state or local school board? Or will we serve our teacher unions, placing our collective bargaining rights above the education of children? If we do not serve our masters in Lansing or the union or the school board, we will not long remain in their employ.

Parents Have A Choice

How about you, parents? What is your place in the system of mandatory attendance, state-imposed curriculum, state control of teachers, and a system of taxation that takes your money without your consent and pays others to promote ideas you either love or hate? What is your responsibility? What do you say about it? Are you going to volunteer? Are you going to help out at your local school and thereby validating a system of coercion and force? Are you going to affiliate with an organization that exists because it can call upon a police officer or a truant officer to make sure the children are present? Are you going to send your children into this cauldron based on some ill-thought out notion of "witnessing?"

Churches Have A Choice Too

And what can we say about the inexplicable support which Christian ministries, pastors and churches provide to this system? Many profess to be pro- family and Christian organizations. They range in views from full support of the public system of control and compulsion, to encouraging parents to get their children out as soon as possible. But which Pastor or Church objects on the basis that this system of education is built and financed on the criminalization of non-attendance, the government's control of teachers and curriculum, and use of tax dollars to indoctrinate. Pastors no doubt have a congregation of active and retired schoolteachers whose financial life blood is dependent on the continuation *and expansion* of educational coercion. Pastors have made a hard life for themselves by choosing to serve multiple masters – sowing weak or no teaching about a parent's educational right and duty, and also defending the governmental educational machinery benefitting his teacher congregants. Will God be mocked? No, the children will reap what the Church has

sown.

Conclusion

God operates based on choice, not coercion, in matters of the mind. Compulsory education laws are both sinful and tyrannical. They are sinful because such laws offend God's authority over the mind. They are tyrannical because such laws exceed the purposes of civil government. We must not support this system. We must not reform this system from within or without. We must simply abolish it. We must disestablish it by law and restore to parents their rightful authority to educate their own children. We can all do our part as parents, but the state legislator must see the truth of it first and then resolve to act. The state legislator must purpose to break, not strengthen the chains of coercion.

Let us be sober minded. We cannot expect much from the church or pastors as they are too entrenched in defending their teacher congregants' system of coercion and force to extract themselves, except at great personal financial cost. If they spoke up, they could expect to be fired. Nor will the mass of home schooling or private schooling organizations be of much use. They are constituent driven and cannot see the big picture until it affects them personally.

It just comes down to you as a parent wanting to be free, the way God made you and your family. Free from the coercion of the state and its indoctrination of your children. Free from the pressure of your church to conform to that system or their own church school preferences. Free from the expectations of your extended family who teach or administer in the system. Free from your pastor's teaching the educational rules of men, as the commands of God. Free from the mass of "pro-family" organizations trying to make government schools good, thereby keeping your family in perpetual servitude to the government system of control over your child's mind.

Don't wait on any of these. They will not lead. That is your job as a parent.

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