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REV DR DAVID MITCHELL ON EDUCATION

This is an address given by Rev Dr David Mitchell at Tatura, Victoria, in August 1998. The text of the speech is reprinted by permission of the author.

"... So I have for myself, at any rate, a definition of education. Training for good works. That is, God's works. The works that He has prepared for us to do. And that, I perceive, as being the object of education of children...."

"... The authorities talk about increasing police forces, cracking down hard on criminal offenders, but do they talk about discipline in their young years? Do they talk about the training, about the correction, about the rebuking, about training in righteousness?..."

My purpose is to talk about education. I am to sound an alert or a warning. Well, I expect it's up to each parent, up to each grandparent, up to each citizen, to appreciate whether this is a time when there is something to warn about.

Now we all have some picture and idea of what's going on in the education field. I do not need to start at the very beginning. I want to say to you though, that even among those of us here tonight there will be different views about the responsibility for training children. It's as if there were a cursor on a scale. At this extreme end of the scale, from your point of view, the right side, right-wing view — extreme right-wing, you might say — the extreme right-wing view of the responsibility for children, their training, their health, their everything, is the parent.

People holding this extreme view would say it's the parents, and parents

alone, who should have input into the training of children. The Christian would say "God has placed these children, these young souls, in our hands. We're the ones who God has given special responsibility to. It is our special responsibility under God. He has placed them in our hands, not in anyone else's hands, and we're the ones who are totally, and completely responsible."

The humanist with this same extreme right-wing position might say, "Well I don't know about God. I don't even know that God exists. I know this child is mine. This child came from my body. No one else had any part in bringing this child into the world. The child is mine. It's almost as if I own the child." (No, no, I'm not going back to the days of ownership of slaves, or ownership of children.) But the humanist would say, "I, because I am human, because I am a man, because I am a woman, because I am a parent, I have a special, not just a special,

but an exclusive responsibility for the child."

At the other end of the scale, what I might call the extreme left-wing end of the scale, there would be those who would say, "Look, you must understand. Equality of opportunity is the catchword. It is the motto that we must have for our children. And not only do you people at the right-wing end — not only have you got it all wrong, not only are you a bit conceited, not only have you really got tags on yourself — but if you people have any input into the training or bringing up of the children there will immediately be an inequality. You see, some of you are rich, and some of you are poor. Some of you live in the country, some of you live in the city. Some of you have many children, some of you have few. Some of you are well educated, and some of you are not well educated. Look, if you people are the ones who have any input into the training of the children, there will automatically be inequality.

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What you've got to do is to have an unbiased, an unprejudiced, a completely independent body for the training of the children from their youngest days upwards. And that must necessarily be the government, because the government speaks on behalf of all the people. So what we've got to do is to take the children away from the parent and put them into some kind of a — I don't like to use the word 'institution', because that doesn't sound quite so nice — but put them into some wonderful facility where there will be a total equality of opportunity. That there will be no distinctions on the basis of the particular parents that they've been privileged to be born with. Privilege? That's what we have got to get rid of, you see. We've got to have complete equality, so the children must be taken away from the parents and placed under government control.

Now my guess — and it is only a guess — is that no one here would be either extreme end of this scale. That we would be somewhere along the scale. Perhaps some would be further to the right, and some perhaps further to the left. But my suggestion to you is that during your lifetime, whether you are young or old, you have seen the cursor moving. Gradually moving from this side to that side.

We have by no means become a communist or a totalitarian state where the children are taken away from the parents. But the government

is becoming more and more and more influential in the training of children.

What do we mean by education? What is the purpose of education? I suppose probably everyone here has thought of a definition for 'education of children' — training of children. Is it to fit them for life? Is it so that those children as they grow and become adults will make society a better place? Is it so that those children will not only make society a better place but add to the sum of human knowledge? Is it so that those children will be able to make fortunes for themselves? Is it so that those children will be able to care for other people? Is it to glorify God?

It will depend on your perspective, where you stand on those issues. Is education for the purpose of humankind, or is education for the purpose of eternity? I do not know where you find your ultimate measure of right and wrong. In the little book I've written about the Constitution, I suggest that there are four possible ultimate sources of right and wrong.

I suggest that each person will hold one of these four as the ultimate measuring stick for right and wrong. Those who are totalitarians will say that the government establishes the measure of right and wrong. The government makes the laws, and the laws are what distinguish right from wrong in society. And whether you are a Communist, a Fascist, a Nazi, any other kind of totalitarian, you will be saying the government makes the distinction between right and wrong.

If you are a totalitarian parent, it will go something like this: "Daddy, can I steal?"

"No Johnny, of course you can't!"

"Why not, Daddy?"

"Because I say so! I'm your father, and I make the rules about here! I make the decisions in this place, and I decide it's wrong for you to steal."

On the other hand you might be what some would call an anarchist. An anarchist says that there is no measure of right and wrong apart from what I decide is right and wrong. What's right for me, might be wrong for you. What's right for you, might be wrong for me. Who am I to impose my opinion on you? Or who are you to impose your opinion on me? Who does the government think it is? I have a per-

fectly good mind. I can determine what is right and what is wrong, can't I? There is no law, there is no measure of right and wrong, apart from what I say.

In an anarchist domestic situation: "Daddy, can I steal?"

"Well, Johnny, I think it's wrong to steal. But, you see, you and I are different people. And you've got to think it out for yourself. You've got to come to your own conclusions. You've got all the equipment to decide whether stealing is wrong or stealing is right. You can consider how you would feel. How would it affect you if people stole from you? You could consider how it would affect the people you're stealing from. You can consider how it would affect society. And you make your own decision, Johnny. I'm not going to impose my views on you. You work it out for yourself."

In other words, go and learn it, I'm not going to teach you.

The third possibility for a measure of right and wrong is what some would call democracy. I don't call it democracy. Democracy has another meaning for you. Let me call it 'popular'. A popular measure of right and wrong. Where people who hold this view say that the measure of right and wrong is determined by the majority of people. What the majority say is right is right, and what the majority say is wrong, is wrong.

"Daddy, can I steal?"

"Well, Johnny, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll call the family together and we'll have a vote. And if the majority says you can steal, of course you can steal. If the majority says you can't, of course you can't."

Of course, there's plenty of Biblical warrant for this, isn't there? What do I remember at the foot of Mount Sinai? Do I remember that Aaron was convinced of this idea of the popular decision of right and wrong, and Moses was dead against it? Do I remember that Aaron approved of the people deciding whether they would make a golden calf and worship it? I think I do.

And what about Pilate's hall, when our Lord and Saviour was there on trial? "What is truth?" said Pilate. For my part, I don't think that was just a throwaway line. I think Pilate was saying, "Where do I find my measure

of right and wrong?" And in the end he listened to the voice of the people around him. He listened to the popular call.

These are three possible measures of right and wrong. Each depends on the opinion of people.

The fourth possibility is that the measure of right and wrong — the humanist would say "exists". The Christian, or other religious person, would say, "No, the measure of right and wrong was established by God at the Creation. The right and wrong is God's decision." And the Christian would say that God has graciously disclosed His measure of right and wrong, at least to some degree, if not totally, in the Bible. Thus it is to the Bible which we go to find what God says about any issue.

Is it surprising then when we turn to 2 Timothy 3:16 — that's an easy one to remember, isn't it? We all know John 3:16, we can equally easily remember 2 Timothy 3:16, can't we? What's it say? "The Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus."

Wise for salvation? Yes, you might say, but that's only one aspect of education, isn't it? Being wise for salvation. Well the Christian would say that that's the most important aspect of the training of a child. I would want my children to be wise for salvation. I don't know about you folk, but that would be my fundamental wish and prayer for my children.

"The Scriptures are able to make you wise for Salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus." Then in verse 16, "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

My definition of education - well, when I say that it's mine, it's one that I sort of adopt - my definition of education is "training in righteousness". Being rebuked, so that the person being trained will be turned towards righteousness. Being corrected, so that righteousness - this is God's measure of right and wrong - will be the measure of right and wrong for my children. This is the whole purpose of teaching, that they may be thoroughly equipped for good works.

And then as I turn to Ephesians 2:10, "We are God's workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus, to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

So I have for myself, at any rate, a definition of education. Training for good works. That is, God's works. The works that He has prepared for us to do. And that, I perceive, as being the object of education of children.

It's a very interesting question, isn't it, when we ask, "Where does the government enter into this education picture? Does the government have a responsibility to ensure that I train my children, prepare them to do the good works that God has established for them to do? Does the government have any position at all in that?"

Some, even Christians, would say, "Yes, most certainly. I mean, the government has responsibility for absolutely everything. And David, if you are not training your children in God's way, then David, you are distinctly in breach of the measure of right and wrong, you are distinctly in breach of the law, and you ought to be punished."

But in today's Australia, in general terms, people would not hold the same definition of education that I've put to you tonight. Their definition would be rather different. The usual definition would be one of the others that I've put forward as possibilities. Definitions derived from a humanist background, and a humanist perspective. There is, then, a basic division between those who would seek to honour the Lord God as first, and those who would seek to honour mankind as first.

Now I know that if we honour the Lord God, we do honour mankind. I know it follows. If we honour mankind, do we necessarily honour the Lord God? Does that necessarily follow? I think not. For, if we place man first, or accept man's ultimate measure of right and wrong, we can reject the idea of God — at least we think we can — and for those who think they can, I can only hope that they're right. For if it should happen to be that the Bible position is the true one, if it should happen to be that each person has to give an account before the eternal God, then it's quite a tragedy for those who don't recognise their responsibility under God, isn't it?

In our education system of bringing up children, the government is be-

coming more and more interested. In a book titled, *The Assault on Parenthood: How Our Culture Undermines the Family* by Dana Mack, it is suggested that parental autonomy is being supplanted by the tyranny of so-called experts in psychology, education, social science, and law. That instead of helping families, the institutions, that is, schools, courts, social service agencies, and even religious groups are actively fostering a culture of hatred towards parents. I think we all know that in many schools now, children are taught to question their parents. They're taught to question the principles that motivate their parents. They're taught to question whether their parents really *are* right. They're taught to work things out for themselves and not to rely on their parents for decision making.

Under the fairly recent *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, children are given many rights as against their parents. They're given the right, for example, to associate with people of their choice, with children of their choice, rather than with children of their parent's choice.

Of course, corporal punishment, spanking of any kind, even by parents, is frowned upon very much indeed, and is not normally allowed in schools at all. I don't know what your attitude to spanking is. Some would say that my personal attitude fits in very nicely with the present views of discipline, for it's not been my general practice to paddle my child. I've only had one, it's not been my general practice to paddle him at all. I have used other means of discipline. However, the precocious little fellow went to school, and I had a telephone call from his headmaster (they call them principal nowadays, don't they?) on the telephone saying, "I've just had occasion to spank your child."

I said, "Oh, well done!"

And he said, "Do you mean that?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you want to know what he did?"

I said, "No. No, I've sent him to school to be trained in my way, and I don't need to know what he's done. I trust you completely not to spank him unnecessarily, and I'm just surprised that you're telephoning me to tell me,

unless you want to tell me that I have to do something additional?"

He said, "No, I think he's had his punishment."

I said, "Well, I don't understand why you're telephoning me."

And he said, "Well, the real reason I'm telephoning you, is that that little angel of yours, said to me, when I spanked him, 'You know, Mr. Headmaster, my dad's a lawyer — and that's assault! And as soon as I get out of school, I'm going to telephone my dad, and he'll have your insides for those things . . .'"

I was a lawyer in those days, but I said, "What about calling him in, and giving him some more?"

I'm not sure whether the headmaster did or not, but my dear little angel has never mentioned it to me, from that day to this.

What they are saying, in effect, is "Don't discipline the children." Why? Because you will affect their psyche. You will put in them some sort of inhibition that will go with them through the rest of their lives. I wonder if there's anyone here who was never spanked? Yes, me too, me too.

Nearly all the rest of us haven't had much lasting harm from it, have we? Most of us have had much lasting good from it. Now, I am not promoting necessarily the spanking of children. I *am* promoting the disciplining of children. And in today's education system, discipline is more or less non-existent.

There is a major attack on the structure of society. Is it surprising that teenagers and others, particularly those who are out of work, trouble the community? Is it surprising when they have not learnt discipline at home and at school? The authorities talk about increasing police forces, cracking down hard on criminal offenders, but do they talk about discipline in their young years? Do they talk about the training, about the correction, about the rebuking, about training in righteousness? Do they talk about these things? Hardly, hardly. Not at all. Because the whole of our educational

thrust has gone towards a humanist position. That has not always been so. If you were to read the book called *Church and State*, it is a tremendous history of how Victorian education started from the position of Godliness, started with God's measure of right and wrong as the measure of truth. God's measure of training as the proper measure of training for children, the Scriptures as the proper basis for training in the schools.

I don't know whether any of you remember the Nelson Royal Readers. Unless you were at school in the late part of last century, or in the early part of this century, you probably would not. But these Nelson Royal Readers were the graded reading material for Victorian schools. For example, on page 148 of the Fifth Class (that's Primary School) Royal Reader, these words: "And when man to judgment wakes from clay, be thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay." And so on it goes.

There are two other books I want to mention, one from earlier this century. *Education, Christianity and the State* by J. Gresham Machen.¹ It's been out of print for a few years. It really is fundamental in getting to grips with the philosophy of education, of government philosophy of education, of Christian philosophy of education, and whether the two can be melded or incorporated.

The third book is called *Intellectual Schizophrenia* by Dr. R.J. Rushdoony.² It's not readily available. These things just don't turn up in ordinary bookshops, you've got to go to lots and lots of effort to get them. This is an up-to-date presentation of the position in the United States with regard to state school, Christian schools, and the general philosophy of education.

Now in this state of Victoria, all sorts of interesting things are happening. There are small Christian schools starting all over the state. Some of them have only two or three pupils. You might say, "Ah, but that's not a school." Well, if it isn't a school, what is it? In order to get government approval, a school needs something like

20 pupils, and if the school has 20 pupils and state-trained and state-qualified teachers — that is teachers who have been trained in just the way that the government believes training should happen, and who the government certifies as being appropriately trained. If you have such teachers, you will be able to have your school approved by the government.

Over the years in the Presbyterian Church, there has been quite a disagreement and argument as to the extent to which the church should allow schools to be approved by the government or funded by the government. You'll find some of that argument in Gregory's *Church and State*. I don't know what your attitude is to a school not being able to exist without government approval. I don't know what your attitude is toward the government providing taxpayer's money for Christian schools, or for schools at all. I don't want to talk about those things tonight. It's a big question, and there's lots of argument on both sides.

I do want to say that in this state, and across Australia, the government is seeking more and more to control schools. It's very hard to get a school registered in Victoria now. It's almost a miracle that Mr. Schultz has managed to have Bethel registered, and the wonderful Christian teachers that he's had. I was privileged to have a look at that school today, and the children really were enjoying their learning beyond measure. It was really a quality performance. . . . (I don't get paid to advertise the school, do I? . . . All right, in that case, I'll stop.)

As I think about what's been happening across Australia with regard to government control of schools, it just occurred to me that it's strange that you ask a preacher, a minister, to come and talk about education. I was at another school recently where I heard three boys having a typical schoolyard argument. One of them said, "My dad's better than your dad. My dad's the schoolteacher. You've got to pay fees to come here, but my dad teaches me things for nothing!"

1. *Education, Christianity, and the State: Essays by J. Gresham Machen* (ed: John W. Robbins, Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1987).
2. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Intellectual Schizophrenia: Culture Crisis and Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., [1961] 1976).

"Oh," said the second boy, "absolute nonsense! My dad's better than your dad. My dad's the doctor, and he makes me well for nothing." And the third one said, "Oh no, my dad's better than either of your dads! He's the minister, and he makes me good for nothing!" So why you bothered to have a preacher rather than a teacher at this podium tonight, I find it difficult to understand.

Some years ago, I was privileged to meet the principal of a Christian school in South Australia. I'll just embroider a little the circumstances in which we met, but it was something like this: The school had been prosecuted for operating without government approval. In other words, it was an unregistered school. What had happened was that registration came into existence for the very first time in South Australia in 1982. You see, registration of schools is a new idea. And it was 1982, for the first time, the school registered with the government. It was inspected, duly approved.

In the fulness of time, the inspectors came to do a re-evaluation of the school, and they were shocked. They found that the children in the school were all facing to the front, and the teacher was up the front of the class? Do you know that the desks were so far apart that they couldn't pass things to each other during class? And indignity of indignities, do you know that when the children wanted something, they couldn't call out, "Hey Bill!" — the teacher, Bill — "Hey, Bill, I want to be excused!" Do you know, they couldn't do that? They had to put their hand up and wait there until the teacher deigned to notice them. What terrible, terrible training for the children.

So the education department wrote to the school and said we are not satisfied that your education is of a sufficient standard to warrant the continuation of your registration, so therefore you are hereby de-registered.

The school board in this country town in South Australia had a look at this and said, "Oh well. We existed for some considerable time before the registration came in, and we don't like this very much. I mean, what's the point of being registered anyway?" So they just decided to continue on. But they received that little blue piece of paper, and the headmaster went along to the court room and lodged a plea of

guilty to conducting an unregistered school, and was duly fined \$300 and he went back to the school and said to the board, "Well, we've paid our debt to society." And the board said, "All right, if we've paid our debt to society, we go on operating."

The education department didn't know quite what to do. So they referred it of course to the Minister of Education. He didn't know quite what to do either. So they amended the law in South Australia, it would seem to me, specially for this school. They amended the law so that the law provided that for a second offence: there was a penalty of \$1,000 a day for every day that the school continued operating after the first offence.

So the inspectors duly turned up in the fulness of time, several years later. \$1000 a day remember for several years. The inspectors duly turned up, found the school operating, and prosecution proceedings were instituted again. The principal of the school consulted a lawyer in Adelaide — and here's where the little bit of embroidery comes in — consulted a lawyer in Adelaide. And the lawyer said, "Well, Mr. Principal, look, you've already been convicted. There's just no way — you just have to close the school at once, you'll get a very hefty fine, and you'll just have to go to court and plead guilty and suffer the consequences."

And the principal said to him, "Oh, but look, surely there's some lawyer who will represent us." And the lawyer said, "I don't think so, Mr. Principal. Unless . . . there's just one who might be mad enough." So I came in contact with the principal and went off to South Australia, and we went before the magistrate, and there was duly a conviction, and the appropriate penalty was imposed.

Then we appealed on up to the Court of Appeal of South Australia, with the three judges in the Court of Appeal. And I had some 16 separate grounds of defence. In the Court of Appeal, I said, "Look, you've just prosecuted the wrong person." I said this all the way through. The judges kept on saying to me, "Well, who should have been prosecuted?"

I said, "I don't say anyone should have been prosecuted. But what I'm saying is, they've got the wrong per-

son." And they said, "But surely you'll tell us who they should have . . .?"

And I said, "I'm not saying they should have prosecuted anyone. I'm just saying this is the *wrong* person." So the offence, of course, is conducting an unregistered school. Now the three judges found the school not guilty. As I say, there were 16 grounds of defence. Each of the judges adopted some grounds of defence, but only on one of them was there unanimity among the judges.

It was a very technical point: the letter that had gone to the school, saying that they were de-registered, said that the Department was not satisfied that the standard was good enough. Whereas the Act said the only reason for de-registration was if the Department was satisfied that the standard was *not* good enough. So we said they had applied the wrong test.

It was a very, very technical defence, but it was successful before the three judges in the Court of Appeal. I mention that case in South Australia because of its consequences in Victoria, where the Croydon Baptist Church in Melbourne was prosecuted for conducting an unregistered school. How this came about: that school's been in operation for quite some time, but two children were withdrawn from the local state school to go to the Croydon Baptist Church Christian School. And the principal of the local state school lodged a complaint to the Education Department that his children were being taken away and sent to an unregistered school.

The prosecution proceedings were duly instituted, but having in mind what had happened in South Australia, instead of prosecuting those who they thought were conducting the school, they prosecuted the teachers for aiding and abetting the offence of conducting a school.

Now there is a question as to whether aiding and abetting is an offence in Victoria. We never had to get a decision on that, but we argued that to some degree. The basis of our argument was: that the Croydon Baptist Church's school was not a school at all because they used the A.C.E. system, the Accelerated Christian Education system. And the definition of a school which was accepted by the court, is that school is a place where children between the ages of six and sixteen go

to be taught by a teacher, and with the A.C.E. system where the children learn from their PACEs, we demonstrated that the children did not go there to be taught by a teacher, therefore it was not a school.

The magistrate accepted this argument, and a number of others that I put up to him. And the Education Department appealed to the Supreme Court. In the Supreme Court, the judge again upheld that argument, and in the providence of the Lord, he included in his judgment, the suggestion that I'd made that Australia is a Christian country. And he included that in his judgment, which is rather nice to have in the judgment of the Supreme Court of Victoria, that Australia is a Christian country, and he agreed that it wasn't a school at all, therefore staff could not be convicted. No one could be convicted of conducting or participating in the running of an unregistered school, because what they were running was not a school.

Since that case, there have been a multitude of meetings of the Ministers — Education Ministers of each of the state governments — and the heads of the Education Departments, and they've discussed those cases up and down and backwards and forwards. And all states have toughened up their law on the registration of schools, and it is now very hard to register a school. But there have been no prosecutions since. When the next one will be I do not know. Of course, there are a number of unregistered schools in Victoria.

In some states, the . . . can I call it an attack? No, I don't think I can properly call it an attack. The observation of the government of the Education Department is directed towards homeschoolers. And it is directed toward unregistered homeschoolers and registered homeschoolers who do not train their children properly. Or at least properly in accordance with the government's view of properness.

In Victoria, the situation of homeschoolers is quite different. If you were to look at the Education Act, and the Act which requires the registration of schools, you will find that there is no

offence of failing to attend school, or of failing to send your children to school. You will not find the offence of truancy in the Education Act of the state of Victoria. Indeed, truancy is to be found in the Welfare Act. And the Welfare Act provides that a child is not a truant if he's being properly educated.

So homeschoolers and parents who might have your children at an unregistered school, don't fear that you're going to be prosecuted for failing to have your child at a registered school, because in Victoria at the moment, it is a complete defence to show that your child is adequately educated.

So prosecutions of unregistered homeschoolers are not happening in Victoria at the moment. It looks to me as if the next swag of prosecutions on unregistered homeschoolers is likely to be in New South Wales, but that remains to be seen.

Finally, I want to say congratulations to those who are running the school here. I want to say that the question of whether you send your child to a state school or to a Christian school might be a matter of preference, or it might be a matter of conscience.

I really do think that every person needs to consider whether the training they're giving their children is being given to the children out of conscience, or out of preference? Is it easier? Is it cheaper? Is it closer? Ah well, are there a lot more children going to this school, I'll send my child there? Is it preference, or is it conscience?

Does a Christian need to exercise his or her conscience to ensure that children are removed from the humanistic system of education? Should a Christian be saying, "Well, I don't want to hothouse my child. You know, really, in real life, when the child grows up, he's going to have to be with these humanist-trained people, these godless types, and he'd better learn it while he's young."

Are there any gardeners here? I expect there are. I expect some of you put some effort into your garden. And I

expect especially during the hard winters you put your young tender plants into a hothouse, protect them from the frost? And when the plant is strong enough, and big enough, you put it out in the elements, when it can really stand on its own.

I don't know whether that's why we give special attention to our young children, why we feed them in a different way from the ones who are somewhat older, why we tuck them into bed at night, why we read stories to them. Is it because we need to give the young children special training? Or should we put them straight onto adult food?

Oh, David, you're really off the point, aren't you? Really, you know that their young tummies, their young systems, they're just not ready for adult food. Look, if you've got a child, David, you've really got to care for that child, especially from a physical point of view.

My friends, what about an educational point of view? Do we have to care for the children from an educational point of view?

In conclusion — and I really have spoken for far too long (it's the habit of Presbyterian ministers, and I see one or two here, and they will sympathise, even if no one else does) — I want to say that the government control of education is not only for those between the age of six and sixteen but the government of one of the states has recently made a law, making it illegal for adults to be trained, even in the ways of their own choice, unless the institution is approved by the government. Fun, isn't it?

Oh I'm sure they're acting with the very, very best of motives. Please, I'm not suggesting that anyone is acting maliciously or to their likes, improperly. I am saying, they don't understand. What don't they understand? They don't understand the call of the Eternal God. They don't understand the freedom in Christ Jesus. Freedom to them means something quite different. It means free to follow what the government decides. Whereas freedom in Christ Jesus means freedom to follow in the ways of Christ.