

*Rendering to Caesar the Things that Are God's,
Statism: the Golden Calf of the Modern World*
By Stephen McDowell

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Rendering to Caesar the Things that Are God's

Statism: the Golden Calf of the Modern World

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’” (Ex. 32:7-8)

Israel worshiped a golden calf. Many Christians in the world today, especially the western world, worship a golden calf as well. But this is not a physical golden calf. It is something more subtle, but just as destructive. It is the golden calf of socialism, the god of statism. This false god is one of the greatest threats to Christianity in the 21st Century.¹ In recent elections we have seen people tearing off their “gold rings” and clamoring for such a god. To those who worship this golden calf it seems to be a good god that will do good things for them. It promises them provision, security, comfort, and much more. Beware! This god will gradually consume you, your family, your business, and your freedom.

Consider one small action of this golden calf as reported in *World Magazine*, June 9, 2007:²

“Melissa is finally home, but it took almost three months for the 16-year-old German to return. Along the way, she went halfway around the world, through a psychiatric ward, a children’s home, and foster care — all because her parents homeschool her.”

“Homeschooling is illegal in Germany. A Nazi-era prohibition, the ban grew out of Hitler’s worry that too much parental control would supersede the state’s influence.” Even so, about 400 German families homeschool. But they face “fines, imprisonment, and loss of custody of their children.”

Despite the risk, when disruptive classes made Melissa fall behind in math and Latin, her parents decided to tutor her at home. She took

advanced courses in English and French and sang in the school choir at a community college, but the school she had been attending noticed her absence and alerted authorities.

The family skirted the police for months, even sending Melissa to Australia to avoid the state of Bavaria taking her into custody. But on Feb. 1, 15 police officers in multiple cars arrived at the Busekros home and took Melissa, then 15 years old. "It was like the Russian invasion of [Czechoslovakia] or Hungary," said Melissa's father, Hubert Busekros.

In custody Melissa underwent a psychiatric evaluation that found she had "school phobia." The state placed her in a clinic's psychiatric wing for two weeks. She complained and said she preferred being homeschooled, but officials told her this was the result of "tyrannical" parents forcing her into it.

Melissa stayed briefly at a Catholic girls' home and then she was placed by authorities with a foster family on Feb. 16. They treated her well, but Melissa wanted to go home. She knew when she turned 16 she would have more rights regarding where she lived. "So on her birthday, April 23, at 10 minutes past midnight, she left her foster family as they slept." After writing a good-bye note, she slipped out the window, and trekked some 60 miles to her home.

The authorities continued to press their case against the Busekroses, but the family won a major court appeal on May 16 that returned Melissa to her parents' custody. While this instance turned out happily for the family, this is usually not the case as German courts almost always rule against homeschooling families since, according to one activist who followed the case, "they don't want parallel societies."

Statist nations do not want and cannot afford to have parallel societies. All those who believe and act contrary to the statist philosophy will find themselves gradually restricted in their rights and freedoms. A society cannot serve two gods. It cannot have two sources of authority, law, and morality. One will ultimately prevail. Statism is the belief that the civil government (or man via civil government) is the ultimate authority in the earth and as such is the source of law and morality. The state defines what is right and wrong, what is lawful and unlawful, what is moral and immoral. The state becomes the de facto god of the society, or in the words of Roscoe Pound, President of Harvard Law School in the 1920s, "the state takes the place of Jehovah."³

Jesus taught that we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

In attempting to trap Jesus, the Pharisees sent their disciples to ask Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not (see Matthew 22:15-21). Knowing their malice, Jesus responded by having them show a coin and asking them whose image was inscribed upon it. When they replied, "Caesar's," he said, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." Jesus was teaching an extremely important concept here — that of jurisdictional authority. Jesus used a coin with Caesar's image upon it to illustrate that civil government does indeed have certain jurisdictional authority, such as in the area of taxation. However, Christ went on to pronounce that the state's jurisdiction is limited when He said that we are to render "to God the things that are God's." The inference is that there is a sphere of life where civil government (i.e. Caesar) has no jurisdiction at all. That sphere is implied here as involving the soul and mind of men, being made, not in Caesar's image, but in the image of God. Jesus was affirming that religious worship and opinions, and any endeavor relating to thoughts or speech, must remain completely free from government control.

This is the Biblical idea of the separation of church and state. It is not like the modern idea, which says we must remove God from public life. The principle of separation of church and state, the separation of school and state, and the separation of the press and speech from the control of the state, which are articulated in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, are rooted in this historic political teaching of Christ. Before Christianity, the pagan world always included religion and education under the jurisdiction of the state. It was a radical political concept for Christ to declare that Caesar's power should be limited and, therefore, was used against Jesus when He was convicted of treason and crucified under Roman law. Christ's teaching has since changed the western world.

Caesar thought he was Lord, but Christians declared that "Jesus is Lord." Caesar saw this declaration by early believers as a threat to the state and to his reign and, hence, persecuted and killed many Christians.

The responsibilities of the state are to be distinguished from that of the individual, family, and church. Usurpation of authority occurs when one jurisdiction encroaches upon another jurisdiction. The result is tyranny. Usurpation is exercising authority or power that belongs to another. It is "the act of seizing or occupying and enjoying the property of another, without right."

Rendering to Caesar the Things that Are God's

Jesus taught that we are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, but today Christians throughout the world have been rendering to Caesar the things that are God's. It is not surprising that secularists will do this because, since they have no god (but themselves) the state readily becomes their default god. It is surprising that Christians are worshipping this golden calf.

Does this mean they are worshipping the civil government? Do people have images of the Capitol in their house that they bow down to each day? Do they have Barak Obama bobble-heads on their coffee tables that they pray to each day? No, their idolatrous action is not so obvious.

The second commandment says, "you shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exodus 20:4-6). Habakkuk 2:18 says: "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols." Isaiah described well the absurdity and futility of those who worship the very thing they create. In chapter 44, verses 9-19, Isaiah tells how a man planted and raised trees, then cut one down and burned part of it to warm himself and prepare his food. "But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, 'Deliver me, for thou art my god'" (Isa. 44:17).

We would consider it stupid to worship the thing we create with our own hands. Modern western man wouldn't think of making a golden calf, setting it up in his living room, and bowing down before it. What he does is much more subtle.

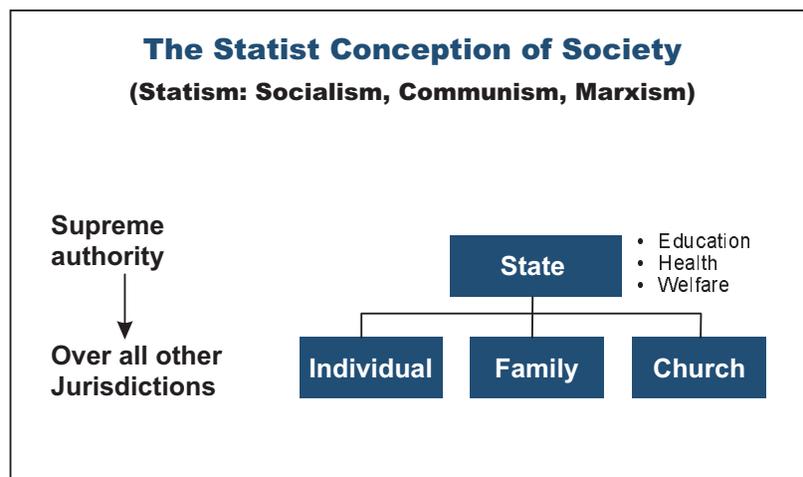
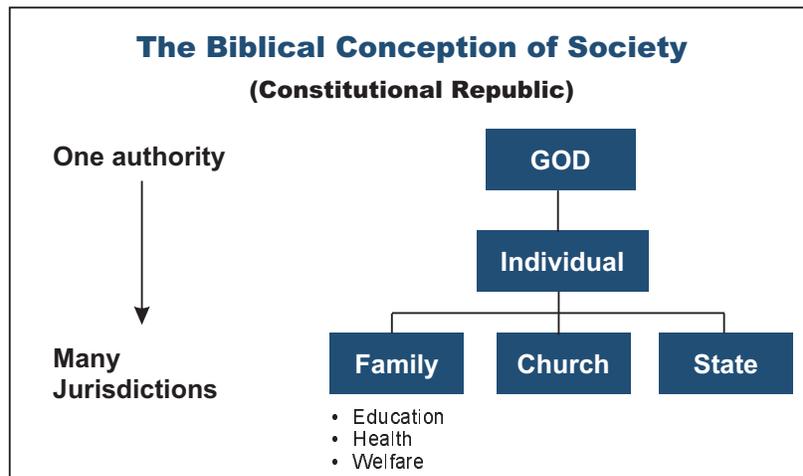
Humanists are sophisticated idol makers. They are like the guy who carves an idol and worships it — they trust in their own handiwork. They create their own laws, think up their own value systems, form their own governmental and educational systems, and worship them, trusting in them to be "god" (that which is right and true). They can do this, but it is not too smart, for if it is not based upon God's truth, it will lead to ruin. Such idol worship produces bondage, not liberty.

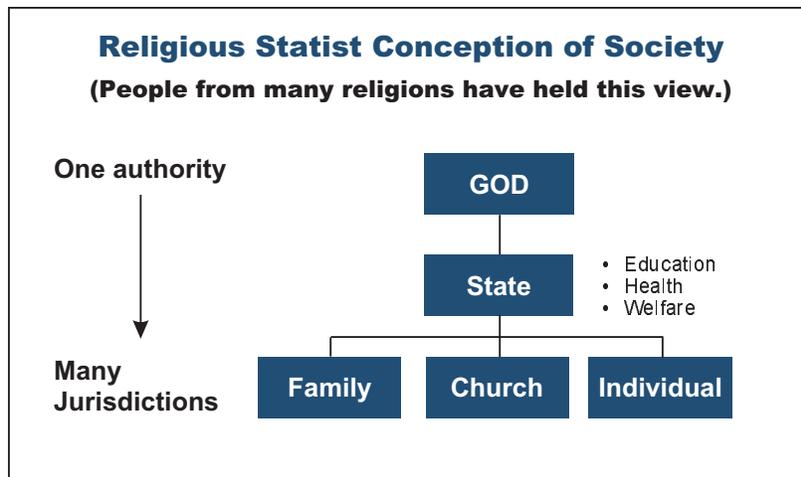
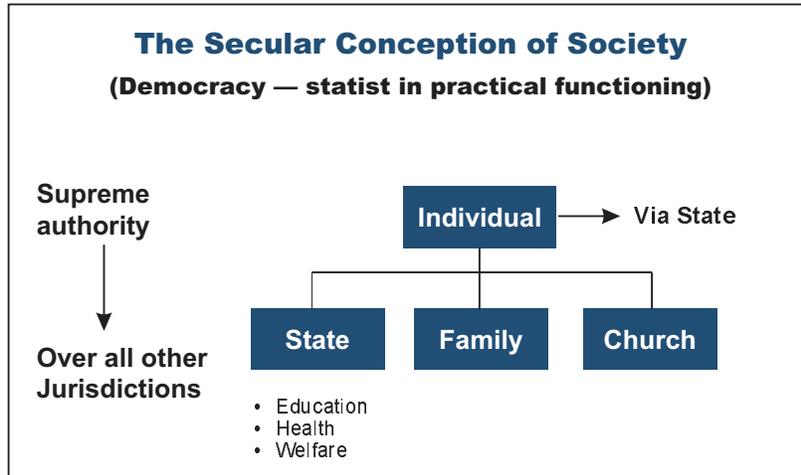
Isaiah speaks of those who worship what they create, ending by asking, "Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" (Isaiah 44:19). Americans must ask themselves, "Shall we as a nation fall down before a block of wood?" "Shall we worship the creation of our own hand?" Shall we look to civil government to be our provider, our comforter, our savior, our god? Jeremiah warns that those who do "are altogether stupid and foolish" (Jer. 10:8).

While civil government is a divine institution with an important purpose, it is very limited in what it is suppose to do — it basically is to protect the life,

liberty, and property of its citizens (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:14). But we have made it like Babel, thinking the state (something of our own creation) will do much more than God says it is to do, where it takes on the role of God, the family, the church, and business. Many people look to the state to meet their needs from cradle to grave, to bring peace and utopia on earth, to help them in times of trouble, to solve all their problems, to care for them when they are sick, and to control and regulate all things. We as a nation have given over to the state many of the responsibilities that God says belong to individuals, the family, or the church.

The following charts give a brief comparison of the Biblical conception of society (and the role of civil government) with various man-made views of how societies should be governmentally structured.⁴





What Are We Rendering to Caesar?

In what way have we rendered to Caesar the things that are God's? Before answering this we must understand the great liberty Christ brought to mankind. We must understand the freedom we have in Christ.

Jesus came announcing a gospel of liberty — we can be freed to direct our own affairs under God. Even God Himself does not seek to control man from without, but desires man to want to obey Him from within. His kingdom is birthed within us, where we consent to live in it. God does judge the acts of every man, but He does not control all the actions of men. Jesus gave to the state

what it can take by force — money (via taxes), material things, and even His physical life (for a time) — but He never gave His freedom, His self-determination to accomplish His purpose, and His belief in His Father.

Many have given to Caesar the control of their lives (or at least part of their lives) thinking that government or leaders should control them and/or provide for them. We are not to render to Caesar our liberty, our self-determination, our provision or care. We become slaves if we do so. God created man and desires redeemed man to live free under Him, to act and make choices, to labor and be productive, to take dominion. He wants us to govern our destiny, our children, and our property.

Throughout history many men have resigned themselves to the idea that their lot in life is already determined and they can do little about it — two examples include the Hindu caste system and the feudal system (where some were peasants and laborers, some lords, some knights). These have surrendered to the idea that other people or circumstances govern who they are, what they will do, and where they will be. The Christian idea of man and the Christian idea of history declare something different. God says we can change things. If there is evil in society, then we can and should change it! If something is wrong in our life, we can change it (by God's grace). We can be changed and we can change society because we have access to God and all His truth and liberty, and He tells us that we are to continually grow into His image.

God wants us to live free under Him, directing our own affairs, in covenant with others, fulfilling His purposes for our lives. It is not for others, via government or force, to direct our lives or tell us everything to do (from how to educate our children to what food to eat, to how to spend our money, or how to support the poor). We are not to give to the state control of our lives, liberty, or property; nor are we to look to government to provide our needs, manage our affairs, or fulfill our responsibilities.

Earthly authorities are not intended to control us. We are to govern ourselves under God and His standard of truth. We should seek to change the mentality of letting others govern. It is true that civil government is supposed to restrict unlawful behavior of men who would take or threaten the life, liberty, and property of others. It wields the sword for this reason (Rom. 13:4). It controls evil men, but not those who do what is right.

Freedom to choose is one key way we are like God. As we choose in a way that pleases Him, we bring Him glory. When we are deprived of this ability to make free choices by evil governments (or other evil men), then part of our God-likeness is suppressed. Thus it is not surprising that man will pay almost

any price to get freedom. Patrick Henry's cry, "Give me liberty or give me death!" resonates deep in the heart of all men created in His image.

We have rendered to Caesar the things that are God's in two primary ways:

1. Control of children

Americans (and most American Christians) have given control of education to the civil government. (Nearly 90% of all youth attend state schools.) Most have assumed the idea that the state should provide and govern the education of its citizens. They believe the state should provide "free" education for everyone, and more than this, that they should force everyone to go to school. In many nations, they are forced to go to the state schools (or if there are private schools the state must control them via curriculum requirements, regulations, etc.).

Education is the means of propagating a kingdom on the earth. Biblical education brings God's kingdom; present-day state education brings man's kingdom.⁵ The Scripture says that children are arrows parents use to shoot into the future (Psalms 127:4). This is how we shape the future. If we turn this over to government, we are surrendering control of that which God has put into our hands as the most effective way to fulfill His purpose for us to disciple the nations.

Martin Luther wrote: "I am afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."⁶

Theologian A.A. Hodge wrote: "I am as sure as I am of the fact of Christ's reign that a comprehensive and centralized system of national education separated from religion, as is now commonly proposed, will prove the most appalling enginery for the propagation of anti-Christian and atheistic unbelief, and of anti-social, nihilistic ethics, individual, social, and political, which this sin-rent world has ever seen."⁷

Hodge's warning has become a reality. During the 20th century public education in America was taken over by secularists who replaced an underlying Biblical philosophy with a man-centered humanistic philosophy, with its foundational ideas of relativism, positivism, and humanism.⁸ Tens of millions of citizens have come out of these schools embracing a new religion, where man is his own god and the state is the savior. This is the primary way that socialism has become so predominant in the belief system of people throughout the world. (Biblical education is the primary way that socialism will be ex-

posed as bankrupt and rejected by Christians and the American public at large.)

The Bible teaches that **parents have the right and responsibility to govern the education of their children** (see Deut. 6:5-9; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 1:8; Prov. 22:6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).⁹ A fundamental idea for any society that is free must be that parents have the final say as to how their children are educated. If there is not freedom to choose this, then there is little freedom.

Some Christians say their children (or others) went to state schools and came out okay, retaining their faith. That may be true, but it was not because of the state schools; rather it was in spite of them. Government schools are humanistic in philosophy, in ideology, and in structure. Bad seeds cannot produce good fruit.

There are many other actions of government in recent years that have resulted in loss of parental control of children. These include:

- Failure to stand for Biblical discipline of children — most western nations forbid spanking (some European countries encourage children to report their parents to authorities who spank).
- Breakdown of family by promoting non-Biblical family structures, such as homosexual marriages and civil unions.
- No fault divorce promotes the breakdown of the family and loss of ability to train children.
- In many nations, the government seeks total control of the education of children, demanding all schools, private and public, to teach only state approved curriculum.
- A California court ruling in early 2008 said parents do not have a right to educate their children at home. While this was rescinded, such rulings and laws will continue to be pressed upon Americans by the statists/socialists, for this is part of their ideology.

2. Control of property

God owns all the property. The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, but He has given to men the responsibility to steward His earth for Him. In particular, He has given to the family the right to manage most of the property in the earth. It is okay for churches and governments to own small amounts to enable them to fulfill their purpose in the earth. For example, the state can own forts or town halls and the church can own meeting houses.

Civil governments have always sought to control and/or own the property within its domain. Fallen leaders have the tendency to think all power and property belongs to them. They may share a little with some lords and nobles if they help them to keep their power. Caesars, kings, monarchs, and tyrants have

sought this from the time of the fall of man. Some men have espoused property for all, yet acted through their unbiblical philosophies contrary to this (for example, those promoting Marxism, communism, and socialism). Even nations founded upon individual property rights have to watch the tendency for the gradual usurpation of this right by the state. This has been occurring in America through various means, such as:

(1) Property taxes, inheritance taxes, graduated income taxes.

You may think you own property in America (and we do in some sense), but just see what happens to *your* property if you do not pay your property taxes. Property taxes are in essence the state laying ultimate claim to all property because if you do not pay your property taxes then the state will confiscate *your* property and sell it to obtain the taxes you owe (and give you what, if any, is left over). You have no recourse from the state taking your property. Inheritance taxes diminish the ability for parents to lay up an inheritance for their children, as is their Biblical duty, for the state takes part of the property (most of which was already taxed during their life) that God intends to be passed on to each succeeding generation. This increasing inheritance, coupled with increasing ability to be productive, makes each generation wealthier than the one before. This is God's design in Biblical societies. Graduated income taxes violate many Biblical principles, with a few mentioned below.

(2) Ideas of sharing the wealth by taking from the productive and giving to the less productive.

The socialistic concept of taking from the productive and giving to the non-productive is contrary to Biblical principles. Compare socialism to the parable of the *talents* or *minas* in Matthew 25 (and Luke 19). Socialism takes from the productive by force via civil government and gives to the unproductive or less productive. Jesus taught in this parable that the man who buried his *talent* — that is, he did not increase what he had through trade — had his *talent* taken from him and given to the man who had multiplied his. The master distributed *talents* according to each servant's ability to be productive. (He gave 5 talents to the servant who produced 5 more, 2 to the servant who made 2 more, and only one to the servant who had no increase). Socialism gives to each based upon need; a Biblical system gives to each based upon his ability. That is, in a free society with a free economic system, those who have the most ability to be productive will experience the most increase. This will help everyone though, for they will create jobs and wealth for many others (even those who are afraid and would tend to bury their talent). This does not discount the Biblical injunction to assist the poor. We are to do this, but in a Biblical manner. Central to God's method of assisting the poor is to get them to work by learn-

ing skills and trades and/or removing oppression so they have the freedom to work freely. Gleaning incorporates labor and the Bible clearly states that if you don't work, you don't eat.¹⁰

President Barak Obama has expressly proclaimed he wants to spread the wealth around using the force of civil government, that it is good to do this and the mark of American ideals.¹¹ This is not an American ideal. This is socialism. America was founded upon principles that rejected this Marxist idea. This is one reason why America prospered more than any nation in history. It is as we have rejected Biblical principles of individual enterprise and free markets that our prosperity and freedoms have diminished.

Americans have embraced worshiping the golden calf of statism, and see no problem in rendering to Caesar the things that are God's, to the extent that we elected a socialist President and Congress in 2008. We have had socialist presidents in the past, but they never proudly proclaimed they stood for socialist principles. While President Obama and most congressmen do not embrace the label of socialist, they do proclaim ideas that a majority of Americans in the past would have easily recognized as socialistic. Today, too many Americans either do not see this or they gladly adhere to these principles, thus, showing how we as a nation are going the way of Babel.

(3) Excessive regulation of property, business, and land use; oppressive and expansive tax laws

While communism is classically defined as government ownership of property and the means of production of goods and services, socialism is defined as the control of property and the means of production of goods and services. Both are just a different shade of statism, and the end of both is loss of liberty and prosperity. Over the years America has seen the state gradually increasing the regulation of business, private property, land use, and personal behavior. Examples abound, including: an ever-increasing mountain of paper work needed to file taxes and comply with government, the state restricting how individuals use their private property since it may be a wetland or endanger a bug's life, and New York City outlawing restaurants using trans-fats. South Los Angeles even seriously considered forbidding fast food restaurants because their citizens were getting too fat and not eating healthy. You are too stupid to know how to take care of yourself so the all-caring and all-knowing state will mandate how you are to live. This is where the road of statism leads a nation.

(4) Eminent domain

The United States Constitution makes provision for the government to obtain private property if that property is needed for the government to perform

its function (which is primarily to protect the life, liberty, and property of the citizens) and if the property owner is fairly compensated. In the beginning of our history eminent domain by the state was narrowly restricted. However, over the years, as America has gradually become more socialistic, eminent domain has expanded greatly to the point where in recent years property has been taken by government, not for public use, but for private use.

In the year 2000 the City Council of New London, Connecticut, gave the power of eminent domain to a private company to force local home owners to sell their property so this private corporation could develop the area. The Council's view was that the new development would generate more taxes than the home owners were paying, and thus benefit the community at large. Some of the people who lived in the Fort Trumbull area did not want to sell their homes, even for "a million dollars." One owner said, "This is not about money."¹² Some of the owners fought the action in court. Each court ruled against them, but they kept appealing all the way up to the Supreme Court, who also ruled against them in the summer of 2005.

Statist governments will act as if they are sovereign in all things. As America has gradually moved from a Christian constitutional federal republic to a socialistic democracy, the state has exerted more and more control over the lives of the citizens, usurping the authority of individuals, families, and churches. God gave to the family the authority to govern both the education of children and the use of property. **Whoever controls the property in a nation controls the present; whoever controls the children, controls the future.** God has given these important responsibilities to the family, not the state. God wants the family to control the present and the future.

Other ways we have rendered to Caesar the things that are God's

In addition to giving the state control of our children and property, we have also given it authority and responsibility in other areas that God never intended. We have rendered unto Caesar the things that are God's in other ways, including:

- Control of health and welfare
- Looking to government to provide for individuals in times of trouble (from natural disasters like hurricanes and floods), in times without work, in sickness, in old age, etc.
- Government control of religion, ideas, etc.
- Looking to government as provider, peace-giver, source of utopia, helper in times of need
- Government provision for the poor. This is just another way for the state to control more property and to regulate your conduct. (Since you

are too mean and selfish to use your money to help others, we, the merciful and compassionate government, will make you do what is right.)

In recent elections, where one candidate was pro-life and pro-family but the other was pro-abortion and pro-homosexual family, I have heard some Christians say: "I'm pro-life and for the Biblical family, but I'm also for social justice and for helping the poor, and these issues are more important to me so I will vote for the pro-abortion candidate because he wants the government to spend more money helping the poor."

God is for helping the poor, but only on His terms. Having the government forcefully take money from some citizens and give it to others (with about 70% skimmed off for government bureaucrats) does not fulfill God's desire or means to help the poor. Such action does not help anyone. God's means for helping is through temporary assistance involving work (gleaning) or no interest loans (to be paid back when they get back on their feet), or gifts from those who **voluntary** give because they are motivated by God's heart.

Recipients of this help will be ingratiated to God and His people and not to civil government. Such people will not be enslaved to civil government nor be continually indebted and dependent upon the state. A state that provides all things becomes the modern plantation.

When the early church provided for the poor, widows, and orphans, the world was attracted to the great love these covenant people showed to each other. This action of voluntary giving pointed the lost to the living God. Today, the state forcefully uses citizens' money to meet needs of the poor (and that not too well or efficiently), who in turn look to the state as their provider. The state stands in the place of God and people become dependent upon the state instead of God.

Will We Sell Our Birthright?

Statist leaders will offer you many things if you place them in power. We see it in recent elections with politicians proclaiming, "I will bring change and make all things right, giving the poor and middle class more help, more jobs, more health care, more money, free education. Just elect me." Government can dish out some assistance, but it is always with a much greater price than it seems.

We must ask ourselves, "**Will we trade our freedom for a bowl of pottage?**" We may get a mess of pottage, but we will end up losing much liberty (and prosperity and more). Plans of socialist leaders may initially benefit us monetarily, but in the long run (and it won't be that long) they will harm us and

the nation economically. Of greatest consequence, their action will take away our freedoms. I am not prepared to trade away my liberty for a bowl of pottage.

Rebuilding the Tower of Babel

Bowing down to Caesar or civil government is not new today, nor was it new to the time of Caesar. It has existed since the fall of man, and was dramatically displayed at Babel. The builders of Babel proclaimed, “**Let us** build for ourselves a city . . . **let us** make for ourselves a name. . .”(Gen. 11:4). Man looked to himself as god (“a tower whose top will reach into heaven”), as his source of strength, supply, provision, and a legacy. He looked to what he himself had constructed. The tower represented society, culture, law, government, order, economy. Babel was a humanistic public works project.

Many people today are seeking to build another tower of Babel, declaring: “Let us build a nation. Let us make our own laws. Let us provide our needs. Let us build our own kingdom upon the earth.”

Unity is important for strength (Gen. 11: 6), but those at Babel attempted a unity apart from God, a unity based upon external actions, a unity contrary to God’s command. Unity via socialism does produce a greater empire than individual men doing their own thing, but this is a pagan unity brought about by external things. God’s unity comes internally, and this based upon His Spirit and truth. This is truly powerful. At Babel, God saw the power in unity and broke it up by confusing languages.

Socialism is an attempt of man to build his kingdom, through which he tries to take dominion over the earth. But we must build God’s Kingdom in the way He prescribes. Anything else He will resist. Plus, any kingdoms that men establish on their own cannot remain, for they do not have the right foundations nor the blessing of God.

America’s problem today is that we have rendered unto Caesar the things that are God’s. We have looked to the state to be our god. We are casting aside Christian liberty and replacing it with democratic socialism, a form of statism.

Statism: the Golden Calf of America

Socialism is the golden calf of America and the modern world. Socialism leads to the gradually increasing control of all things by the state. Socialism is a moderate form of statism, unlike Marxism or communism. Communism was too radical a form of statism to continue to survive overtly, and its bad fruit became evident to all, regardless of how much the common citizens were deceived and misinformed. (Communists would tell the Russians in school, as recent as the 1980s, that capitalism caused their shortages and lack, and it

would take some time to overcome this, but the land would eventually flow with abundance if they stuck to communism. But, of course, this never occurred, and could never occur.)

Socialism has gradually grown in many nations (or their old governments have morphed into modern socialism as monarchies have moved toward democracies). Enough freedom has existed in some nations to produce some prosperity, but most nations do not know the great freedom that Christian ideas of government and economics bring. We in America have known this in our past, and experience it more, even now, than any other nation, but we are laying this aside — we are selling our birthright for a bowl of pottage.

Statism has many forms — socialism, communism, Marxism, fascism, socialist democracy. Statism is the belief that the civil government (or man via civil government) is the ultimate authority in the earth and as such is the source of law, morality, and righteousness (that which is right and wrong). Statism is a religious belief. Socialism may be a mild form of statism, but it is rooted in the same non-biblical presuppositions. It is more dangerous because it is subtle and more difficult for people to recognize as evil. Socialism is unbiblical because it is man's attempt to control God's earth on his own terms. Moreover, socialism is demonic. From the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, Satan has attempted to control man and the earth. He has worked through men to exercise this control. Socialism is one of the vain philosophies through which Satan has taken many people captive (see Col. 2:8).

There are many negative consequences to statism. One is ever increasing taxes. Statism espouses state control and/or ownership of all property and control of all education (hence, the state controls the present and the future). But in order to control all things, the state must have an ever-increasing supply of money. It takes a lot of energy, man-power, and resources to control everyone's life and business. It also takes a lot of wisdom to know how to regulate the economy, business, the daily affairs of people, etc. In their arrogance, statisticians think they know what is best for men — how they should live and spend their money — but by their actions, statisticians have shown they have little wisdom, thus they will throw money at many things hoping something may work. (Just look at the nearly one trillion dollar 2009 stimulus package.) Since most of their actions do little good, they need to keep implementing more and more programs and spending more and more money.

Statism in the World Today

Statism is the dominant governmental philosophy in the world today. Some form of statism governs almost all (if not all) nations. Socialism has been advancing in the Western World and Christians have embraced this ide-

ology in various degrees. As socialism has advanced, freedom has diminished. Most people readily recognize there is little freedom where dictators rule (as in North Korea or Zimbabwe), where communism governs (as in China), or where religious states governed by a few elitists exist (as in Iran). It is more difficult for people to see that socialism leads to loss of liberty. Consider the following examples.

“Christian Socialism” in Western Europe

Christian socialism is an oxymoron, because the underlying presuppositions of socialism are not Biblical. Unfortunately, there are many Christian individuals who have embraced much of socialism’s tenets, especially in Western Europe, but there is a rapidly growing number in the United States as well. We should not be surprised that non-Christians embrace statism, for this is their default religion. We should be surprised and greatly concerned when Christians began to worship this false god.

America is the most prosperous nation in history. Our standard of living is higher than the socialist nations of Europe, as well as the rest of the world. European governments control and regulate the lives of their citizens much more than the American government does its citizens. Consequently, there is less liberty and less prosperity in these nations. Taxes are much higher, the per capita gross domestic product is lower, and the standard of living is lower for the average European compared to the average American. A recent study by Swedish economists found that “most Americans have a standard of living which the majority of Europeans will never come anywhere near.” “The really prosperous American regions have nearly twice the affluence of Europe.”¹³ By some measures poor Americans are better off than average Europeans. For example, they “have more square feet in their dwelling places (1228, or 438.6 per person) than the average Western European household (967.5, or 395.7 per person). By European standards, poor U.S. households also have astonishingly high rates of home ownership (45.9 percent), car ownership (72.8 percent), cable or satellite TV hookups (62.6 percent), VCR or DVD player ownership (78 percent), and microwave ownership (73.3 percent).”¹⁴

The economists who did this study point out “that if the 15 Western European nations in the European Union together became a U.S. state, it would rank ahead of only four other states in terms of per capita GDP.”¹⁵ A major reason for this lower productivity is the statist/socialistic policies of the Western European nations. There are many examples revealing the failure of statist ideas. Some years ago the socialists of France enacted legislation requiring a 35-hour work week. The intent was to force employers to hire the many unemployed, but it only resulted in more unemployment with stagnating wages for

those who were employed. A government thinking it knew best how to regulate the marketplace ended up undermining the marketplace. Things got so bad, the government had to recently rescind the law.¹⁶

Increasing taxes and spending are signs of increasing statism. But this gradual encroachment is not always noticed by the people. The following seemingly minor actions may help to awaken us to the never-ceasing intrusive nature of statist governments.

Many European nations require citizens to register their televisions, with some collecting annual taxes on each TV owned. While this is bad enough, some of these nations even send officials (unannounced) to the homes to count each TV to make sure they are all reported. A number of these statist nations have an official list of approved names that parents must use when naming their newborn children. According to one news report, a woman in Norway was “jailed for giving her son a name not approved by the government.” Kirsti Larsen was sent to jail for two days “for choosing the name *Gesher* for her son.” Larsen said she was a Christian and that she believed God wanted her to name her son *Gesher*, which is the Hebrew word for *bridge*.¹⁷ (The puritans in early America would not make it too well in these nations. Consider Mr. Barebones who named one of his children: *Praisegod or We'd All Be Damned Barebones*, and called him *PraiseGod Barebones*, for short.)

Socialistic European nations, as well as the European Union as a whole, have the “Caesar mentality.” This view that civil government is the ultimate authority on earth has plagued most nations since the time of the tower of Babel. Those citizens and rulers with this philosophy see, usually unconsciously, the government as God. It is their provider from cradle to grave, their savior in times of trouble, the solver of all their problems (if only the right people are in control); it is that which can bring peace and utopia. If something needs to be done or a problem needs to be fixed, then look to the government. It knows what is best for humans, with such things as socialized medicine, that assigns each citizen a doctor, sets the fees charged, and other detailed controls. It even knows what is best for pigs.

“England’s farmers must keep their pigs happy with toys and straw or face a big fine,” reports Reuters in London. “Farmers have been told to put a football, metal chains, or hay in their pigsties to provide ‘environmental enrichment’ and stop pigs from getting bored and attacking each other. Anyone breaking the rules faces a fine of up to 2,500 pounds.” This law originated with the European Union and was adopted in Great Britain in recent years.¹⁸

Other statist policies have had much more serious consequences, especially to Christians. In recent years, many pastors and others have been jailed and punished for teaching what the Bible says about homosexuality. Churches

have been shut down in Canada and Western Europe for speaking out against this unbiblical lifestyle. Recently, a British court ruled against a Church of England Bishop for discrimination against a homosexual man who applied for a job as a youth worker, whom the bishop asked about his sexual practices. Many people have been persecuted for seeking to teach their children at home (like the Busekros family, as mentioned earlier) or for using Biblical discipline.

America has more freedom and prosperity than Western Europe due to a more Biblical foundation of government, law, and economics. Yet, as America has been abandoning her Christian foundations and embracing socialism, she has gradually seen her liberty and prosperity diminish. That this has occurred over the last century or so, and we still remain the most free and prosperous nation in the world, is a testimony to the power of Christian ideas and the corresponding fruit that comes from them. In other words, the fruit of Christian ideas is so powerful, it has taken over 100 years of sowing non-Biblical ideas to diminish our liberty and prosperity to the point where we now readily see that our government and economy have serious problems. And there is still no nation as free and prosperous as America.

Growing Socialism in America

America is becoming more and more socialistic. Some of the past and recent actions indicating this include:

- Graduated income taxes (beginning in 1913 with the 16th Amendment to the Constitution)
- Establishment of the Federal Reserve Bank (Fed), a central bank in hands of private bankers¹⁹
- Rise of the socialist state under President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Social security system
- Social programs under President Johnson, since which time trillions of dollars have been spent with little help for the poor (with most money going to government workers). These social programs not only did not help the poor, but they destroyed poor families in America, especially African-American families.
- Soaring government expenditures, especially in areas outside its jurisdiction. (Non-defense spending was 57% in 1965; it was 80% in 2005. Social security and medicare/medicaid spending was 40% of federal budget in 2005 and will be 53% in 2009.)
- Congress is addicted to pork barrel spending (special projects of little use and, certainly, not within government's jurisdiction): 2008 budget had 9800 earmarks totaling more than \$10 billion.

- Increased taxes and deficit spending. The tax burden has gradually increased on the American people during the 20th Century (with some reprieves here and there, as under President Reagan). But the American people will only put up with so much, so our statist national government gets more money by borrowing it or creating money out of nothing (as blips on computer screens). This diminishes the wealth of people who have labored hard and saved over their lifetime, plus it lays a burden upon future generations.²⁰
- On Dec. 15, 2007, the Senate approved a \$286 billion farm bill. Most of this was for farm subsidies, using tax dollars to support private farmers' production. Government subsidizes many businesses and private endeavors. The recent subsidies of ethanol production did not lessen the price of gasoline; they merely increased drastically the price of corn products.
- Excessive regulation of land use and private property.
- Bailouts of AIG, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and loans to American automobile corporations.
- \$750 billion bailout agreed to in the fall of 2008, much of which was used to prop up faltering financial institutions.
- The election in 2008 of a socialist president and socialist leaders of both the House and Senate.
- In early 2009, the nearly one trillion dollar "stimulus plan" which was really primarily a socialist spending plan.

The effects of the massive recent spending by Congress will not produce the desired results of restoring the economy to a firm foundation. It will only increase our debt (increasing the burden on our children and grandchildren) and cause inflation (since any of this "money" not borrowed will be created from nothing). And worse, it will increase the power and size of government, which will result in loss of liberty and prosperity.

In 1986, Ronald Reagan summarized the modern socialist government: "Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

Fruit of Socialism

The fruit of socialism — or the "Caesar (or Babel) mentality" — is loss of liberty, loss of prosperity, and loss of the ability for the church to disciple the nations. A statist government will suppress Christian involvement in government, education, and social life. It will seek to control not only what is taught

in schools, but what is taught in homes and in churches. It will suppress Christian liberty.

Liberty is freedom to do God's will — freedom to do, not want I want to do, but to do what God wants me to do. In Germany (and most nations), parents do not have freedom to educate their children. I am not free to labor hard in my life, and confidently save money that will have the same purchasing power it did when I earned it — this due to unbiblical action of the government (fiat money, fractional reserve banking, legal tender laws). We are becoming less free to provide for ourselves and our family because the state is taking more money from us and assuming control of more and more of our responsibilities.

Businesses are not free to operate based upon their moral convictions (like the photographers in New Mexico who were fined \$6000 because they refused to photograph a homosexual union). In America, we are not free, in many ways, to govern the use of our property, especially upon death with inheritance taxes. We are experiencing a gradual loss of liberty to govern our children, live securely on own property, freely worship, and freely speak.

If we turn over to the state control of the most important areas of education and property, we will have little positive long term influence in reforming the nations. This is where we must start if we hope to fulfill Christ's command to disciple the nations. Following are some things we can do to turn the tide of socialism and bring liberty to the nations.

What Can We Do?

1. Have a mentality of liberty and act on your own under God to take dominion.

Men who have taken dominion in history (in accordance with God's command in Genesis 1:28) and brought advancement in various fields have not waited for Caesar to direct them and tell them what to do. They have been able to live free, have self-determination and take dominion in their sphere of calling.

Christians began to do this historically as Christ's message of truth and liberty began to grow and gain influence, especially since the time of the Protestant Reformation. They were free to labor and benefit, at least to some degree, from the fruit of their labor. This brought progress to mankind. This was most fully expressed in America, where the individual was released from control by government.

What constitutes a free nation? A nation where individuals, and the divine institutions of family, church and state, are free to fulfill their purposes and re-

sponsibilities and where these institutions do not usurp authority from one another. Part of the fruit of a free nation is prosperity. A nation is cultivated in direct proportion to the amount of liberty that exists. Where there is more liberty, there is more cultivation. There is also more invention. Those people who have brought advancements in various fields have come primarily from nations that have more freedom (and those most affected by the Protestant Reformation, which is the source of ideas of liberty).²¹

We should not go back to the old idea that has dominated history, that the gods determine the fate of people or govern their lot in life. (This was the view of the Greeks and Romans — their gods directed affairs; this is the idea of Eastern fatalism and of animism.) When we give control of our lives to the state we are acting upon this same pagan idea, for we are giving to our god (the state) more and more control of our lives, children, and property.

2. Assume authority to educate your children (via home schooling, Christian and private schools) and seek to reform state schools by instituting local control, competition, and a Biblical educational philosophy.

We must retain control of directing the education of our children for it is one major way we will transform the nation. The potential to impact the future through properly training our children is great. Consider the example of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards. As a leader of the First Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards had a great effect upon early America (there would have been no American Revolution without the First Great Awakening²²). Through their eleven children he and Sarah also positively impacted the nation. A study was done of 1400 descendants of the Edwards. Of these there were 13 college presidents, 65 professors, 100 lawyers, 30 judges, 66 physicians, and 80 holders of public office (including 3 senators, 3 governors, and one vice-president). The seeds we plant in our children can have an affect far beyond what we might imagine. As someone once said, you can count how many seeds are in an apple, but you cannot count how many apples are in a seed.

As long as state schools exist (which will remain until a large portion of the populace embrace a Biblical philosophy and model of education) we should seek to reform them in all areas, including having local control so parents can more effectively govern them.²³

- 3. Lessen government control of property by ending property and inheritance taxes and by stopping excessive regulations.**
- 4. Look to God, and not the government, for provision, care, and salvation.**
- 5. Train and elect Godly leaders who understand the limited nature of civil government. Do not elect statists or socialists to govern.²⁴**
- 6. Encourage, establish, and work in voluntary associations.**
- 7. Use culture molders (churches, media, arts and entertainment, schools, businesses, government) to educate people in liberty.**
- 8. Do not fall down before a block of wood (Isa. 44:19).**
- 9. Render to Caesar the few things that belong to Caesar, but, most importantly, render to God the things that are God's.**

End Notes

1. Other great threats to Christianity include materialism, animistic religions, and Islam. All three go hand-in-hand with statism. Materialism rests on the belief that the universe is comprised only of physical matter, that nature or the physical universe is all there is. Those with such a worldview think that man and material things are primary, and much of life involves acquiring material assets. If some people or nations are in poverty or have less than others, then transferring material wealth is the solution. Spiritual or internal resources are not considered; thus, people tend to look outside themselves to those with material wealth and power to provide their needs, solve their problems, and help them in life. Adherence to this worldview promotes statism, since using the power of the state is an easy means of distributing material wealth. In addition, if there is nothing outside the physical universe there is no higher law or source of truth than man. Thus, man via the state is supreme.

Animism is the belief that the supernatural controls all areas of life, and that man has little control over what happens. Characteristics of animism include fatalism, spiritism, and ancestor-worship. Hinduism, Buddhism, and most indigenous native religions are animistic. The animistic universe is unpredictable and chaotic, which is the nature of societies built upon this worldview. The social order is full of corruption, bribery and poverty. Civil government also tends to be corrupt, centralized, and strong-armed. (For more on materialism and animism see, Scott D. Allen and Darrow L. Miller, *The Forest in the Seed*, Phoenix: Disciple Nations Alliance, 2006).

Islam (which is animistic in many ways) is more of an external threat than an internal threat. Since its inception Islam has spread more by force, or by natural growth within Islamic families, than by internal conviction. It has historically been militant, using force to keep everyone under its domain obeying the rules, or advancing its

reach by use of the sword. A strong government that preserves and advances the "truth" has been its ally.

2. "Melissa's gumption," Priya Abraham, *World Magazine*, June 9, 2007, p. 65.

3. Roscoe Pound, *The Spirit of the Common Law*, in Stephen McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, Charlottesville, Vir.: Providence Foundation, 2004, p. 197.

4. See Stephen McDowell and Mark Beliles, *Liberating the Nations*, *Watchmen on the Walls*, and *Building Godly Nations*, all published by Providence Foundation, for more on the details of the purpose and responsibilities of individuals and the three divine institutions of family, church, and state.

5. See McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, p. 267 ff.

6. Robert Flood, *Rebirth of America*, Philadelphia: Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1986, p. 127.

7. A.A. Hodge, 1886, *Outlines of Theology*, Banner of Truth Trust.

8. See McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, Chapter 15; and Stephen McDowell, *Restoring America's Christian Education*, Charlottesville, Vir.: Providence Foundation, 2000.

9. See McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, *Liberating the Nations*, and *Christian Education and Biblical Worldview*, a Providence Foundation Biblical Worldview University (BWU) course, for more.

10. For more on Biblical economics see *Liberating the Nations*, Chapter 12, and Providence Foundation BWU courses: 1) *Foundations of Biblical Economics, Business, and the Marketplace*; 2) *Principles for Transforming the Marketplace*.

11. The economic stimulus packages of 2008 and 2009 were simply a means of spreading the wealth from the productive to the unproductive, not only through directly channeling money, but also through the inflation that will follow increasing the money supply (which is how much of the new money was obtained). See Stephen McDowell, *Honest Money and Banking*, Charlottesville, Vir.: Providence Foundation, 2009.

12. "Land lock," *World*, April 19/26, 2008, 60-61.

13. Timothy Lamer, "Better off French," *World Magazine*, May 13, 2006, p. 33.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. "France dismantles 35-hour work week," *The Daily Progress*, Charlottesville, Virginia, Tuesday, March 22, 2005, p. A9.

17. "Son's name worth jail, mom says," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Thursday, December 24, 1998.

18. "Socialist pigs," *World Magazine*, February 15, 2003, p. 12.

19. For more see, *Foundations of Biblical Economics, Business, and the Marketplace*, a BWU course.

20. For more see, "Honest Money and Banking" in *Foundations of Biblical Economics, Business, and the Marketplace* course manual.

21. Some examples include: Newton, Bach, Faraday, Washington, McCormick. See McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, Chapter 1, 14.

22. See Mark Beliles and Stephen McDowell, *America's Providential History*, Charlottesville, Vir.: Providence Foundation, 1996, pp. 127 ff.

23. See McDowell, *Restoring America's Christian Education* for more.

24. Biblical qualifications for civil leaders include having a fear of God, Christian character, and a Biblical worldview (see McDowell, *Building Godly Nations*, Chapter 13). Some may ask, what if no candidate understands the limited nature of civil government, nor meets all Biblical qualifications for officials? Who should I vote for? The lesser of two evils, or no one, or a minor candidate who has no chance of winning? First, to have candidates who meet all the qualifications (with a complete Biblical worldview) will be difficult, especially as we first begin the work toward gradual transformation. We will gradually get better and better candidates as Christian families and the church train them. But if there are substantial differences between the two major candidates (with one holding some Christian ideas), then vote the more Biblical of the two. If you vote for a third party, who may be more Biblical but has no chance of winning, you are by default voting for the worst guy. While the less than ideal govern, there will be more time for us to continue to work freely to educate and bring Godly transformation. With the most evil governing, we will have no such freedom.

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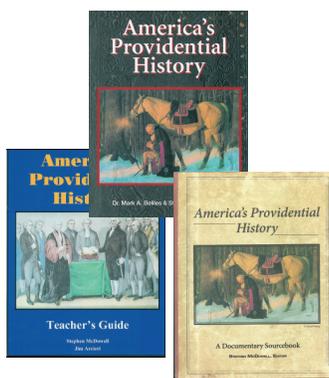
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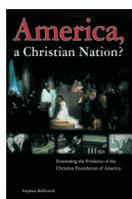
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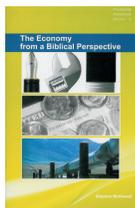
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