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Fathers were featured on ABC's *Politically Incorrect* Father's Day program last month. One of the fathers featured was Bob Enyart, talk show host and father who has recently been jailed for spanking his stepson. For those of you who don't know him, Bob starts his own shows by saying he is "the world's most right-wing, religious fanatic, homophobic, anti-choice talk show host." There is no doubt about his staunch conservative position on anything.

When Bob admitted that he had given his stepson five swats on the backside with a belt, the other guests were horrified. "I don't agree with using a belt," said Donny Osmond. Then, when Bob admitted the spanking left three welts, the guests began spouting time-worn words like 'violence' to describe their outrage. Osmond actually grimaced in horror.

When Armin Brott, author of several fathering books actually asked if spanking was supposed to illustrate to a child that the parent loves him, he had such an incredulous look on his face that this parent couldn't help but feel sorry for this poor, befuddled, politically correct father. I felt even worse for his children. Undisciplined brats do not win any popularity polls.

When Enyart asked Martin Short what he does when his children disrespect him, Short replied that he 'talks' with them and isolates them socially. Enyart then pointed out that his children don't even disrespect him, a distinction that was evidently too subtle for the other fathers to pick up on.

But isn't that one of the key issues between parents who spank and those who don't? Parents who spank responsibly and effectively often don't have the same problems that non-spanking parents have. In any event, I sure would like to be able to compare kids. I want to see a normal day in the Short, Osmond, and Brott households and compare them to a normal day in the Enyart household. I would anticipate that Enyart's children would be much more pleasant to be around than the other celebs' kiddies.

But what about spanking, and any subsequent welts or bruises? Most states have an affirmative defense - a law that allows parents to use whatever force is necessary to promote the welfare of the child. But even without that legal loophole - how many parents are willing to become martyrs, as Enyart did, to assert their parental prerogatives as mandated by their cultural or religious beliefs?

I have stated publicly that I don't believe that a bruise on the bottom necessarily constitutes abuse, and for that I have earned the title of 'baby bruiser' by the rabid child savers out there. I won't bow down to the child saver's foolish rhetoric because, as a parent, I answer to a higher authority.

Take for example the account of Eli in the First Book of Samuel. He did not raise his sons properly and God punished him for it. Chapter 3, verses 12 and 13 says, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." Not only did God punish the sons, who died on the same day, but he punished Eli, his own priest, for not raising his sons properly.

Without even going into the old testament punishments of death for disobedient children, Eli's fate reminds us of the serious obligation parents bear before the eyes of God when it comes to raising their children.

It is for that very reason, that I, among many other Christian parents, believe that my

children's immortal souls were more important than a bruise on their backside or a red mark across the face. A bruise or a welt is not a life threatening injury and will fade instantly in comparison to the fate our children would suffer if their soul was lost to wickedness due to our failure to raise them up properly. Such bruises shouldn't even be used to justify a criminal conviction or jail time. But parents face serious pressure from government agencies to compromise their religious beliefs and values in the name of 'protecting children.'

I don't care by what name they choose to call it, this is religious persecution.

We are told that we can't leave welts on kids' bottoms or red marks on their faces if the situation warrants it. Many parents succumb to that pressure. They cannot face the possibility of losing their children or their freedom simply for honoring God's commandments about parenting, so they compromise. They sell their souls and the souls of their children for some false earthly security.

Bob Enyart did not sell his soul to keep himself out of jail. He still spansks his children, which undoubtedly is a violation of the terms of his probation. At the very least, it violates his 'treatment plan,' which places his entire family at risk. He probably must also comply with court-ordered therapy to modify his parenting attitudes. The attitudes under attack are his Christian beliefs. This is happening in America, dear reader. On a wholesale basis.

The State has taken up the holy chant of 'child protection' to undermine Judeo-Christian parenting practices. Yet, while they profess to protect the child's body and mind, they ignore his immortal soul.

What the state simply could not comprehend was that I, as a parent, placed the condition of my children's souls as a priority. That was why I had high expectations for them, and corrected them when they erred. That is why I spanked them, because the lessons I had to teach were extremely important. I was unwilling to take the risk that my failure to impress upon them the seriousness of the situation would cause them to treat their transgression too casually. I spanked them because I loved them too much to risk the damnation of their souls due to a foolish fear of bruising their bottoms.

I was charged with their upbringing by God, not by the state. I will answer to God for my performance as a parent. In the event of a contradiction between earthly laws and God's commands, God's will prevails. This is my religious belief and it is in conflict with our country's laws. This may be the true test of religious freedom - will those who don't share my faith punish me for practicing mine - even when nobody's life is at risk?

We have some hard choices to make as parents. We could never have believed that our religious convictions would be tested in this manner in this great country - in America, which was founded by those who sought freedom from religious persecution - or that we would be called to pay the price with our freedom and our children.

Right now, only a few carry the banner for the right to practice our religious parenting beliefs. Those few cannot prevail alone. Intolerance for fundamental Judeo-Christian beliefs has forcibly invaded the home. I promise you, it won't stop there. If they can attack one religion, they can attack them all.