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The Right Medical Treatment for Your Child — Who Decides?

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The modern state is driven by an ambition to expand into every area of human activity. The logic of the expansive state is to control or regulate all dimensions of life. The personal and private is undermined in favor of the public and the political. The institutions that stand in the way of unchecked government expansion — especially the family — are progressively stripped of what had been considered sovereign rights and unquestioned roles.

Americans are accustomed to observing this pattern in totalitarian regimes such as China or the former Soviet Union, but the logic of the bureaucratic state is frighteningly similar.

Consider the case of Starchild Abraham Cherrix, a 16-year-old boy in Virginia, whose parents have just been forced to “share” custody of Abraham with the Accomack County Department of Social Services (in Virginia). Jay and Rose Cherrix were found guilty of neglecting Abraham by allowing him to decide not to take a second round of chemotherapy for cancer. Instead, they allowed him to follow an alternative treatment program.

Abraham told the press that the court became involved after a social worker reported the situation to authorities, charging that the Cherrixes were guilty of parental neglect. On July 21, a Virginia juvenile court judge found the Cherrixes guilty, and ordered that Abraham start the chemotherapy treatments.

As *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported:

After three months of chemotherapy last year made him nauseated and weak, Abraham rejected doctors' recommendations to go through a second round when he learned early this year that his Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph nodes, was active again.

A social worker then asked a judge to require the teen to continue conventional treatment. In May, the judge issued a temporary order finding Abraham's parents neglectful and awarding partial custody to the county, with Abraham continuing to live at home with his four siblings.

The paper states that Abraham's parents now have ten days to appeal the judge's decision. They are expected to file for the appeal immediately.

The real issue here is the right of parents — rather than a social worker — to determine the medical treatment of their own children. Note carefully that Abraham's parents have not refused him all medical treatment. He has already undergone one round of arduous chemotherapy. They have allowed him to determine that another round of chemotherapy is not in his own best interest.

What is next? This case sends a chilling signal to America's parents. Christian parents should take special note of this case, for the logic of this court would allow state intrusion into many of the decisions Christian parents make for their own children, ranging from education to discipline.

Let us all pray for Abraham Cherrix — a brave young man in the fight of his life.

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