

SATAN'S SEAT OF TYRANNY

**ITS DAMAGING RULE OVER THE CHURCH OF
GOD**



**THE BONDS OF RESTRAINT BROKEN BY THE
FREEDOM OF GOD'S TRUTH!**

**This Book Explores Scripturally How
Modern Traditional Church Government
in God's Church Is Largely Founded Upon False Scriptural Premises,
and How It Can Both Impede Growth in God's Elect, and Limit the
Spread of the Gospel. To Many It Has Become a Form Of Spiritual
Tyranny, from Which It Has Been Difficult to Break Free. Thankfully
God's Word Teaches Us What True Godly Leadership Is, and The
Beautiful Fruits of Growth and Freedom It Produces in Us All.**

~by Don E. Haney

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Special thanks are given to my family without whom the task of writing this book would have been much more difficult to achieve.

Unless noted otherwise, the New King James Version (Copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) has been used as the default Bible version.

GOD’S WORD MAKES PLAIN the Wonderful Truth of How The New Testament Church of God Is to Be Structured. God’s Loving System Promotes Personal Growth in Each Member, and Shows Us the Way to True Unity Through Proper Leadership for the Benefit of the Church and Gospel.

However, Much of God’s Church Has Been Subjected to a Pyramid of Power and Intimidation, Which Has Hurt and Unnecessarily Divided God’s People, Thereby Impeding the Spreading of the Good News. Those in “POWER” Have Interpreted Scripture for and Exercised Authority Over Those They Have Subjected to Themselves for So Long That They Seem to Have Cultivated an Even Greater Influence Over Some in God’s Church Than the Direct Authority of God’s Written Word!

Thankfully, God’s Word Teaches Us What True Godly Leadership Is, and How The Truth Can Make Us Free from Spiritual Tyranny!

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EPILOGUE

SATAN'S DECEPTION

“Men must be governed by God or they will be ruled by tyrants.”

~William Penn

Are you governed by God through His written word, or do you follow the tyrannical dictates and doctrines of men who claim to have authority to rule you and your beliefs? Often people can become so accustomed to being limited and controlled that they do not even recognize tyranny until they have their eyes opened wide by directly becoming one of its abused victims – or by experiencing the fruits of true God-given freedom firsthand. This is how the communist regimes kept so many people in its grips until modern communication and global view, made the benefits of freedom impossible to hide. Once oppressed people witnessed the freedom to grow as individuals, like that experienced by those in the Western World, the shackles were soon removed, and growth and freedom in the oppressed countries catapulted forward. Christ, and freedom to study and obey Him without constraints, shall make us free indeed (John 8:32-36). Combining that freedom from God with virtue and obedience to God produces REAL GROWTH in the spiritual KNOWLEDGE of God's Word (2 Pet.1:5). As that **Godly knowledge is acted upon**, it leads to the fruitful building of loving Godly character (2 Pet.1:6-8) without which we remain blind (verse 9). This process, which begins with the freedom to study, grow and apply God's Word, when completed, virtually guarantees you an entrance into God's Glorious, Awesome Kingdom (2 Pet.1:10-11)!

One of the wonderful things about God's people is their sincere believing nature and love for God's Word. Yet Satan has exploited this as a point of vulnerability. When Satan cannot stop God's blessings upon His people or the Gospel, he infiltrates God's elect in such a manner as to cause them to limit themselves (Num.25:18 & Rev.14-15). Let's remember the parable of the enemy infiltrating and sowing bad seed in the field that represented God's elect (Matt.13:24-30). There are many ways the enemy uses to accomplish this. A growing number of people are beginning to see that Satan has done this to many in God's Church by way of a Gentile system of governance which often produces false teachings and false teachers which has itself limited the personal growth of many and hinder the spreading of the Gospel.

Are you able to grow in Biblical understanding even if your church or minister does not believe the same way you do? Certainly we need to listen to God's true ministers, they are to be HELPERS of our joy, but do they have dominion over our growth and understanding (2 Cor.1:24)? Many people are less inclined now to believe the plain words of their Bibles,

because they view God's Word primarily in light of the slant they have been taught to view it through! Fellow students of God's Word, can we see how this limits growth in the individual to what he or she is told to believe? A sometimes well-meaning, but unscriptural approach to church governance, and an apparent obsession with "authority" by those claiming the most authority, can contribute to God's people not feeling truly free to study and grow and discuss God's Word unless the subjects they study and the conclusions they reach are "approved doctrine." Some are "forced" to keep their studying "underground." Does this describe you?

Should not a shepherd and teacher of God's Word teach God's people to THINK DEEPLY and help ENABLE THEM TO RIGHTLY DIVIDE GOD'S WORD OF TRUTH (2 Tim.2:15)? Should not that be a goal of the true Church of God? God's Word says each member of Christ's body is to learn for himself how to study the scriptures, even to the point of being able to teach others (Heb.5:12-14)! Satan has deceived many and brought them into a cult-like system that has caused brethren to fear some church leaders and blindly follow them, instead of gladly pursuing open, joyful and hearty personal study of God's Word, and following it. How has this happened?

Some people look to their Pope as their primary source of knowledge and guidance, calling him their "vicar." Millions of people take the Pope's words IN PLACE OF Christ's. They believe his words as if they were God-breathed, and his authority over them as from God, so they accept and follow his words and interpretations of scripture instead of having their own personal convictions from Bible study. It is a structured system of pyramidal governance, patterned after Rome and the Caesars!

Some leaders in God's Church have said that this Roman Catholic form of church government is one thing the Catholic Church got right. On the other hand, many of the same people also call that same church governmental system "**the image of the beast**" that is spoken of in Revelation 13. **Amazing, isn't it?**

Notice what was said in Lesson 31 of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, entitled "What is the MARK of the Beast?" on page 9: "*They patterned their ecclesiastical government after the most efficient government they knew. They patterned it after the Roman civil government so they could administer their 'religious' government more effectively.*"

This copy of the imperial model of Roman government has been noted in various encyclopedias. The A.C. correspondence course continues: "*Pope Leo advocated the complete organization of the church on the model of the image of the Roman civil government, with the Pope as its religious head.*" "*He finally accomplished his goal by organizing the church into a government, thus forming the 'Papacy.'*" Continuing from the A.C. course: "*This counterfeit spiritual empire, like the secular empire, possessed a hierarchy of officers.*" "*The Papacy is called by Catholics the 'Hierarchy of Jurisdiction.'*"

Just as Caesar demanded absolute power over those under him, by forming a ruling pyramidal hierarchy of government, the Catholic Church designed its governance to rule over the church with their bishops, priests and cardinals, with the Pope presiding over them at the top of the pyramid of power.

How is this different from the form of church government employed by many in the Church of God in recent decades? Instead of using the title “Pope,” a different title is employed by those who take to themselves the same absolute power to interpret scripture on behalf of others, the same authoritarian power to rule over, and if necessary to “judge” those whom they perceive as “challenging” them – putting them out of the church under the guise of “rebellion!” Many were told to “blow the dust off their Bibles and prove” what they were being taught. But often, if they did so and came to a different conclusion, they were corrected, suspended or even put out of the church.

As implemented today, how are authority-seeking self-appointed titles like “apostle,” “presiding evangelist,” or “pastor general” different in reality from the title of Pope? How is such a ruling pyramidal system of hierarchy (as employed today) different from the Pope and his leading cardinals? Is it biblical for one man to always be in a position of dominating authority over God’s Church, even outside his geographical region? Was Peter ever-seeking preeminence as Diotrefes did (3 John 9)? Did Peter preside over the other apostles as chief apostle? If so, why didn’t Paul and the other apostles submit? Was Peter the first Pope? Was Peter’s leadership one of interpreting scripture for the church, controlling thought, and presiding over a “church government” that reached to the far corners of the earth? Or was his a collegial leadership of a respected, converted, humble man of God, evidenced by his teachings AND his example? Do you feel free to truly think for yourself in applying God’s Word?

Do you thoroughly “prove all things?” “Yes,” you say. Good. What if you do, and the proof points in a different direction from what you were led to believe – different from your church leader’s beliefs and teachings? Would you then concede – actually give up your beliefs – letting others determine what you believe, or at least practice? Could that best be described as unity – or idolatry?

While some look to their Pope, others look to Ellen G. White, for special prophetic understanding, (calling her a prophetess), and thereby many have had their minds so trained that they can only accept her interpretations of scripture, so they view scripture with the preconceived understanding they were taught. No disrespect is intended here towards any church leader. However, many go to church and receive “ready made knowledge” poured into their minds, which can discourage individual thought and deep personal Bible study because it’s already been so neatly studied out and prepared for them. Any conclusions to the contrary are usually viewed very negatively, and such a person is warned or accused of being divisive. Have you experienced that? Are you fearful to study certain topics deeply lest your conclusions differ from those in the hierarchy that you have

placed yourself under? Do you ever avoid studying certain topics because you are sure what you were taught is true? Have you had your understanding served to you “on a platter,” all organized, studied and thought out for you by others who in effect say – “Just believe us, and follow?”

Do you believe the Catholic-based system of “lording it over others” in a pyramidal form of church government leads to personal growth in knowledge, truth or spiritual freedom?

Do you believe it is from God, even though God said “*it shall not be so among you*” (Matt.20:25-27), and even though most of the time in Bible history, and **NEVER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**, was there ever ONE MAN IN CHARGE OVER ALL OF GOD’S CHURCH! Think about it. Since we know Christ is the Head (Eph.5:23 & Col.1:18), not any man, should we not each primarily look to the scriptures – the written Word of God – for our leadership, and to leading men ONLY as we see them faithfully following and teaching the scriptures (Isa.8:20 & 1 Cor.11:1)?

Do you judge the scriptures in light of what your church or church leaders teach, or the other way around? If we really believe Christ is the Head, should we refer to human offices of service as “Headquarters?” **How about calling them “Servants’ Quarters?”**

Because he taught so much that was good, some people have come to view Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in a similar light to the way others view their Pope or Ellen G. White. Some have since transferred this same approach to the person, church board or “council” they think presides as Mr. Armstrong’s successor. My dear friends, can we be realistic enough to see this? Can we see the idolatrous nature of it, and how it can lead to laziness in Bible study?

Many feel “safe” being told what the Bible says, and what to believe and practice. Some in God’s Church are fearful to believe anything other than what Mr. Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages* or some other piece of church literature – or in what their current “apostle” or presiding one tells them. We do not know that this is what Mr. Armstrong wanted, but it has happened to many. For them, their doctrine is primarily determined by how their church leaders view scripture – and the leaders thus maintain the control they have come to exercise. Is that kind of rule in God’s Church not akin to idolatry? What if instead, each individual were to have an open-minded, unbiased approach toward examining God’s Scriptures for himself – looking to God’s Word as the authority – and hopefully thereby would come to further respect and appreciate the faithful loving service of their church leaders, as they habitually confirmed the Truth from God’s Word (Acts 17:11)? What if there were more shepherding and less lording among the various Church of God fellowships? How might that affect thought and growth?

As of now, the minds and consciences of many have been seared to such an extent with the teachings and beliefs they have inherited and from the fear of growing beyond those teachings – that they have become impotent in thought and unable to

think for themselves (1 Tim.4:1-3).

As a pastor, I was asked more than once by those who referred to themselves as “Headquarters,” to SHUT DOWN GODLY BIBLE STUDIES that were taking place without a minister (something my conscience would not allow me to do).

Closing down Bible studies was commanded, and was (and still is) actually done by many ministers under the guise of maintaining “unity” so that we all would speak the same thing. If we all speak and believe what “they” say, then they see that as unity. But such unity is shallow and short-lived. **Only unity with God is lasting (Ps.127:1).**

Should we seek unity with our church, by agreeing with what it teaches us? Or, should we individually (and collectively) in the church seek unity with God through His Holy scriptures, being led by His Holy Spirit? Have we put the cart before the horse?

Can you even imagine what the Bereans or early New Testament saints would have said if some minister had claimed to have authority by “the government of God” to shut down their Bible studies unless an approved minister were present to control them (Act.17:11)? It’s incredible!

Is it the purpose of the church and the ministry to control thought and Bible study? Didn’t Diotrefes also try to shut down the study of God’s Word? Did not Diotrefes try to stop the congregation from fellowshiping with those he did not personally approve of, in an evil attempt to gain or maintain control and loyalty of the people to himself (3 John 1:9-10)? A true minister is a teacher, a servant, and a shepherd and not a “lord.” He is one whom you need not fear (1 Pet.5:1-3 & Luke 22:24-26).

Is your minister or church teaching you to follow men and their “rules,” or are they ENABLING YOU to correctly study and with spiritual maturity, properly serve by teaching others (Heb.5:12-14)?

When he departed, did Paul commend the church into the hands of other ministers, or some “council of elders,” or a governing body of men – or did he commend them directly to God’s Word (Acts 20:27-32)? Am I a faithful minister to point these things out? You judge, but judge according to God’s Word, not human ideas and traditions. We, too, can be taught to worship God in vain (Mk.7:7)! Yes, God’s Church needs leadership. Yes, there ought to be respect for the ministry. Yes, there is a right form of authority to be used lovingly in the ministry within the parameters of God’s Word – but as shepherds and servants – not as “lords” or as men seeking preeminence over anyone.