



"Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

—John Adams

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The Nanny Church (Part Two)

Part One showed that wherever there is a government of man, it tends to take on greater power and responsibility as the governed relinquish their liberty for the sake of being taken care of. Within [the world](#), this is known as a "Nanny State." The church is not immune to this pressure, and Jesus Christ's instruction in [Luke 22:24-26](#) illustrates that when this happens, it indicates that those involved are behaving like Gentiles—that is, they act like people who do not know [God](#).

The problem of Nannyism, though, does not lie only with those in authority; the actions of the people often invite the government to step in and assume responsibility that is not theirs. When a people are rebellious, they invite a crushing response. When they will not work to provide for themselves, they invite the government to enlarge itself in order to do for the people what the people should do on their own.

Evidently, some of the brethren in Thessalonica had fallen into this mindset, prompting Paul to remind them that "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" ([II Thessalonians 3:10](#)). Using even stronger language in writing to

Timothy, Paul likewise compares Nannyism to Gentile conduct: "[I]f anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has *denied the [faith](#)*, and is *worse than an unbeliever*" ([I Timothy 5:8](#), emphasis ours throughout).

The solution to the "Nanny State" is quite simple, but it will only be truly effective in converted people. The solution to these problems is *self-government*, that is, people employing [self-control](#). Incidentally, this is why we should not expect things in the nation to get better anytime soon: The people are not becoming more self-governed. *When the people govern themselves, there is no need for a controlling government to establish order.* Likewise, if those in leadership govern themselves, rather than lording their authority over the people or becoming benefactors, the people will neither rebel against oppression, nor slide into the decadence and complacency that result from having everything done for them.

That will never happen in the world, except in very small degrees, which is why Christ must return to save man from himself and show him the proper way to live. However, we in the church *have* been given the means to govern ourselves:

But even to this day, when [Moses](#) is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* ([II Corinthians 3:15-17](#))

A carnal man cannot understand the law ([Romans 8:7](#)), for a veil keeps the meaning hidden. The converted man, however, has God's Spirit, the essence of the mind of God. One of the effects of God's Spirit is that where it is present, there is liberty (verse 17). It is not coincidental that the [fruit of the Spirit](#) includes self-control ([Galatians 5:23](#)). Where the Holy Spirit is working, the people will be self-governing, and the leaders will be self-governing. Because everybody keeps a tight rein on himself and is being led by God's Spirit, there is no need for heavy-handedness—for strict external enforcement—nor for people to live in fear of the leaders. The leaders will be serving, the people will be working and growing, and liberty will flourish.

Liberty exists where God's Spirit is at work because the people have the time and the space to grow and develop character. They will not act out of fear or because they feel that they have to. Everyone must practice [forbearance](#) and [patience](#), as we allow God's other children the time and space to grow and develop character, just as they forbear with us as *we* grow and mature spiritually.

The controls, however, are *internal* rather than *external*. They will not be developed instantly because growth takes time. Proper judgment and discernment take a lifetime of personal experience with God to develop. Yet, when they are developed, they become permanent. They become *eternal*, which is what God is after.

It may seem like a risky proposition, and our Western nations are evidence that self-government without true internal controls cannot work. When people do not govern themselves, the human solution is a Nanny State. When the Nanny State falls apart—which it will—it typically ushers in either a Police State, or an occupation by a foreign power, which *will* impose order on those who will not govern themselves or provide for themselves when it is within their power.

But it need not be so for the church of God. If we have the Holy Spirit, we have the means to control ourselves and thus to be free. This does not mean that external control will never be imposed upon us. The lives of Jesus and the apostles demonstrate that they were subject to governing authorities who exercised lordship over them. Yet, where the Holy Spirit is working in the leadership and the people, heavy-handed external control is not necessary. That is what matters in God's purpose in bringing many sons to the same glory and liberty that He has.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

Self-Government and Responsibility (Part Three)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

We are disturbed when our lives are encumbered by incremental pressures and seem to be spinning out of control economically, morally, educationally, politically, or socially through no fault of our own. Even though social critics can identify these unrelenting pressures and problems, they have no clue as to the causes. The future time of Jacob's Trouble, or the Great Tribulation, comes about because people are not meeting their God-given responsibilities: keeping His Commandments. We live in the time when the piper demands payment. We desperately need to reject the welfare mentality as justification for our godless behavior, owning up to our responsibility for our behavior rather than blaming genes, environment, or government, for God will judge us on the merits of our own personal conduct (Ezekiel 18:20).

From the Archives: Featured Article

In the Grip of Distrust

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Most are aware of a phenomenon that too often takes place within the church of God: If an attitude or trend develops in the world, we can expect it will soon enter the church. Society today struggles under an attitude of deep distrust for institutions and leaders. John Ritenbaugh explains that, in the church, this attitude has led to an increase of independent Christians, a situation contrary to the concept of unity in the Body of Christ.

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