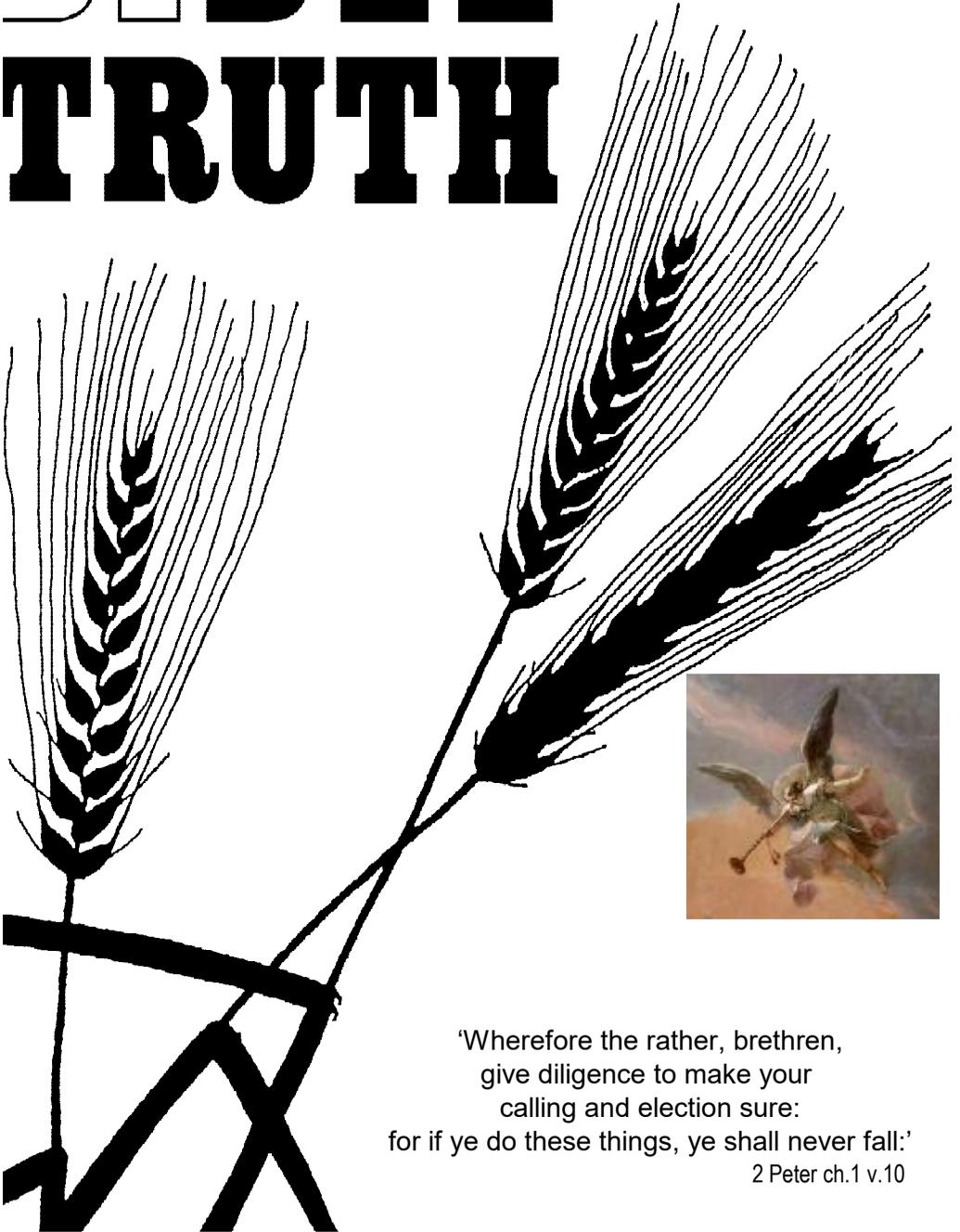


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'Wherefore the rather, brethren,
give diligence to make your
calling and election sure:
for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:'

2 Peter ch.1 v.10

PROBLEMS WITH BEING GOD'S NEW ISRAEL

By the late Robert T. Woodworth

If Christians of American, Nordic, or Germanic descent consider themselves to be God's chosen people, does that not lead to some kind of national imperialism, some concepts of racial superiority, or some religious self-righteousness? Could this possibly lead to an attitude that scorns others outside and does no favours for the Kingdom of God? It has already happened for some extremists who hate those of other races and religions.

Has such extremism affected Jewry who have been considered by some to be God's Israel? Where it has, this is wrong, because God did not choose Israel to adopt a prejudiced, bigoted, imperialistic attitude toward others. Quite the opposite, God chose Israel to be his servant people to serve God by serving others, to be a 'kingdom of priests, and an holy nation' and 'a peculiar treasure unto me [God] above all people' (see Exodus ch.19 vv 5-6). So do Christians fit the words that St. Peter wrote?

'... ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; ...'.

1 Peter ch.2 v.9

Does this mean superiority? Ever since socialism tried to level all people, we have been taught that it is better for everybody to be equal rather than one to be better than another. We have tried to raise the lower classes and lower the upper classes to make us all one big happy middle class family. This is majoring on mediocrity. No one has ever succeeded in economic equality by taking from the rich to give to the poor. Any society that seeks as its aim to make all men equal, all bourgeois, destroys its leaders and also its workers.

There is nothing wrong with being better, superior or above others, higher, richer, smarter, etc. Mediocrity is neither an acceptable goal for Americans nor Christians. One can say that Christianity is superior to Islam and Judaism, to Humanism or Hinduism that Christ is superior to Moses, Huxley or to idols. Christians are superior to people of other religions and people of no religion. How are they superior? In name, in godliness, in holiness, in service to God and others, in wisdom, in charity, in love, in hope, in truth.

God chose Israel to be his special people with these words,
'For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. ... But because the LORD loved you, ...'.

Deuteronomy ch.7 vv 6 & 8

Furthermore,

'Thou shalt be blessed above all people: ...'.

Deuteronomy ch.7 v.14

'For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.'

Deuteronomy ch.14 v.2

Holy, peculiar, superior? How?

'... in praise, and in name, and in honour; ... an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.'

Deuteronomy ch.26 v.19

Some may say Christians and Americans are high above other nations and religions in reputation, in character, in kindness and justice, that they are God's New Israel. They have won wars and conquered nations, but always granted them their freedom after putting down dictators and tyrants — in Cuba, the Philippines, and islands of the Pacific, in Germany and Japan, in Nicaragua, in Bosnia and Serbia, in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rather than listening to the demagogues of past failures or current causes, we ought to study God's Word for terms that the Bible uses for receiving God's blessings. Words like, 'high above all nations' (see Deuteronomy chs 26 v.19, 28 v.1, 14 v.2 & 28 v.13) and 'Above all people' (see Deuteronomy chs 7 vv 6 & 14, & 10 v.15), all are relevant.

The early English who settled America had their roots in Protestant Christianity. They were Puritan separatists and Church of England loyalists, but they all perceived the concept of their covenant calling as God's chosen people to tame the wilderness and convert the natives, to build the kingdom of Christ in this new part of the world. How do we know? They said so in writing.

John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was put in every cathedral in England in 1571, and it later became second only to the Bible among books known and read by English Christians. The influence of Foxe's

book has been evaluated by historians of our culture such as *Religion in America* by Winthrop Hudson, the *Elect Nation* by William Haller and *Redeemer Nation* by Ernest L. Tuveson. The titles of their books indicate their theses.

William Penn established Penn's Woods (Pennsylvania) as an 'Holy Experiment' to show God's example to the nations. This Holy Experiment was illustrated in the murals on the Pennsylvania State Capital in Harrisburg. The historic Massachusetts State House in Boston has a mural which is captioned, 'The Lord is Our Defence; the holy One of Israel is Our King'. Maryland was founded, according to Jesuit Father Andrew White, by the providence of God, and the 'first and most important design' was 'sowing the seeds of religion and piety'.

In Virginia, John Rolfe wrote that the English migration to that colony was for 'a peculiar people, marked and chosen by the finger of God' to possess the land. These early English colonies were beset with many hardships and tragedies with loss of lives and investments. Alexander Whitaker of the Church of England in *Good News From Virginia* in 1613, reminded the discouraged ones as follows.

'... forty years were expired, before Israel could plant in Canaan, and yet God had called them by the word of His mouth, had led them himselfe by a high hand. Yet may you boldly looke for a shorter time of reward.'

The Puritans of New England probably had the clearest perception of their destiny under God where they could establish a covenant relationship with God for their new Christian Israel society. As Professor Cherry states,

'They believed that like Israel of old they had been singled out by God to be an example for the nations'.

God's New Israel, p. 27

It was expressed for them in John Winthrop's *Model of Christian Charity*, written aboard the flagship Arbella. Winthrop spelled out the covenant as a divine social order in which there were some rich and some poor. He saw the Puritan new Israel as a new covenant with God.

Jonathan Edwards, leading theologian of the eighteenth century, defended this 'Great Awakening' and saw revival in America as God's 'City upon a hill' whose light would shine until the Kingdom of God would spread from America to the rest of the earth. Little did

Jonathan Edwards knew then that this America would become a light to the nations as was prophesied of Christ, 'A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel' (Luke ch.2 v.32, Isaiah ch.42 v.6 & Acts ch.13 v.47).

In recent times it is the United States of America that publishes more Bibles, more Christian books, tracts, and literature; sends more missionaries to more parts of the globe, builds more churches, church-related schools and colleges, hospitals and homes for the elderly, conducts more services for the poor, for widows and orphans, than any combination of religions and nations in the world.

While I have believed in the spiritual origins of our American culture and preached it all my adult life, it seems there were too few modern Christian educators, historians and theologians who grasped the significance of our spiritual heritage. I discovered evidence in the history of American education. I wrote an essay for one of my classes at the university about the Christian foundation for education. It was confirmed in the founding documents of the first colleges in New England, such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Brown and Rutgers. The same Christian emphasis underlined the founding of institutions of higher learning in the South, like William and Mary, the University of Virginia, George Mason, and so on.

At the close of the twentieth century there has been a resurgence of awareness among Christian preachers and professors of our rich origin and destiny steeped in spiritual leadership; and scriptural principles. Among these are prominent Christian leaders such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, James Kennedy, along with intellectual inquiries by Christian scholars like Bill Bennett and James Dobson, and younger scholars with insatiable curiosity who had not even heard of such things in their basic education at the best schools. Gary DeMar later came to the scene with zeal and conviction that America has a rich cultural heritage based on its rich Christian heritage.

During the first six months I lived in Ellicott City, I disposed of about a fourth of my extensive library, but gradually rebuilt it with the latest renditions. I even wrote brief reviews of a dozen books with published dates of 2000 to 2005, all depicting the latent background of our founding fathers and the potent awareness by modern scholars of the unique character of this 'One nation under God'. It was introduced by President George W. Bush when he was inaugurated, and the president referred to the U.S. as 'the City on a hill'. What

significance has this term, 'a city set on a hill'? Jesus used it in the Sermon on the Mount when He stated to His disciples,

'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid'.

Matthew ch.5 v.14

When the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts, they referred to their establishment of a city on a hill. It was the celebration of the transportation of God's country from a land of serfdom to the land of freedom. It was a symbol of the mission of Israel to bring the light of truth of God's word to the Gentiles, to those who sit in the darkness of ignorance.

The Old Testament prophets saw it in the mysticism of prophetic utterances. Then the actors in this unfolding drama began to identify the meaning of their sojourn. Listen to what some said about these seminal events. Civil government founded on religious principles has always been part of historical records. Plutarch, a great follower of Plato, wrote this.

'There never was a state of Atheists. You may travel all over the world, and you may find cities without walls, without king, without mint, without theatre or gymnasium, but you will nowhere find a city without a god, without prayer, without oracle, without sacrifice. Sooner may a city stand without foundations than a state without belief in the gods. This is the bond of all society and the pillar of all legislation.'

So why do so many secular educators and judges and politicians find it difficult to assume we can have government on a firm foundation without a firm belief in a faithful God and the oracle of the Bible to guide and govern us? Make no mistake about this — America was built on the Christian faith and its principles are outlined in Holy Writ and its faithful founders plainly confirmed this spiritual heritage. This is one nation under God, which is under the tutelage of God's servants and governance of God's laws. Our problem with being God's chosen people is that we fail to recognise it, but instead give the honour to the enemies of Christ! Lord, open the eyes of Your chosen people to their great heritage and divine destiny!
