

WE THE PEOPLE!

By Robert Schmid, October 1997

Twenty years ago I was baptized by a Minister of the (Worldwide) Church of God. I did so not because that organization taught me that salvation is by grace, not because they taught me that God's Son - the Lord Jesus Christ died and paid the penalty for my sinfulness and the sins of the world. No, I learned that many years before in the Protestant Church.

I was baptized in the (Worldwide) Church of God because they taught me that we are to live by every word of God. I learned to love (not reject) the laws of God, including His weekly and annual Sabbaths. But, most of all, I learned about myself - who I am and why I am her. I learned that God, from the beginning, raised up for Himself a people - the Nation of Israel, and that He has never abandoned His people to this day. I learned that God has no other people but Israel and that all people, Israelites by race and all gentiles, have to become "**Israelites by grace.**" I learned that God is reproducing Himself in and through this people who are the "spiritual Israel," begotten by God through His Holy Spirit - the true children of God. I learned about the identity of the United States and Britain as explained in Herbert W. Armstrong's book *The US and Britain in Prophecy*. It is this understanding of who the US and Britain is that makes the Bible - both Old and New Testament, meaningful and relevant.

Let's consider a quick historical overview of the people of God and why it is - or why it should be significant for us today. The pilgrims left Europe because of hierarchical governments that did not allow for freedom of religion. These state religions were mandatory and oppressive. They did not allow for the development of godly and righteous character which requires freedom of choice, the opportunity to love God from within, without external coercion.

Therefore, God rose up this "United States of America" and miraculously provide it with a form of government that was utterly unique in the history of mankind. Instead of, "**I, the King,**" or "**I, the Emperor,**" or "**I, the Pope,**" the Constitution of the United States began with, "**We the People.**" A totally new concept of government, which many immediately rejected and fought against. In fact, many simply returned to Europe, unable to see the Hand of God providing a form of government that would, in the approaching end-time, make it possible for His people to exercise and develop free will, a primary attribute of the image of God. "**We, the people, one nation under God**" was a form of government that imposed a high degree of responsibility on every individual. It was not a government without organization and leadership, but it was a form of government ordained by God for a very specific purpose. It was not the ultimate form of government to be used in the Kingdom of God, but it was the best form of government to accomplish God's objective and desire of re-producing Himself in and through a sinful people.

When Herbert W. Armstrong first came unto the scene in the 1930's he understood that human hierarchical government, because of human nature, will always fail the people. That fact was already well established in history. That's why he wrote in 1939,

"But let us drop all effort to build up a government or an organization. Let us quit working for organizations and work for the Lord and the salvation of souls! What

has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? Nothing but organization.....organization and Church Government has brought us only strife, jealousies, division, bitterness! It is not of God and it can bear no other fruit."

When subsequently he deviated from his original understanding and set up a church government after the Catholic Church and after the Church of England, it was only a matter of time until it came to pass exactly as he wrote about.

Could it be that God showed us what form of government He wants in His Church when He set up this United States of America, His "physical Israel?" Beginning in about 1994, God again miraculously provided an opportunity for His "spiritual Israel," to organize and operate under this type of government. Unfortunately, most off-shoots of the Worldwide Church of God went right back into hierarchical church government, and even the United Church of God began its Constitution with the attitude of, "**We, the Ministry**" (article 3.1 of the original draft, later changed), instead of, "**We, the people,**" instead of, "**We, the members - the brethren - the children of God.**"

There must first of all be full recognition and tangible evidence that we are all brethren, members of the household of God, the royal priesthood. Government in the Church of God must be *of the people, by (all) the people, for (all) the people*, not by one or a few over the many. Only God can administer the Government of God. Human leadership must teach and train the people to become independent from this world, including church organizations, and become fully dependent on God for all their needs. The Church of God is not something an organization provides for the people of God. The people of God are the Church of God, with or without an organization. Organizations can be a desirable and useful tool to provide fellowship and to do a work. However, organizations, especially large organizations, are wasteful and are dangerous in that they divide nobility from commoners, the priests from the laity, and the elders from the members.

In His final instructions to the Church, God cautioned against the doctrine of the Nicolaitans as something He hates. What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans? Could it be that Herbert W. Armstrong described it in his 1939 article on church government without realizing it? **It's a question the various (church) organizations should seriously and prayerfully consider.**