

How Long Have We Been Aware of Our Identity?

One reaction to the discovery that the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the world are the modern continuation of ancient Israel, God's servant nation, is *curiosity*. The question is often asked: How long has the truth been known?

God has revealed through His prophets that Israel, as a *nation*, or people, would be blind to their true identity until the final conflict in the latter days of the Christian Dispensation (see ISA 42 & 43 and EZEK 39). But there is some evidence to suggest that God may have permitted this great truth to be revealed to chosen individuals in each generation. The ancient Irish chronicles, for example, bear testimony to the fact that many of the early nobility of that country were aware of their Israelitish origin. And this appears to have been known and accepted by scholars throughout Europe up to at least the 17th century. In 1581 we find Vincenzio Galilei - father of the famous astronomer - writing about the origin of the harp in Ireland and referring to the Irish tradition that their kings were of the royal line of David.

The chieftains of many of the ancient Scottish clans - whose successors were to append their signatures to the Scottish Declaration of Independence of 1320 - were obviously aware of their Israelitish origin. But the first unmistakable written evidence that the ancient English were also aware of their origin is not found until the reign of Alfred the Great in the ninth century. The 33rd Law, enacted by that wise monarch, laid it upon his subjects: "Vex thou not comers from afar and strangers, for remember, *ye were once strangers in Egypt.*"

It would seem that in England an awareness of Britain's identification with ancient Israel has of England. He was in no doubt as to the identity of the peoples he had been called to

come in phases or eras, the first of which reached its peak during the Elizabethan period. The Queen herself became known as "The Light of Israel." There can be no doubt that by "Israel" the land of England was meant, for we find that Sir Francis Drake, when asking John Fox to pray for the country and its people, defined his prayer with the words: "that we might have continual peace in Israel."

The medals struck to commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada also revealed that the people were aware of their Israelitish identity. The legend around one reads: "He blew and they were scattered" - a reference to the gales of unprecedented violence which scattered and destroyed the Spanish fleet. On the reverse of another Armada medal the name of God appears in *Hebrew* characters.

The most striking evidence that the Elizabethans were aware of their identity is, however, '*The Book of Common Prayer*', the work of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer who was martyred in 1556. The order of Matins and Evensong, and especially the versicles and responses, make it clear that the Elizabethans were undoubtedly aware that they were God's chosen or servant people *and under His protection*.

This knowledge was apparently so widespread throughout Southern England as to become known in some professional circles in France. The '*Petit Parisien*' has revealed that in 1590, Lelayer, a French magistrate, published a large volume entitled '*The Lost Ten Tribes Found*' in which he proved that "lost" Israel was to be found in the peoples of Britain.

In 1603 the childless Elizabeth was succeeded by James VI of Scotland who became James I rule. Indeed, he claimed that "*the Lord had made him king over Israel*", and upon the



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Jacobus, the gold coin of his day, he had inscribed in Latin, the prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 37:22: *"I will make of thee one nation."*

However, James's awareness of Britain's identity was to lead him into paths of contention. He misinterpreted God's blessing upon the royal house of David (2. Samuel 7:16) as conferring a divine right upon all kings, a philosophy which brought him into serious conflict with Parliament and which sowed the seeds for the English Civil War which was to divide the kingdom and led to the execution in 1649 of his son and successor, Charles I.

This misinterpretation of Scripture was also to have an adverse influence upon the thinking of the Puritans who, being fundamentalists, would - under other circumstances - have been able to identify themselves with God's servant nation. However, the policy of a political movement known as The Levellers - which came into existence at the time of Oliver Cromwell and which sought to modify the powers of the Lord Protector - was believed to have been influenced by the conviction of its leaders, Everard and Winstanley, that the Celto-Saxon peoples were the continuation of ancient Israel. It should also be remembered that the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed for the New World in the *Mayflower* in 1620, were clearly what we would describe today as Christian Israelites. In the log or the records they kept they refer to themselves as "The seed of Abraham", "the children of Jacob" and as "His Chosen" - clearly the language of people conscious of who they were.

Public interest in this subject appeared to wane in Britain with the end of the Common-

wealth. We have to wait until the eighteenth century for the next phase of public interest; but there was a simmering of interest on the Continent - and especially in the Low Countries - which first found expression in 1671 with the appearance of an anonymous pamphlet in Dutch which argued that the English-speaking people must be the continuation of ten-tribed Israel. Then in 1723, in his *'Le Triomphe de la Providence et de la Religion'*, which was published in Amsterdam, Dr. Abbadie contended that the Northern European tribes from whom the English people derive are the lost

ten tribes of ancient Israel.

The nineteenth century was to see an era of identity awareness of such magnitude as to provoke the satanic forces of evil into organising a relentless campaign of opposition in both Church and State, a movement so relentless in fact that we may still feel its malevolent influence as we move towards the end of the twentieth century. However, we digress. By the middle of the nineteenth century Britain's true identity was known - or suspected - from Buckingham Palace to the humblest cottage in the land, widespread interest being stimulated by the amazing growth of the British Empire which was bringing peace, prosperity and orderly humane government to nearly one-quarter of the world's population. Supported by the United States Fleet in the Western Hemisphere, the Royal Navy preserved the freedom of the seas, putting down piracy and the slave trade.

The extent to which the clergy became aware of Britain's true identity may be gauged from the comment made by Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) when asked why, in 1845, he had left the Church of England to join the Roman Catholic Church. The one-time Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, revealed that he had been disturbed by the extent to which the Identity movement was growing. He believed that there was a very real danger that the movement "would take over the Church of England." Certainly, few converts to Rome played a greater part in the restoration of Roman Catholicism in England or in the acceptance of the false dogma of Rome by the Church of England. Indeed, it can, with hindsight, be said that the work he did during the

last twenty years of his life laid the foundations on which the Church of England would ultimately erect the 'Alternative Services Book' and turn its attention from the New Jerusalem to Apostate Rome.

The nineteenth century also saw an entirely new phenomenon: the formation of local study, discussion and prayer groups by Identity Christians of all denominations. These groups varied widely in their organisation and in their corporate activities; but they had one common interest - to proclaim the discovery that their country, with the Dominions and the great United States, were the bulk of the modern continuation of the ancient servant nation whom God had promised to protect in order to enable them to live as a pattern people in willing obedience to His Laws. These Identity groups also varied widely in their size and influence. Some, indeed, became so large and influential that they were able to publish a magazine and organise public meetings.

As their activities began to awaken public interest they became aware of how their witness could be improved. The individual groups lacked cohesion and an agreed credo based upon Scriptural research. They saw that there would be undoubted advantages in joining together and in pooling their intellectual, material and human resources.

In 1919 the various local Israel Identity groups joined forces, or federated, to form a national interdenominational movement.

The Federation attracted great spiritual leaders, eloquent speakers and erudite scholars who gave of their best; it became a powerful force in the religious life of the nation. Branches which were formed in every population centre of the United Kingdom were supported by thousands of dedicated Christians from every denomination. The '*National Message*', the official organ of the Federation, reached a circulation of nearly 100,000. This was not only a true ecumenical movement of immense size and influence: it was also an easy target for the forces of evil.

In retrospect, it is not difficult to appreciate why the movement should have become such

an easy target for satan and his minions. The fathers of the Federation were Christians of great intellect and spiritual vision who failed to realise that their movement would be under attack - unscrupulous attack - from the moment of its inception and that every aspect of its organisation should have been considered from that angle. Without a thought as to possible misuse by opponents, the title of 'The British-Israel World Federation' was adopted with enthusiasm and individual members began describing themselves as British Israelites.

It was not at all difficult for satan's minions to smear the movement as a collection of politico-religious cranks who were misinterpreting the Bible to justify British jingo-imperialism. Those ministers of religion who had been influenced by the then growing Oxford movement condemned "British-Israelism" (as they called it) out of hand - as did most intellectuals and the political left.

Public interest in our movement declined dramatically. There was a considerable stirring of interest during the Second World War when public meetings became crowded and our message was well received in the highest political circles. But with the end of the war, the declining trend was renewed and too many of our local meetings were attended only by the "faithful converted." Significantly, however, a latent knowledge seems to have remained among the people - the seeds of future new growth.

In 1989, the decline has not merely been halted: there is now a steady expansion of interest. Under the influence of a group of Christian Israelites experienced in public affairs, satan's supporters are being vigorously challenged and the message of Scripture is being interpreted in terms of the great world events in the Age-end period of history.

This ever-growing public interest and support will, we now believe, deepen and widen until, at the Return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He will find throughout Israel "a people prepared."

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