**Advocates of British-Israelism**

by the United Church of God

**T**he prosperity of Britain and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries fueled the popular belief that the British and American peoples are in fact the descendants of the lost 10 tribes. This movement came to be popularly known as *British-Israelism.*

In the United States, where the idea of "manifest destiny"-the belief that it was the nation's destiny to expand from shore to shore-was already firmly entrenched, advocates of British-Israelism promoted the biblical explanation for the nation's unexplained growth and prosperity. Britain and the United States, they concluded, were recipients of the unconditional birthright of Joseph.

In recent times some have associated British-Israelism with the modern negative connotations of imperialism. Critics even allege that those who embraced this reasoning were only seeking a salve for their conscience to justify their imperialist tendencies. Such accusation, however, is simply not in keeping with the thinking of the 19th century. Those who project today's political sensitivities on a past audience that viewed the world far differently are incorrect and unfair in their assessment.

In the mid-19th century British subjects did not perceive imperialism as negative. They viewed it as*a magnanimous gestur*e-that they were extending the blessings that had made their nation great to less-fortunate peoples around the globe. Indeed the British Empire provided many blessings to the peoples who became part of the empire.

Another criticism-this one accurate-aimed at British-Israel advocates is that some of their proponents incorporated racism into their beliefs. Prejudicial racist views have tarnished their reasoning, thus discrediting the historical aspects of their teachings.

This is both regrettable and biblically unacceptable. Racial bigotry is most definitely*no*t what the Bible teaches. God is not the author of such a point of view. He loves all people and commands us to do the same. The central issues we need to consider are whether many of the descendants of the 10 tribes of Israel reside in the British-descended nations today and, if so, what God expects of them.

Focusing on the biblical promises, some scholars have undertaken extensive research to advance the knowledge that God's promised blessings to Abraham's descendants have largely been fulfilled in the British and American peoples. Although many have contributed to the basic research, here are a few people who have made significant contributions to the advancement of this area of study.

John Wilson, Anglican layman from Cheltenham, England, published*Our Israelitish Origi*n in 1840. This work was the first full-blown thesis connecting the Anglo-Saxons to ancient Israel. Wilson drew on the best of contemporary scholarship and methodology. He made particular use of the work of Sharon Turner (1768-1847), a monumental figure in British historiography whose multivolume work,*The History of the Anglo-Saxons,* traces the Anglo-Saxons back through Europe to the Balkan countries and ultimately to the Crimea and Caucasus Mountains-exactly what we would expect according to 2 Kings 17:6 and 1 Chronicles 5:26.

Edward Hine, a banker and successor of Wilson, wrote*Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation With Lost Israe*l (1871).

Hine claimed to have addressed five million people on this topic during his lecture-circuit career.

John Harden Allen, Methodist minister from the U.S. Pacific Northwest, wrote*Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthrigh*t (1917).

T. Rosling Howlett, Baptist minister, had pastorates in New York City, Washington and Philadelphia.

**Charles Piazzi Smyth (1819-1900) was the royal astronomer of Scotland and emeritus professor of astronomy at Edinburgh University.

Col. John Cox Gawler (1830-1882) was the keeper of the British crown jewels.**

Herbert Armstrong (1892-1986), founder and chancellor of Ambassador University, wrote*The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, published in several editions until 1986.

Steven Collins wrot*e The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel ... Foun*d! (1992).

Yair Davidy authore*d The Tribe*s*: The Israelite Origins of Western People*s (1993)*, Ephra*im (1995) an*d Lost Israelite Identit*y (1996).

John Ogwyn, minister of the Living Church of God, wrot*e What's Ahead for America and Britain*? (1999).