

Rediscovering Western Christian Civilization

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The Antiquity of the Anglo-Israel Thesis

By Reed Benson

Many are the critics who denounce the idea that Caucasians have a genetic connection to ancient Israelites of the Old Testament. To suggest that White people of European extraction are the descendants of the lost ten tribes often invites scorn and reproofs from mainstream theologians and academics. Yet, when asked to offer proof that such a thesis is erroneous, the evidence presented is always brief and shallow and quickly deteriorates into name calling, asserting that anyone who might adhere to such a belief is a "kook" or a "racist."

By itself, the fact that many mainstream academics ridicule this idea does not make it false. Mainstream academics scoffed at Copernicus and persecuted Galileo when they suggested that the sun was the center of the solar system rather than the earth. Mainstream academics were wrong. For the last century, mainstream academics have heaped scorn on anyone who asserts that God created the universe, preferring instead to believe that the universe created itself, i.e., evolution. Mainstream academics are wrong. Most recently, mainstream academics are busy mocking anyone who believes the earth was designed with a self-adjusting climatic feedback system, insisting instead that man-made global warming is about to destroy the planet. Even as you read this, overwhelming evidence is piling up that the mainstream academics are wrong.

Truth is revealed when the merits of an argument are allowed open and free examination. Too often, mainstream academics, eager to protect their turf for political and economic reasons, will suppress ideas that make them uncomfortable. That is the case regarding the Kingdom Israel message.

One of the key points of contention in this debate is the origin of the thesis. Who originated the thought that White Caucasians of northwest Europe are the genetic descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel?

Mainstream academics posit that an eccentric English gentleman, Richard Brothers (1757-1824), developed the notion rather recently, only about two hundred years ago. Brothers also claimed that he himself was to inherit the throne of England and went on to be incarcerated in an insane asylum for several years on the grounds of possible treason. He thus gives the appearance of being non-credible. If he were the founder of the Kingdom Israel message, it indeed got off to a rocky start. Thus, to discredit the thesis at its very source, mainstream academics repeatedly assert that Richard Brothers was its true originator and prime advocate.

It is the purpose of this essay to demonstrate that many other writers and documents pre-date Richard Brothers in the assertion of the Kingdom Israel thesis. Indeed, they precede him, not by just a few decades, but by wide expanses of time. Proving that this idea is an old one does not necessarily make it true. Additional essays by this author and other skilled expositors of the Bible and history offer the necessary evidence to build its veracity. But proving the antiquity of the Kingdom Israel message does demonstrate a strong measure of credibility; if many writers from varied locations and over long time periods believed that it is true, surely it is an idea that deserves a fair shake and should not be lightly dismissed to the realm of "kooks."

Let us travel backward in time. Beginning with the period of history immediately preceding Richard Brothers (1757-1824), let us work our way ever deeper into antiquity and pursue this thesis of whether people from Europe are the descendants of the ancient Israelites. How far back in time does this idea go?

The English Puritans

In the English-speaking world, Puritan thinkers dominated the seventeenth and eighteenth century. From a distance of over three centuries, we tend to generalize the Puritan movement and place them all in a box. You know the image: they only dressed in black, never smiled, carried gigantic Bibles, hated fun, and spent a lot of time falsely accusing old ladies of being witches. In point of fact, with the exception of carrying large Bibles (all Bibles were large in those days), every one of those popular images is a mischaracterization. While it is not our purpose to explore every facet of what Puritans were like, let it be stated for the record that the term *Puritan* became a catchall term for any Englishman who had any dissatisfaction with the state church, the Church of England. Beyond that, they truly comprised a broad array of theological ideas. Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic were caught up in deep exploration of the Bible and their own role God's unfolding plan of history. Puritans did not always agree with each other; but despite their differences, their writings almost always reflect sensible, cogent arguments based on honest readings of Scripture. Some of these Puritans believed that they were descended from the tribes of ancient Israel. And to prove it, consider the following quotations by these prominent Puritans divines:

Cotton Mather, an American Puritan minister, wrote *The Ecclesiastical History of New England* in 1702 about the Puritans who emigrated from England to America. In this work are sundry passages revealing his belief that they were the offspring of biblical Israel:

"...our hastening voyage unto the history of a new English-Israel."

"These good people were now satisfied, they had as plain a command of Heaven to attempt a removal, as ever their father Abraham had for his leaving Chaldean territories."

"Among these passengers were divers worthy and useful men, who were come to seek the welfare of this little Israel."

"To give them such hearts as were in Abraham and others of their famous and faithful fathers."

"An introduction unto this piece of New English history; that when some ecclesiastical oppressions drive a colony of the truest Israelites into the remoter parts of the world . . ."

"The enemies of New England owed the wondrous disasters and confusions that still followed them as much to the prayers of this true Israelite as to perhaps any one occasion."

"Here lies Nathanael, True offspring of God's Israel."

John Milton, the seventeenth century's most celebrated English poet and writer, believed that the Saxon tribes that settled England were direct descendants of the Israelites. In his work *The History of Britain*, published in 1670, he wrote this of the Saxons: "They were a people thought by good writers to be

descendants of the Sacae, a kind of Scythians in the north of Asia, thence called Sacasons, or sons of Sacae, who with a flood of other northern nations came into Europe, toward the declining of the Roman empire."

Nathaniel Morton, the court secretary for New Plymouth wrote the following statements in 1669 in his book *New England's Memorial*:

"That especially the seed of Abraham his servant, and the children of Jacob his chosen, may remember his marvelous works in the beginning and progress of the planting of New England."

"God . . . brought to nought their wicked devices [the American Indians] . . . until he had accomplished the freedom of his Israel, by the overthrow of his and their enemies."

Edward Johnson was a historian of the Puritan movement in England and New England. His often spoke of the English people as literal Israelites. In his book, *Johnson's Wonder-Working Providences of Zion's Savior in New England*, published in 1630, he wrote the following, referring to the Puritan settlers coming from England:

"The Lambe is preparing his Bride . . . yee the ancient Beloved of Christ, whom he of old led by the hand from Egypt to Canaan through that great and terrible wilderness."

"You the Seed of Israel both lesse and more, the rattling of your dead bones together is at hand, Sinewes, Flesh and Life: at the Word of Christ it comes."

John Bunyan (1628-1688), the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* (written from a prison cell), believed he was an Israelite according to the Jewish Rabbi Louis Finkelstein who analyzed his works: "Bunyan actually fancied himself an Israelite . . ."

Reformation Era Writers

The Protestant Reformation was a two hundred fifty year period of religious revival and tumult across Europe that began earlier and then ran more or less contemporaneously to the Puritan movement in England. There were a variety of theological opinions publicly vented during this exciting time, but again, like the Puritans in England, all viewpoints were grounded in literal and honest readings of Scripture, even if the interpretations were not always identical. Among the ideas voiced was the theme that God was actively working among his Israelite people, who were to be found in the nations of Europe. Consider the following quotations:

Johannes Jacobi Eurenus (1688-1751), a Swedish dean and pastor in Angermanland and Torsaker, was an advocate that the Hebrews had many connections to Western European regions in ancient times and believed the Swedes, along with the other Europeans, were Israelites. Among his other arguments he observed a linguistic relationship and stated in his book *Atlantica Orientalis*: "Furthermore, the language which we have kept confirms that our ancestors have sprung from the fled Israelites and Scythians, since we have an extraordinary mixture of the languages through which the Israelites stayed during their exodus out of the Orient and wandered through."

Dr. Jacques Abaddie, a French Huguenot who was forced to flee France, eventually settled in Ireland and became the Dean of Killaloe. In his four volume-work *Le Triomphe de la Providence et de la Religion*, published in 1723, he wrote this: "Certainly, unless the Ten Tribes have flown into the air, or been plunged to the earth's centre, they must be sought in that part of the North . . . namely among the Iberians, Armenians, and Scythians; for that was the place of their dispersion—the wilderness where God caused them to dwell in tents . . . Perhaps if the subject was carefully examined, it would be found that the nations who in the fifth age made irruption into the Roman Empire, and who Procopius reduced to ten in number, were in effect the Ten Tribes who made their home in Europe . . . Everything fortifies this conjecture; the extraordinary multiplication of this people, marked so precisely by the prophets, the number of the tribes, the custom of those nations to dwell in tents, according to the oracles, and many other usages of the Scythians similar to those of the children of Israel."

Henry Spelman (1562-1641) was a noted English scholar of church history, the author of *Concilia Ecclesiastica Orbis Britannici* and *Glossarium Archaeologicum*. According to his eighteenth century biographer Peter Suhm, Spelman believed that the Danes, Norwegians, and Goths were Hebrews and that the Danes were in particular of the tribe of Dan.

Adriaan van der Schriek was a Dutch scholar who published a book in 1614, *Troost Mijn Volk*. In the subtitle he stated: "The Netherlanders with the Gauls and Germans together in the earliest times were called Celts, who came out of the Hebrews."

Councillor Le Loyer, a French Huguenot, wrote in 1590, in his work, *The Ten Lost Tribes Found*: "The Israelites came to and founded the English Isles."

William Tyndale, the famed English Bible Translator, like Johannes Eurenus, observed a surprisingly close affinity between Hebrew and the Germanic languages of northwest Europe (German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and English). In 1530 he stated, "The properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one; so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate it into English, word for word . . ."

Medieval European Sources

The Declaration of Arbroath, one of the most remarkable medieval documents, strongly infers that the Scots were descendants of the Israelites of old. Also known as the *Scottish Declaration of Independence*, this intriguing document was addressed to the Pope in the 1320 to ask for his recognition of Scotland as a nation distinct from England and English ambitions. Drafted by Bernard de Linton, the Abbot of Aberbrothick and the Chancellor of Scotland, it was signed by twenty-five Scottish nobles and Robert the Bruce, the King of Scotland. This English translation of the original Latin states this: "Most Holy Father and Lord, we know and from the chronicles and books of the ancients we find that among other famous nations our own, the Scots, has been graced with widespread renown. They journeyed from Greater Scythia by way of the Mediterranean Sea and the Pillars of Hercules, and dwelt for a long course of time in Spain among the most savage tribes, but nowhere could they be subdued by any race, however barbarous. Thence they came, twelve hundred years after the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, to their home in the West where they still live today." This document places the ancestors of the Scots in Scythia in precisely the period of time when the ten tribes of Israel were moving westward. Furthermore, by mentioning the landmark event of the crossing of the Red Sea, it marks them as having a unique connection to the ancient Israelites of Old Testament fame.

Gildas, an early British historian and cleric, writing in the sixth century AD, showed his distress at the invasions of the Saxons and wrote that these events were taking place "to the end that our Lord might try this land after his accustomed manner these His Israelites whether they loved him or not."

There does exist a body of evidence in the British Isles that predates the coming of the Romans. Although these documents do not rise to the standard historians prefer, and skeptics will dismiss as legendary, they are nonetheless worth noting because they are very near to being contemporary to the events under consideration. They are thus the closest documents that exist that can be considered as possible eyewitnesses to the movement of Israelitish people from the Near East to northwest Europe.

One of these is particularly plain. In *The Brut*, or the *Chronicles of the Kings of Briton*, a Scottish chief named Bathlome, a commander of "thirty ships," spoke to a king named Gwrgan. In this conversation, "This chief related to king the whole of their adventures, from the time they had been driven from Israel,

their original country, and the manner and circumstances in which their ancestors dwelt in a retired part of Spain, near Eirnia, from whence Spaniards drove them to sea to seek another abode."

Witnesses from the Classical World

Josephus was the premier Judean historian of the first century AD. An early supporter of the Judean uprising in 70AD, he was captured and then paroled by the Romans after the uprising was defeated. He went on to write a detailed and voluminous account of the history of the Hebrews up to his own time. He identified the ten tribes of Israel in existence in beyond the reaches of the Roman Empire in southwest Asia. This was exactly where they would have been after their escape from the Assyrian captivity on their slow but steady migration westward into Europe. In Book 2, chapter 5. 2:133, he wrote this: "So there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates until now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers."

Spartans in the *Apocrypha*, in about 200 BC, state quite clearly that they were Israelites: "King Arius of the Spartans, to the high priest Onias, greetings. It has been found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews that they are brothers and are of the family of Abraham" (1 Maccabees 12:20-21). The Apocrypha is a reliable source, well documented, and considered of nearly equal value as the sixty-six canonized books of the Bible. Indeed, the original edition of the King James Bible included the *Apocrypha* as did many other Bibles of the Reformation era. For the *Apocrypha* to identify such a notable collection of people as the Greek Spartans as being relatives to the people of Judea is almost unimpeachable evidence that it is true.

In Conclusion

Having seen with your own eyes the testimony of prominent men in history that adopted the thesis that Caucasians are Israelites, you are in a position to know that Richard Brothers did not launch this idea. As is obvious, it is a thesis with a long history into antiquity. Just because it is politically incorrect does not make it false. Indeed, the intellectual tyranny of our own time in the media and academia that tries so hard to scorn this idea without ever looking at the facts is prima facie evidence that this is a potent idea worthy of honest examination.

Are you brave and honest enough to read more about this idea and see if history and Scripture offer evidence of its truth? Or, will you plug your eyes and ears and return to the screamers of political correctness who insist that supporters of this idea are nothing more than "kooks" and "racists," all the while providing no thoughtful rebuttal based on evidence? Could it be that there is no thoughtful evidence-based rebuttal? Hmmm...