

Justifying Belief within the Christian Identity Movement: An Exercise in Memetics

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Abstract

This paper examines the origins and utility of the key proof memes of the Christian Identity Movement, a heterogeneous racist subsection of North American Protestant Christianity. These memes have been gathered by looking at conversion oriented texts of three diverse ministries that are commonly held to be members of the Christian Identity movement: Christogenea, The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel, and Mission to Israel. This paper traces the origins of the memes through primary texts of the Christian Identity movement and its direct ancestor, British Israelism, while addressing their utility within historical context. This paper will serve as a case-study in the value of claims about the past providing legitimacy and proof to fringe religious movements.

Preface:

Before I begin, it is germane to acknowledge certain difficulties the scholar faces in examining the Christian Identity Movement and the methods here employed in mitigation. Additionally, I will define certain shorthand used for the remainder of this document in discussion of the Christian Identity Movement.

To begin with, there exists no authoritative body capable of establishing orthodox doctrine within the Christian Identity Movement, leaving the individual Identity minister a great deal of leeway in establishing Identity doctrine within his (the nature of Identity doctrine prevents women from serving as ministers “YHWH’s authority structure is Patriarchal” (Weiland, *Misguided Chivalry* 2010, 23:59)) church. This diversity leaves one two options in operationalizing Christian Identity, a minimalist definition (belief that lost Israel is present in European populations), or a clustering definition (sampling beliefs of a variety of common Identity beliefs). I have chosen to employ the latter definition, sampling the doctrinal statements of three influential Identity ministries with prominent internet presences: Christogenea, The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel, and Mission to Israel; additionally the work of E. Raymond Capt will be taken into consideration as all three cite Capt’s books as published sources of archaeological proof.

Second, as noted by Quarles, Christian Identity documents tend to be extremely flawed in scholarship; often misquoting, misattributing, partially citing, or presenting as original earlier works (Quarles 2004). Moreover, many works have gone through many cycles of reprinting across numerous small or independent presses, obscuring original publication dates and, in some cases, authors. While care has been taken in examining primary and secondary sources in attempt

to trace the lineage of the Identity doctrines discussed in this document, it should not be perceived as exhaustive or definitive in nature.

Finally, Christian Identity believers tend to be both secretive and suspicious of academics. Few identity brick and mortar churches publically proclaim their allegiance to Christian Identity and ethnographic studies¹ relating to the Christian Identity Movement are rarely conducted or published. As such, sampling beliefs of the laity and assaying the value of the Identity message to its adherents is beyond the scope of this document.

For the sake of economy the sign Identity, capital I, within this document will refer to the Christian Identity Movement such as the previous paragraph's "Identity message" meaning the message of the Christian Identity Movement, and Identity adherent meaning one who believes the message of the Christianity Identity Movement, etc.

The use of the term "meme"² throughout this document refers to a distinct, isolatable belief within the cluster of beliefs that compose a belief system, in this case Identity doctrine, which is imitated by others. The term is used in this document to facilitate the examination of the beliefs that have coalesced into the Identity message and should not be assumed to imply support for the idea that beliefs are necessarily subject to Darwinian Evolution.

Introduction:

The Christian Identity Movement represents a heterogeneous collection of independent fundamentalist churches and individuals throughout the United States, Canada, and to a lesser extent, the English speaking world, which assert that, following the conquest of Northern Israel by the Assyrians c. 730 BCE, the Israelites migrated into Northwestern Europe and, through

¹ For an ethnographic report of an Identity community see Shook, Delano and Balch, 1999.

² See Dawkins The Selfish Gene, 1976.

British colonialism, North America (James 2009)³. This belief was inherited from British Israelism (Anglo-Israelism) which during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Much of Identity hermeneutics rejects the dispensationalist ideology present in mainstream fundamentalism as well as supersessionism⁴, maintaining a belief that God maintains all the biblical covenants with the people Israel, i.e. the Anglo-Saxons. As such, the Identity message stands in opposition to mainstream fundamentalist Christianity despite the fact that this is the social and ideological context from which it draws much of its membership. This paper examines the transition of those key meme groups used in establishing the verity of the Identity message in British Israel to the Christian Identity Movement and their value in legitimizing the Identity message.

It is easy to dismiss the Christian Identity Movement as an irrelevant and extremist fundamentalist sect or as evidence of one of the last vestiges of hardcore American racism. However, it would be a mistake to do so, as groups such as Mission to Israel have recently begun an attempt to make inroads in United States politics through a recruiting campaign aimed at the Tea Party Patriots, as well as lectures on the U.S. Government in the context of Biblical teachings at non-Identity churches (Mission to Israel 2009). Moreover, the Christian Identity Movement can serve as a case study of the development of religious proof.

The beginning of British Israelism is difficult to pinpoint. Many scholars cite Richard Brothers' *A Revealed Knowledge of Prophecies and Times* (1792) as the first published ideologically British Israelist work (Barkun 1997, Roberts 2003, Quarles 2004), though some scholars cite John Sadler's much earlier *Rights of the Kingdom* (1649) as the first Identity work⁵

³ Some Identity adherents also assert that the tribe of Dan colonized much of Europe--and the Americas--at an earlier point in history.

⁴ It should be noted that the extreme diversity within the Identity movement results in a state in which the only required belief is that the ancestors of some northern European people were Biblical Israel, therefore some Identity adherents may espouse dispensationalist or supersessionist theology.

⁵ This author does not consider *Rights of the Kingdom* a British Israel text, Sadler's manifest skepticism, it has been included within the corpus of data used in this work to demonstrate the existence of ideas within time.

(Davis 2010). In either case, each of these grew out of earlier puritan works and Millenarism fervor.

The Identity message can be seen as having three stages of development: 1) a proto-British Israel stage from the late-17th century through the mid-19th century during which some of the themes of the Identity message developed; 2) a British Israel stage from the mid-19th century through the 1920's during which much of the foundational doctrine was established and the movement spread outside England; and 3) a Christian Identity stage from the 1920's to present when the movement, primarily steered from North America, became explicitly anti-Semitic and fundamentalist in theology.

The beginning of the contemporary British Israel movement is marked by the publication of John Wilson's *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origins* (1840), which established enduring claims that the English language is of Hebrew ancestry—as is English heraldry (Barkun 1997, Quarles 2004, Roberts 2003, Wilson 1840). British Israelism traveled to North America by the 1850, and was being preached by Joseph Wild in Brooklyn, New York by the latter half of the 1870s (Barkun 1997). By 1920, the first American organization built around British Israelism was founded by Howard B. Rand, which developed its right-wing politics and an increasingly anti-Semitic air (Roberts 2003). During the Great Depression, with the aid of William J. Cameron, anti-Semitism increased within North American Anglo-Israelism, straining relations with their English counterparts (Barkun 1997).

The increasing anti-Semitism resulted in a shift from British Israel's claim to membership in "All Israel"⁶ to a rejection of Jewish claims to Israelite heritage. This has been accomplished by one of three methods: 1) assertions of Jewish "Edomite" descent, 2) Seedline doctrine, and 3)

⁶ Israel in the broadest sense; all the Hebrew tribes, in contrast to Israel the tribes of the Northern Kingdom or the Tribe of Israel.

assertions of a Khazar ancestry of modern Jewry. The Edomite theory asserts that the racially impure Edomites dominated Judea during the Second Temple period and interbred with Jews who were returning from Babylonian Captivity, racially corrupting the Jews in Jerusalem by the time of Christ (Quarles 2004). Popular assertion of the theory of Edomite descent dates back to 1840, when it was proposed by John Wilson (Barkun 1997, Wilson 1840). The Seedline doctrine states that Eve's original sin was miscegenation with Satan, that the product of this unholy union was Cain, and that his descendants are today's Jews who have historically been in conflict with True Israel (Kingdom Identity Ministries 2009, Roberts 2003). The development of the Seedline doctrine from existing anti-African hate doctrine is a matter so complex that Barkun dedicates three chapters to the question in *Religion and the Racist Right*. In any case, the theory had become part of the 1960s Identity ideology (Barkun 1997). The final theory, that of Khazar ancestry (also known as the Khazar Hypothesis), is popular with many "moderate" Identity churches and "Covenant Christians" including Mission to Israel and The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel (Wieland 1995, Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel 2009). Barkun pinpoints the genesis of the Khazar Hypothesis to 27 January 1883, when it was mentioned by Ernest Renan in a lecture titled "Judaism as Race and as Religion." The Khazar Hypothesis grew in popularity during the Great Depression and the Founding of the Jewish State in 1948 (Barkun 1997).

Other memes generated in the 19th century that remain with the Christian Identity include: 1) Pyramidology, 2) Lost Israel's presence in Europe based on interpretations of the Apocrypha, and 3) the assertion that Biblical prophecy indicates that England is Israel, and 4) that the people of Israel can be traced to a homeland in England through a connection between Saxons and Scythians, and 5) assertions of the continued reign of the Davidic dynasty by the

royalty of Great Britain. This paper explores these memes, as well as a specific piece of evidence frequently cited to support them: the assertion that inscriptions on the Behistûn rock in the modern nation of Iran provide proof of Saxon/Scythian connection.

Data:

1) Pyramidology:

Early Development

Around the same time Wilson wrote *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origin* (1840), John Taylor began publicizing works that would form the basis of a doctrine now known as Pyramidology. These ideas made their way into the doctrines of British Israelism with the publication of C. Piazzi Smyth's *The Great Pyramid, Its Secrets and Mysteries Revealed* in 1864 (Barkun 1997, Davis 2010) and *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (Smyth 1877), and remain with the Christian Identity Movement today (Capt, *The Great Pyramid Decoded* 1996).

During the 19th century, ancient Egypt captured and held the imagination of the West. Egyptian themes had become increasingly popular in Freemasonry following Napoleonic conquest of Egypt in the last decade of the 18th century, insinuating Egypt into the intellectual and mystical landscape of English life (Rich and Merchant 2001). Following the defeat of the French at the close of the 19th century, Egypt was subjected to British colonialism and with it, British collection of historical artifacts. Interest in Ancient Egypt was no doubt spurred by the role played by the Egyptian empire in the Bible as well as in classical Greek and Roman literature, both of which were considered subjects of basic education for the British intellectual elite. English colonial bias against the subjugated Egyptian population welcomed a theory to disinherit the Egyptians from their past (Barkun 1997). Linking the pyramids to the Israelite

patriarchs would have been an excellent match for philo-Semitic institutions such as Freemasonry and British Israel.

A key element of Pyramidology is the concept of the “Pyramid Inch.” In 1859, John Taylor “discovered” that the Great Pyramid was engineered in increments that varied only by .001 from the Imperial Inch⁷. The concept of the Pyramid Inch proved useful to British Israel, Millenarianism, and traditionalism in England. Proponents of British Israel, for example, believed that the Pyramid Inch’s similarity to the Imperial Inch was proof that Great Britain had been populated by the descendants of the pyramid’s architects and builders, the Israelites, and asserting that the system of measurement used to construct that ancient monument had been continuously preserved over millennia by English royalty (Barkun 1997, Taylor 1864). Millenarianism found an eschatological message in the numerological aspects of the Great Pyramid that was used to counter widespread claims that the world would end in the 1830s and 1840s. For example, after the world did not end in 1870, Millenarian Joseph Seiss began writing about the pyramid (Webb 1974), and while he did not give a date, Seiss alluded to a connection between “the floor-line of the Pyramid’s Grand Galley” and a future End of Days (Seiss 1877). For traditionalists, the Pyramid inch justified maintenance of the imperial measurement system and could be used in arguments opposing acceptance of an international metric system. The Imperial Inch, it was said, should be maintained because it had been given by God to the patriarch responsible for building the Pyramid—though different authors favored different patriarchs (Barkun 1997). That patriarch, in turn, was asserted to be the ancestor of a continuous lineage that provided a direct, genealogical connection authorized by the divine right of kingship. One such defender of the Imperial system was Sir John Herschel, a noted astronomer, who

⁷ I.E. The Inch employed by Great Britain and its territories, which differs slightly from the U.S. Customary Inch prior to 1959.

resigned from the Standards Commission in 1869 in opposition to its support for adoption of the metric system (Mendelssohn 1974).

Transition:

During the transitional period between the 1920's and the 1960's Pyramidology continued within the movement. Figures such as David Davidson, Howard B. Rand, and numerous less notable figures who used Pyramidological prophesy to explain everything from the Great Depression to the Second World War and the Cold War—all times of confusion and anxiety in which an explanative theory, such as Pyramid encoded messages from God, allayed or increased fears and provided social cohesion to ideological movements.

In 1926, Davidson published *The Great Pyramid: its Divine Message*, in which the Pyramid Inch was again interpreted not only as a unit of spatial length but also as a marker of time, allowing it to be applied to the features of the Great Pyramid in order to decode cryptic messages pertaining to prophesy (Barkun 1997). Davidson wrote that “the Pyramid’s Message was to proclaim this same Jesus as the Deliverer and the Saviour of Men, to announce the dated circumstances relating to His Coming, and to prepare men by means of its Message” (Davidson 1992, 458). The message was that the end of days would happen on 16 September 1936 after a period of tribulation that would begin within the Anglo world on 29 May 1928. After the fact—when the world did not end as predicted--Davidson’s eschatological prophesy of tribulation was justified as a prediction of the Great Depression. For many, this added credibility to the movement’s claim to truth and demonstrated “a means of relieving the anguish millenarians always feel that comes from not knowing when the inevitable will occur” (Barkun 1997, 86).

During the Second World War, Canadian Anglo-Israelist LTC W.G. MacKendrick, who had been writing doom filled prophesies since 1921, declared that the war was, in fact, the great battle between the forces of good and evil in *This IS Armageddon* (MacKendrick 1942). Like

Davidson and the Great Depression, this work can be seen as evidence of the Identity movement addressing the concerns and fears of North Americans in a time of confusion with offerings of prophesy.

Present:

Within the present Christian Identity Movement, Pyramidology has become less evident within the rhetoric and literature than in earlier times, though it remains in the periphery of the movement's proofs. Many Identity adherents refer to the work of E. Raymond Capt for archaeological support of the Identity message, among Capt's publications are at least two works of Pyramidology, *The Great Pyramid Decoded* (1971) and *A Study in Pyrimidology* (1986). Some Identity adherents citing Capt include *Mission to Israel in God's Covenant People* (Wieland 1995), and numerous YouTube users such as **TheFathersChildren** and **chasluim34**. According to Capt, the Great Pyramid was divinely inspired as a witness of the truth of Old Testament prophesy, in particular of Jesus and of his Second Coming, to the people of the scientific and skeptical age (Capt, *The Great Pyramid Decoded* 1996, 91-92). With regard to the Pyramid Inch, Capt wrote that while the Imperial Inch "Only deviates from the original scientific standard by approximately a thousandth part of an inch, the U.S.A. Inch (...) may be regarded as identical" (Capt, *The Great Pyramid Decoded* 1996, 51).

The use of Pyramidology within Identity rhetoric appears to be in decline, I believe this to be due to the increasing saturation of information, both scientific and fringe, relating to the Great Pyramid within North American media outlets, improved archaeological methods, and the decline in the importance of Freemasonry, both in society and as targets of the Identity message. Perhaps this warrants farther explanation, while Freemasonry was a fertile recruiting ground for British Israel as both were "philo-Semitic groups" in Barkun's terms. The modern Identity

movement is, by varying degrees, anti-Semitic. As such freemasonry is repugnant to today's Identity adherents.

2) Israel in the Apocrypha:

Early Development:

The book of II Esdras has been present with the Identity message since Sadler, though over time it has increased in importance and developed from its original form. In *Rights of the Kingdom* (1682), Sadler mentions II Esdras somewhat skeptically in relation to possible remnants of Israel in Brazil or other parts of the Americas. He wrote "It is strange, if it should prove true, and that which might regain fame of Esdras' credit" (Sadler 1682, 106). Richard Brothers also mentioned, briefly II Esdras, in *A Revealed Knowledge of Prophecies and Times* (1794). Brothers included a section of the text of II Esdras in his commentary on the prophet Daniel, and recommends that everyone read II Esdras "From the beginning of the thirteenth chapter to the thirteenth verse (...) and likewise of the sixteenth chapter from the eighteenth verse to the thirty-sixth" (Brothers 1794, 35). It is clear that by 1850, when Wilson published *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origin*, II Esdras was part of the tradition, though it had not become a positive proof. The Apocrypha had not yet reached scriptural status among Identity adherence that it since has.

Wilson addresses Esdras not as support for the Israelitish ancestry of Britain, but in the context of another author's use to support Israelite ancestry among Chinese populations. Wilson wrote that the evidence for Israelites in China "is not derived from the Bible, but the Apocryphal book of Esdras" (Wilson 1840, 23), though rather than stopping with mere dismissal, Wilson

finds that this passage, from a seemingly less valuable source, actually supports the Britain's Israelite ancestry. The verse's in question reads:

Those are the ten tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the King, whom Salmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so same they into another land. (...) and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might keep their statutes, which the never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the most High then Showed signs for them, and held the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth (II Esdras 13:40-45)

Wilson reasoned that the Assyrians had already transported the Israelites east of the Euphrates and would therefore only cross the Euphrates moving north-westward towards Europe (Wilson 1840). This is the beginning of what would eventually develop into a dominant meme within the contemporary Identity movement, but which was fairly dormant during the late 19th century.

Neither Joseph Wild's *The Ten Lost Tribes* (1882) nor Edward Hine's *Forty-Seven Identifications* (1874) makes any reference to II Esdras in their arguments. Whether due to the status of deuterocanonical texts to the 19th century for Protestants or the fact that the text itself does not link Israel to Europe, II Esdras was on the minds of authors in the British-Israelism camp but had not yet found a form that would allow it to be important to the Identity message.

Transition:

By 1890, the II Esdras meme (i.e. allusions to this text, both direct and indirect) had been incorporated within the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme (which will be discussed in depth elsewhere in this paper), and began growing in importance. In 1890, Col. John Garnier included mention of II Esdras in his attempt to link Israel to Britain through the Saxons. This appeared in *Israel in Britain: a Brief Statement of the Evidences in Proof of the Israelitish Origin of the British Race*. Garnier wrote that the books of Esdras had historical value and that "The wilds of Scythia at that

time was [sic] exactly descriptive of such a country” (Garnier 1890, 23) as mentioned in II Esdras 13:41-45, although he erroneously cites II Esdras 14:41-45.

Having been established within a broader narrative, the II Esdras meme grew in popularity along with the Apocrypha in the Christian Identity Movement.

Present:

At present, the II Esdras meme has become a standard belief in the Christian Identity Movement. According to Roberts, “Identity teachers freely supplement the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament with readings from Apocryphal books to support some of their doctrines. Howard Rand argued for the inspiration of at least one Apocryphal work” (Roberts 2003, 49), that is, II Esdras. The common reliance on books of the Apocrypha, specifically II Esdras and Tobit, has in the time since Roberts’ research led some Identity ministries to question scriptural canon in general.

II Esdras 13:39-45 has become nearly omnipresent in Identity evidence, specifically as the beginning of the lineage of Israel to the Anglo-Saxons, Germanics, Scandinavians, Celts and kindred peoples. Pastor Ted Wieland places this meme under the heading “Historical Testimony” in *God’s Covenant People*; noting that while most of Christendom does not accept II Esdras as divinely inspired it is considered a “very dependable historical document” (Wieland 1995, 343) Wieland then quotes II Esdras 13:39-42. E. Raymond Capt begins chapter 7 of *Missing Links Discovered*, “Historical Records of Israel in Asia Minor” by quoting II Esdras 13:39-45, writing that “Since they crossed the river we should find evidence of their presence west of the river, in the large region called by the Assyrians, “Tabal,” which extended from Urartu to Phygia. Phygia is named as a country overran by Cimmerians” (*Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets* 2006, 125). The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel, led by Eli James,

includes the II Esdras meme in point eight of “Explaining Christian Identity to White Nationalists and Neo-Pagans,” quoting II Esdras 13:40-46 as part of a string of quotations to prove that Aryans and Hebrews are the same people. James writes that “The Migrations of the Twelve Tribes prove conclusively that the Euro-Aryans are indeed Hebrew Israelites” (James n.d.).

Christogenea, an online outlet of the Seedline Identity message published the following about Esdras: “Esdras is certainly a better copy of Ezra than the one that ended up in the books considered to be canonical. We at Christogenea believe that it more accurately represents the original work of Ezra” (Finck, Apocryphal Books n.d.), moreover, in a commentary on the biblical translation Finck wrote “Nearly all - if not all - of the various translations of the Bible which are available were created under the auspices of one religious sect or another, and therefore each has its particular quirks reflecting various beliefs” (Finck 2009). This erosion of faith in biblical canon can also be seen in the doctrinal statement of The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel, in which point three reads

In 325 AD, the Council of Nicea, [sic] being made up of YHWH's enemies, removed many of the books of Scripture that were considered 'inspired' (this process became known as canonizing) in an attempt to disguise the Word of YHWH and to prevent the true racial descendents [sic] from coming to the knowledge of their heritage.
(Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel 2009)

The utility of the II Esdras meme has increased following its integration within a broader narrative. The increased reliance on proof from the Apocrypha has resulted in the questioning and in some cases diminished view of scriptural canon within the Identity movement.

3) England must be Israel due to biblical Prophecy.

Early Development:

Many of the earliest identifications of the Israelite ancestry of British peoples were based in Biblical prophecy. Many of the prophetic proofs were discussed by Edward Hine in his *Forty-Seven Identifications of the British Nation with the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel Founded upon Five Hundred Scriptural Proofs* (1874). Among his identifications are assertions such as “Israel must be located on an island,” based on Isaiah’s use of אִי⁸; “Israel must now be under a monarchy” based on I Chronicles 22:10; Israel must have a strong navy, based on Isaiah 42:10, and “Israel must be above all nations” (Hine 1874). Neither Hine’s rabid self-aggrandizement of the British nor his biblical scholarship went unchallenged in print (Anonymous Member of the University of Dublin 1881). Even still, these ‘identifications’ and the practice of using biblical prophecy to justify the British, and by extension the Americans, as Israel remains a part of the Identity message.

Joseph Wild referenced the prophetic proofs in an ordinal list to distinguish Judah from Israel, implying England’s Israelitish identity. This list didn’t reference specific verses of the Bible, as Hine did. Rather, it seems Wild assumed his audience was already familiar with Hine. Examples include: “5. They were to possess the isles of the sea” “6. They were to be great and successful colonizers.” “12. To have a monarchy.” “To have David’s throne and seed ruling over them” (Wild 1882, 7).

Present:

The prophetic based proofs are the major subject of Ted Weiland’s *God’s Covenant People* (1997). As did Wild, Weiland uses them to distinguish Israel. Unlike Wild, Weiland does not identify the group from which Israel is being distinguished as Judah, but Jews. This reflects the change between British Israel and Christian Identity with respect to the Jewish people. Within *God’s Covenant People*, Weiland specifically contrasts “Celto-Saxons” and Jews

⁸ Understood by Hine as Islanders, but also translated as Westerners, Coastal Persons and Distant Persons.

across the now familiar points of prophecy such as “Israel to be a great and mighty nation,” “Israel to live on Islands and coasts,” and “Israel to colonize and spread abroad” (Wieland 1995). His purpose is to simultaneously demonstrate Great British and American Israel identity and attack Jewish Israelite identity.

Eli James also employs on examined biblical prophecy to disenfranchise the Jewish people from their Israelite heritage. In the introduction to his *Migration Chronicles* (2009), he writes that the Bible dictates that Israel will be a “great sea-faring people,” “a great agricultural people,” and “great builders of cities and nations.” Each of these statements is presented with pictures as if locations in the Americas—not the territory occupied by Jews—were relevant to these activities. Finally, James proclaims that Jews have fulfilled none of these prophesied traits (James 2009).

Both of these modern Identity writers, as was true of those of the British Israelite past, pull Israelite traits from the Bible without regard to context in order to argue that traits pertain to both Great Britain and the United States of America, but not to Jewish history in the Middle East. However, unlike their British Israelite counterparts, the purpose of examining these so-called Biblical proofs is not as much about proving the place of those of Anglo-Saxon descent’s place in the category of All Israel as it is about proving the absence of a legitimate place for Jewish peoples.

4) Israel can be traced to England through Scythia and the Saxons, or the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme.

Early Development:

If one considers John Sadler's work to be the beginning of the Identity message, one will note that models for the lineage of Anglo-Saxon Israel have changed from the time of their inception to present. In relating theories on the origin of the British, Sadler included a theory from Nennius, an eight century monk and author of *Historia Brittonum*. Nennius wrote:

The Britons were thus called from Brutus: Brutus was the son of Hisicion, Hisicion was the son of Alanus, Alanus was the son of Rehea Silvia, Rhea Silvvia was the daughter of Numa Pompilius, Numa was the son of Ascanius, Ascanius of Eneas, Eneas of Anchises, Anchises of Troius, Troius of Dardanus, Dardanus of Flisa, Flisa of Juuin, Juuin of Japheth; (...) the son of Noah, the son of Lamech. (Nennius 1998)

Following this, Sadler wrote: "Our Britto, (Father to the Brittains,) whose Genealogy through twenty Descents to Noah and Adam" (Sadler 1682, 33). While Sadler's lineage may seem strange to today's believers, John Wilson traces Israel to Britain in a manner that would be more familiar to today's Identity adherent, though undeveloped. He implies that Israel became the Saxons but had not developed a full system to explain this transition. Rather, he informed his readers that the last place where the Israelites were known to be was the first place where the Saxons were present. He identified the northwestern portion of Media as the likely site of Ephraim and noted that "it is to this neighbourhood that the Saxons have been trace by one of the most eminent of our historians" (Wilson 1840, 56). This quote, in typical British-Israelist style, quotes an unnamed authority in the presentation of a key concept. However, it is likely that the historian to whom Wilson was alluding was Sharon Turner.

Turner did not link the Scythians to the Israelites in *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1807). Instead, he linked Britain to the Scythians. This he based on the writings of Greek historians, such as Herodotus and Diodorus (Turner 1807). John C. Gawler integrated Turner's work into British-Israelism before the Anglo-Israel Association by presenting his 1875 paper *Our Scythian Ancestors Identified with Israel* (1875), which completed the ideas that had been outlined by

Wilson thirty years earlier. Gawler cites Herodotus, Book IV, Chapters 5-7, to arrive at the conclusion that the history of the Scythians puts the date of their existence as a nation as the time of Moses, and their presence in the area as the same time as the capture of Northern Kingdom of Israel (Gawler 1875, 5).

Sometimes this meme is presented as a component of a larger theory migration, as in the migration theory presented by “Oxonian” in *Israel’s Wandering* (1885) in which the tribe of Dan departs Israel before the Assyrian invasion, migrates to the British Islands by sea, and arrives in Ireland in the eighth century BCE. The Tribe of Dan figures prominently in Mediterranean trade and culture as presented in Greek mythology (Oxonian 1885).

Present:

At present, this meme is the key explanation for Lost Israel’s presence in the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Scandinavian, Celtic and kindred peoples upon which the entire Identity message is based. Often, the migration of Lost Israel into Europe is expanded from the early ideas as presented by Gawler in order to account for the inclusion of the non-British peoples of Europe. This meme is present in “The Migration Chronicles” on the Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel website, in numerous pages of the Christogenea.org site, in *God’s Covenant People* (1995) published through Mission to Israel, and within the work of E. Raymond Capt.

The Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel’s “Migration Chronicles”⁹ (James 2009) includes the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme in the background of a larger narrative against Jewish claim to Israelite heritage. In fact, they present (without commentary) two separate courses of Israel’s migration into Europe within their presentation. Both maintain the core Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme, though they differ in the populating of the non-British

⁹ A PowerPoint presentation designed for perspective converts to the Identity message.

nations. Figure 1 appears to have been “borrowed” from a later (1900) work by Oxonian, showing Israel entering Europe both through the Dariel Pass in the Caucasus and crossing the Bosphorus in Anatolia, with the tribe of Dan as Phoenicians colonizing Ireland, and southern Europe. Figure 2, displayed much later in the presentation, is un-sourced and shows Israel crossing into Europe only at the Caucasus and colonizing western Europe from there, with a portion of Judah sailing to the Americas (James, The Migration Chronicles 2009). It seems that including Italians and Scandinavians was not that important. Rather, the point is that Europe was colonized by the Israelites under the guise of Scythians.

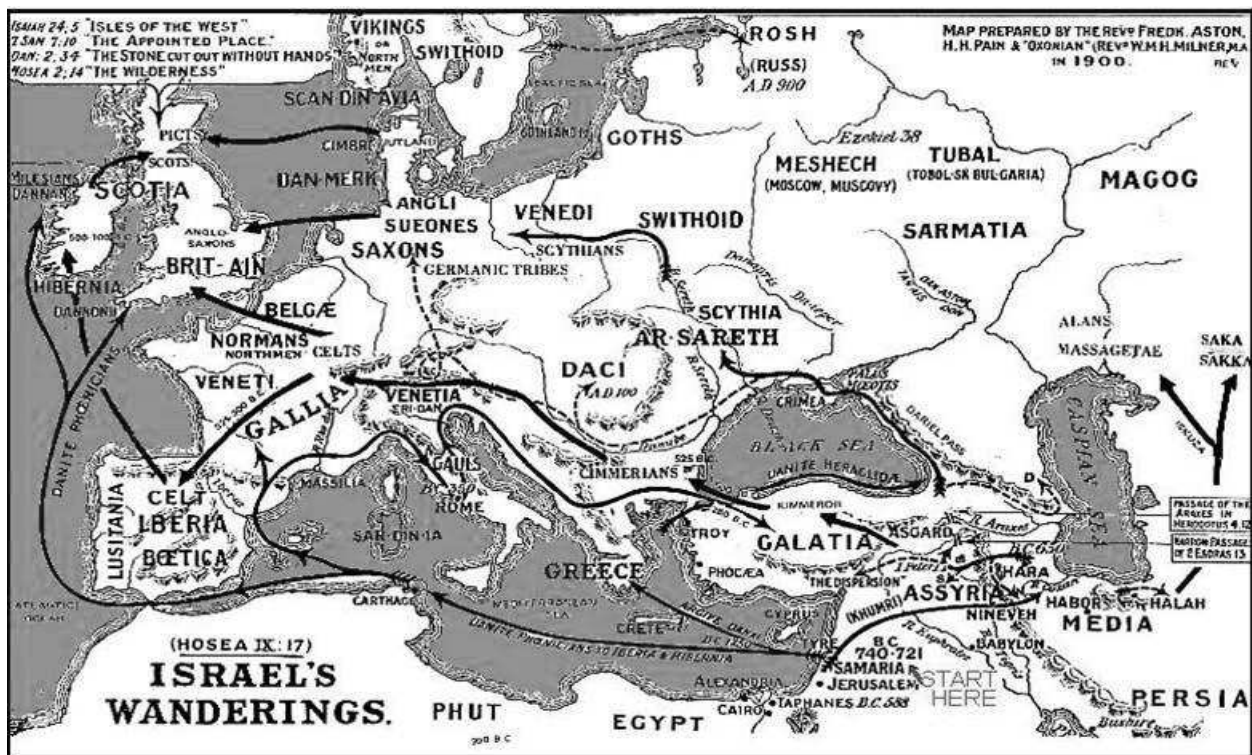


Figure 1 (James, The Migration Chronicles 2009, Introduction)

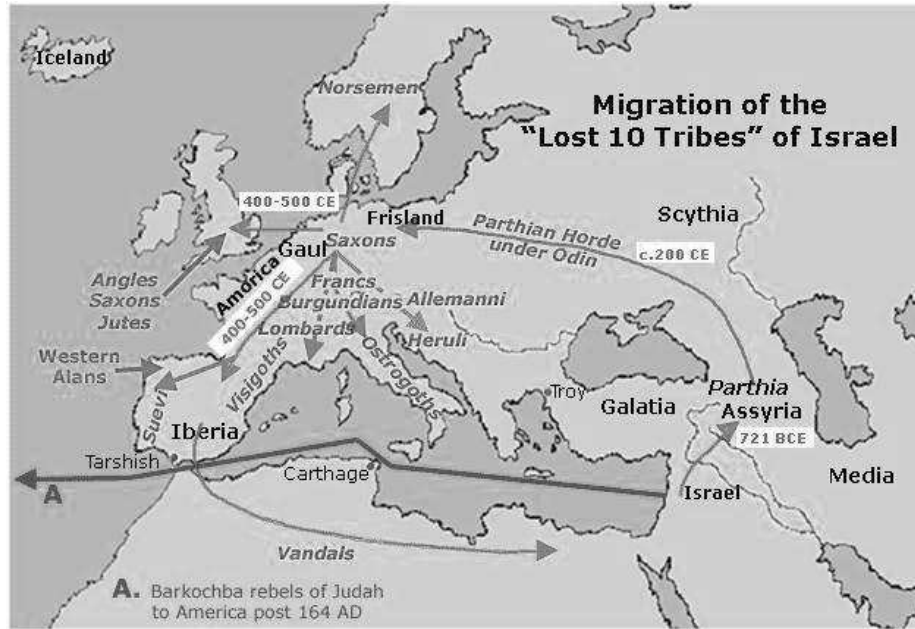


Figure 2 (James, *The Migration Chronicles* 2009, Chp. 6)

According to an article on Christogenea.org, after escaping from the Assyrians a portion of Israel became the Kimmerians and crossed into the Thracian plain from Anatolia, eventually moving west and becoming the Kelts (i.e. Celts) while at a later date the Scythians—representing the greater portion of Israel—would enter Europe through the Caucasus and become the Germanic peoples (Finck, *Classical Records of the Origins of the Scythians, Parthians, & Related Tribes* 2006). In this scheme, the core Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme leads to the Germanic, and by extension British people, while a modification is made for Southern Europeans. In fact, this version is highly similar to the version borrowed from Oxonian above, differing only in spelling and depth.

Pastor Ted Weiland of Mission to Israel devoted most of his book *God's Covenant People* (1995) to disenfranchising the Jewish people up until Chapter 12 where, under the subheading “Archaeological Testimony,” he refers his readers to E. Raymond Capt’s *Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets* (2006) and reprints a map from another Identity

organization's publication. According to the map (figure 3), Israel becomes Khumri, a group that branched into Kimerio, entering Europe through the Bosphorus as Getae and becoming Scythians. Iberia, who enters Europe through the Caucasus and crosses the Kerch Strait, becomes Scythians as well. Cimmeri, who enter Europe by going around the Caspian Sea and taking the route of the Kimerio, become Sacae and eventually Scythians and Goths also. These eventually become Saxons and enter England. Additionally, before the Assyrian conquest of Israel, the tribe of Dan is claimed to have already colonized most of southern Europe as Phoenicians, eventually settling the British Isles. Again, the core Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme remains the base of the migration schema, with expansion to include the rest of Europe.

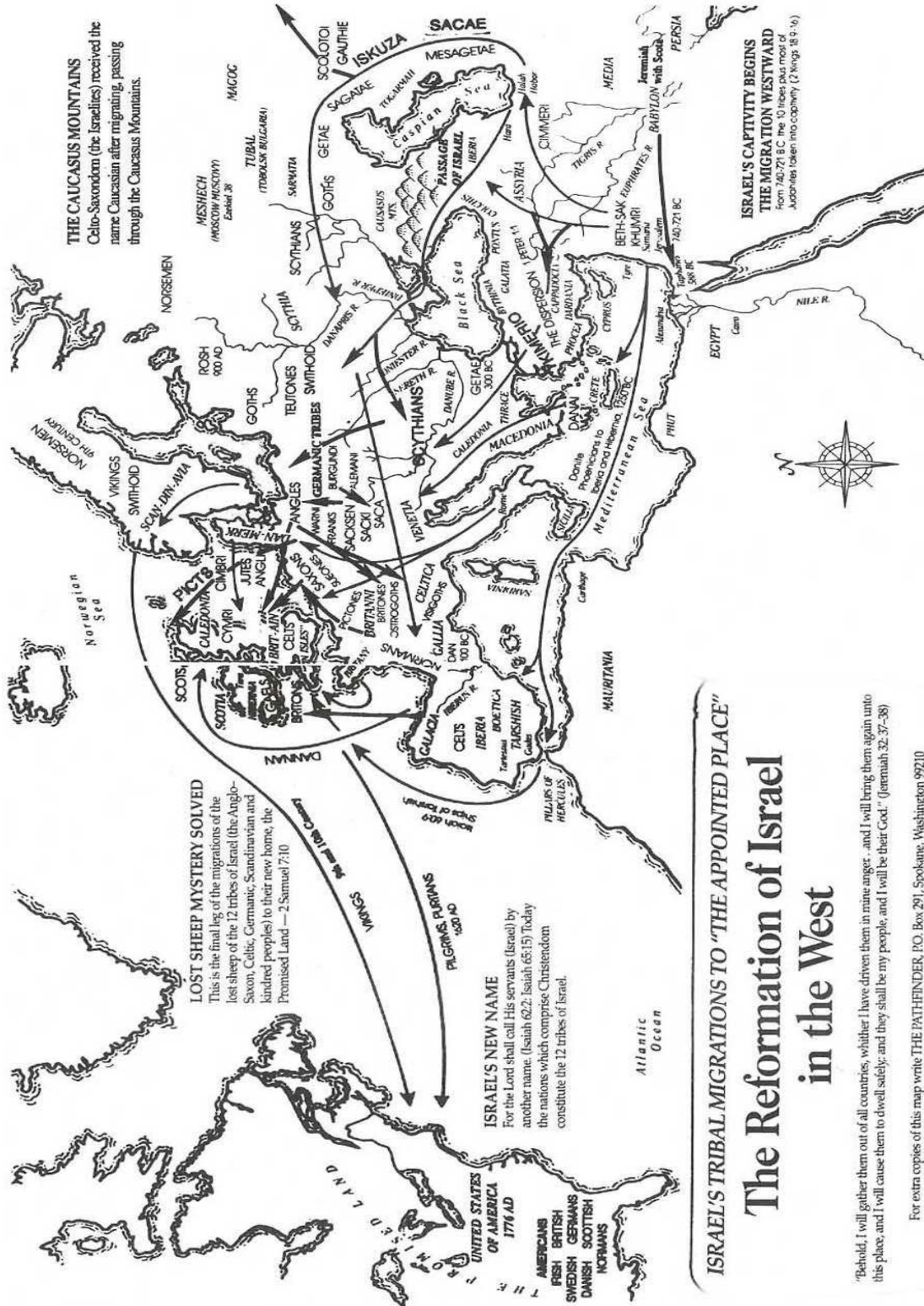


Figure 3 (Wieland 1995, 338-339)

The core Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme is also present in E. Raymond Capt's *Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets* (2006), though Capt presents the material as groundbreaking and fresh. Early in his narrative, Capt invokes Sadler's identification of Brutus as an Israelite descendant, claiming that the Tribe of Dan colonized the Aegean Peninsula millennia before the Assyrian conquest. Not unlike Oxonian, Capt claims the evidence for this colonization can be found in Greek mythology. After the Assyrian Conquest, Capt places Israel in the same location in which Wilson had reported them, Northwest Media. However, Capt claims that this is a revolutionary new discovery based on a total of 1471 Assyrian tablets that, although they had been translated into English as early as 1930, it has taken Capt's insight to understand their true implications with reference to the ethnic groups mentioned in the texts. Through a series of tribal name changes, the Israelites became: 1) the Cimmerians who crossed into Europe through Anatolia (see figure 4), 2) the Scythians who entered Europe through the Caucasus, and 3) the Iskuza who entered Europe around the Caspian Sea (see figure 5). Once in Europe, the Cimmerians became Celts (see figure 6) while the Scythians became the Germanic tribes (see figure 7). For proof of his migration theory, Capt makes a sweeping reference "all historical accounts" as a generic source as well as to "Tactus and Pliny" and "modern archaeological research" (Capt, *Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets* 2006, 141, 144).

Capt works to maintain the appearance of novelty and originality in *Missing Links* in several ways. As noted above, Capt often presents existing Identity migration theory as if it were original. One example would be his borrowing from Oxonian. He uses "new" evidence to reach old conclusions, as with his citation of the Assyrian tablets. He references generic "Modern archaeological research" and cites problems with past theory on trivial points while reaching what is ultimately the same conclusion that had been reached before. This can be seen in Chapter

10 of Missing Links, where Capt takes issue with “a British historian [who] suggested that the Anglo-Saxons were descended from the Sakka Scythians” (Capt, Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets 2006, 157). This British historian is, of course, Sharon Turner. Capt claims the Sakka migrated east, rather than west, eventually reaching India, possibly founding Buddhism, and losing their Israelite identity in the first century CE when they interbred with the native population of India (Capt, Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets 2006, 157-159). Rather, Capt suggests that the Scythians who would become Saxons were known as Sarmatians, then Sarmatae and Germani. Capt cites Pliny the Elder and archaeological evidence of the southern Baltic in support of his hypothesis (Capt, Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets 2006, 169-171).

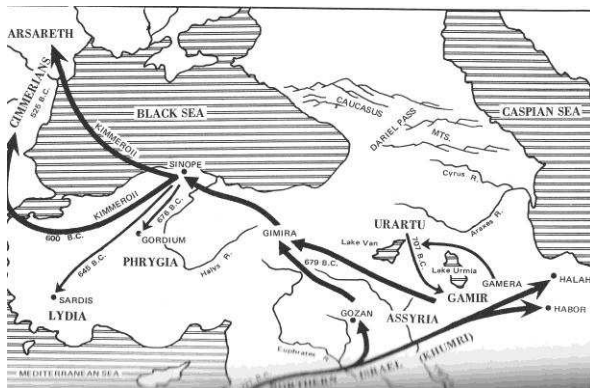


Figure 4 (Capt 2006, 128)

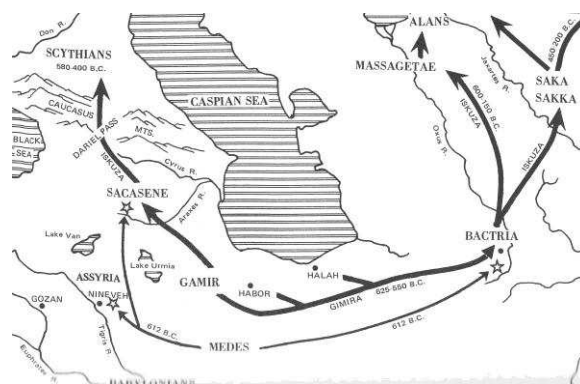


Figure 5 (Capt 2006, 130)

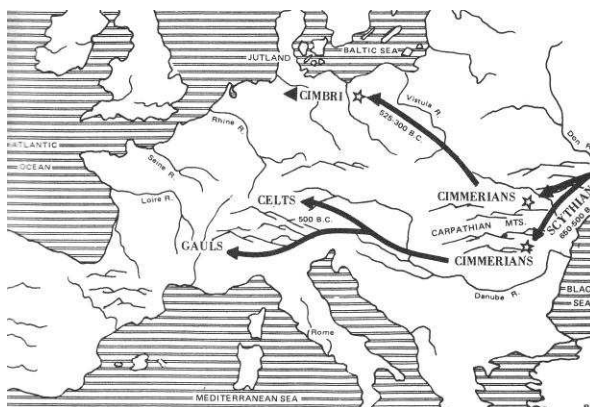


Figure 6 (Capt 2006, 141)

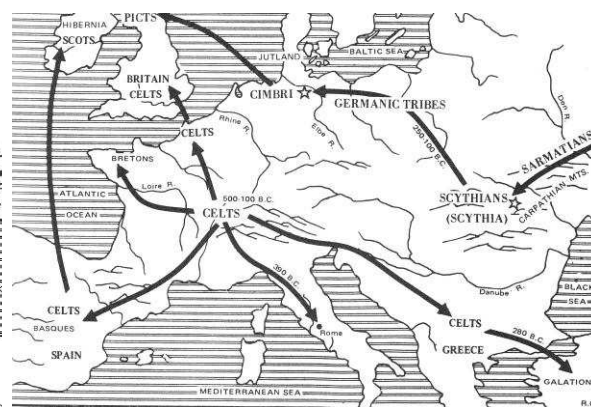


Figure 7 (Capt 2006, 147)

This meme is one of two ways that the Identity message justifies Anglo claim to Israelite heritage, prophesy being the other. Even with the prophesy based proof, it seems inevitable that the Identity adherents should need to explain how Israel came to be the Anglo-Saxons, Germanics, Scandinavians, Celts and kindred peoples. Initially, the movement only required justifying the Israelite descent of the British. It is unsurprising, therefore, that as the need to include more European groups increased, so did the complexity of the migration theory.

5) Secondary memes supporting the Israelite descent of the British

The Davidic Dynasty and the Stone of Destiny

The rejection of dispensationalism, as well as the practice of applying prophesies of Israel to England that came with it, created a synergetic opportunity for linking the British throne with the Davidic dynasty. According to Wild, the Davidic lineage entered the British Isles during the Babylonian Captivity when the prophet Jeremiah took King Zedekiah's daughters to north Ireland by way of the sea routes that had been used by the Tribe of Dan. North Ireland, having been settled by the Tribe of Dan, had people who recognized the importance of one of the girls, Tea Tephi, and married her into their royalty. Their line of descent moved from Ireland, to Scotland and eventually into England. The Stone of Scone/Jacob/Destiny was said to have been taken into distant locations to indicate the presence there of a Davidic monarch. (Wild 1882, Chp. 15). The story of Tea Tephi's role in bringing the line of descent of a Davidic dynasty to the British Isles is also mentioned by James in *The Migration Chronicles*, although only briefly (James 2009, Ch. 4). He claims that the Davidic dynasty's current seat is the English Monarch. In the Introduction to *The Migration Chronicles*, James writes: "The Bible also teaches that King David would always have a literal, physical heir sitting on a throne somewhere on planet earth,

as long as the sun, moon and stars rule the skies. Queen Elizabeth II is one of those heirs, and she knows it. Again, this is not true of the Jewish people.” (James 2009, Intro.). In this instance it seems that the Davidic line’s continued lordship over Anglo-Saxons is more important than the absence of Davidic lordship within the modern Israeli state.

The Stone of Destiny meme is also the subject of an entire book by E. Raymond Capt, *Jacob’s Pillar: a Biblical Historical Study* (1977), in which he uses a hodgepodge of Hebrew scripture and Irish folklore to demonstrate that the Stone of Scone is Jacob’s pillow (mentioned in Genesis 28:10-22) and that the British royal house is part of the lineage of Abraham, Judah and David. Further, Capt asserts, this lineage and the role of the Stone of Scone will continue unbroken until Jesus the Christ takes his rightful place as king of Israel and the world (Capt, *Jacob's Pillar* 1977). The Stone of Scone is also mentioned by Hine as one of his forty-seven proofs of England’s Israelitish descent. Hine is one of the few Identity authors of British nationality to mention the stone, writing “So that, as Israel must have with them a precious stone, it is interesting to know that we have such a stone; hence an identity” (Hine 1874, 35).

The meme that this stone was the same one as that used by Jacob as a pillow in Genesis 28:10-22 is one that has survived in nationalistic Scottish folklore (Encyclopædia Britannica Online 2011). This meme serves to reinforce the idea that England (and by extension The United States) is the legal heir of Israel’s prophecies, while at the same time creating a tangible artifact pointing to the migration of Israel into the British Isles.

Behistûn Rock

Behistûn Rock, a monument covered with ancient cuneiform writing located on Mount Behistûn near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran, is used to support the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme by E. Raymond Capt in *Missing Links* (2006). It is said to mention the names

Sakka and Gimiri, which were used to refer to a people represented as a bound man with a pointy hat. This is, to Capt's eye, an Israelite (Capt, *Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets* 2006). Capt's analysis represents a reversion of the reported meaning of Behistûn Rock to one that was assumed before the inscriptions were successfully deciphered. At the time of its discovery, Behistûn Rock was thought by Robert Porter to describe an Assyrian conquest of Israel. He published this analysis in a two volume travelogue, writing that he believed the ten captive persons represented the heads of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel (Porter 1822). However, by 1907 the inscriptions had been more accurately deciphered and Porter's interpretation was concluded to have been wrong (Darius I 1907). Through the selective use of portions of the deciphered text, the obscuring of consensus scholarly analysis, and the powerful association of the bas-relief images in a mind encultured in the tradition of the Bible and Christian society, the image of Darius I's crushing of numerous uprisings within his empire was interpreted as a reference to the Lost Tribes of Israel. Capt further uses the text of the monument to conflate the erroneous tracing of the Lost Tribes with a misinterpretation of the terms reportedly used for Israel by the three languages in which the inscription was carved. The strategy of asserting that a group had referred to the tribes of Israel by a specific name and that the people of that name were identified as having resided in a specific place, followed by the same pattern under a different name and group, has been the primary method of tracing Israel in Europe. Capt applies this same method to his analysis of evidence for Israel in the Near East, using the tri-lingual text of Behistûn Rock as his primary guide (Capt, *Missing Links Discovered: In Assyrian Tablets* 2006).

Behistûn Rock, like the Stone of Scone, therefore provides Identity adherents with an artifact to support an argument in order to compensate for tendencies towards disbelief in a

world where Biblical prophecy carried increasingly little weight when compared to the evidence that was derived from science.

Discussion:

Of the many supporting memes of the Christian Identity Movement generated in the 19th century, those related to Pyramidology seem to have experienced the greatest decline in use within the movement, though it certainly persists elsewhere. At its inception, Pyramidology represented a body of beliefs that served to attract new adherents to the Identity message in several ways. Pyramidology:

1. Attracted Orientalists to the Identity message through Eastern exoticism.
2. Attracted Freemasons to the Identity message through cooptation of common symbolism.
3. Attracted persons with a penchant for scientism to the Identity message through its use of mathematics, archaeology and astronomy—albeit in the form of pseudoarchaeology.
4. Attracted Millenarianists to the Identity message through its eschatological message.
5. Attracted British Ethnocentrists to the Identity message by disenfranchising the Egyptians from their cultural heritage while transferring it to the British.
6. Gained attention for the Identity message from supporters of the Imperial measurement system.

Over time, many of the conditions that were once favorable to the Pyramidology meme's fitness disappeared. During the early 20th century, the meme complex of Pyramidology struggled to maintain value. The Christian Identity Movement heavily focused on the prophetic and eschatological aspects of Pyramidology to attract those with millenarianistic fever or who were just confused by the turmoil of the time and seeking a compelling ideology as a strategy for coping. In the current reality of the Identity message, Pyramidology carries very little social currency for a number of factors. Among these are the fact that Orientalism, as well as ethnocentrism in general, are considered problematic and even politically incorrect by the general population. They are identified as archaic, fringe, or biased beliefs and are therefore

considered unsuited for discussion in the larger public arena by individuals who want to appear sophisticated, educated, well-informed, and unbiased. The abandonment of Pyramidology is therefore a strategy for obtaining the appearance of objective authority. Freemasonry, which admits Jewish participants, is no longer considered to be a potential recruiting ground for the Identity message due to the anti-Semitism that has developed within the Identity movement. Those to whom the pseudoscientific aspect of Pyramidology would appeal now have a wide variety of alternative pseudoscientific interpretations of the Great Pyramid from which to choose. Among these, the Identity-tinged flavor is considered to be socially unacceptable. The eschatological and prophetic value of Pyramidology has been greatly reduced through overuse in a variety of contexts and has been weakened by evidence for past failed predictions. The increased social currency of competing end-of-the-world theories such as those associated with the Mayan calendar have also drawn away significant portions of an audience that might have embraced it as a central source of mythology. Lastly, there is little life left within the measurements debate. With the exception of the United States, which remains firmly attached to its modified Imperial system, the metric system has become firmly entrenched in science and has few opponents. As such, this group of memes exists somewhere between vestigial and dead. They provide reinforcement to those who have already accepted the Identity message but are no longer valuable for attracting or persuading new believers.

The value of the Apocrypha-based memes seems to have increased since their inception in the late 17th century, as seen in their increased use. This can be explained by the progressive erosion of the Church as a source of truth following the Enlightenment and the individualistic nature of Protestantism. As the authority of institutionalized church doctrine has been reduced in society in general, and the role of the individual has increased in the religious sphere, the

sacredness of the closed canon has been diminished. As such, interest in extra-biblical and deuterocanonical works has been opened to those outside the world of biblical scholarship and clergy. With this, appeals to deuterocanonical scriptures have become more acceptable to the general public, opening the potential for recruiting dialogues with which to communicate the Identity message. Among those who adhere to the Identity message this has resulted in some groups questioning not only the value of those works outside of canon, but the purity of the canon itself. While many groups maintain that translations such as the King James Version are wholly holy, other groups have accused the Church, or its Jewish coconspirators, of cleansing the Bible of most of its Identity message (Finck, *The King James Version of the Bible: Why Quote it?* 2009, Ecclesiastical Council for the Restoration of Covenant Israel 2009).

Prophecy is one of two principal ways in which one can establish an Anglo-Saxon claim to Israelite descent. By employing biblical exegesis, the Identity message follows the mainstream path to religious change: scriptural interpretation. Doing so grants the Identity message access to the prestige of tradition, biblical inerrancy, and orthodox practice within Protestantism. However, the tactic as employed by Identity hermeneutics requires two unorthodox assumptions. First, the idea of Spiritual Israel must be dismissed without the use of dispensationalism. Second, covenants such as the Mosaic Covenant, interpreted as conditional since at least the Second Temple period,¹⁰ must be reinterpreted as unconditional. These occur tacitly within Identity sources. Initially, these memes provided legitimacy to the Identity message of British Israel by demonstrating a biblical basis for their beliefs. At the same time, it increased the appeal of the Identity message among jingoistic English people to whom prophetic proofs reflected their own assumptions about the superiority of the British race and nation. With the shifts in beliefs about Jewish standing in All Israel and the change from a British to American

¹⁰ 530 BCE-70 CE.

audience, this meme became more useful in disproving Jews' place in All Israel than in proving the legitimate place of Anglo-Saxons. However, this latter purpose still stands. The Bible-based claims against Jewish legitimacy gain the Identity message traction among Christian anti-Semites while continuing to provide the biblical interpretive basis for the Identity message discussed above.

The second way is through the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme, which is nearly essential to the Identity message as one of the two ways that it is possible to link Ancient Israel with Modern Europeans. The use of prophetic interpretation alone, as justification for Britain as Israel, does not adequately justify the Identity message's claim to physical, rather than spiritual Israel, and begs the question 'how did Israel come to be our [genetic] ancestors?' The acceptance of this specific explanation of descent is based on the addition of one link to early 19th century historian Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799). This work dominated the discussion of Anglo-Saxon history from its publication in 1799 until 1849, despite criticism on the grounds of "lack of discrimination, a predilection for romance, and an inflated diction" (Loyn 2009). Turner's work was not without political, and indeed, jingoistic undertone. As such, it would have appealed to the types of people who would consider the English people to be God's Chosen People. It is only natural that the message of Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* should be incorporated into the Identity message. The type of person who maintained attachment to Turner's aggrandizing lineage of the British, despite its critics, after other voices entered the debate would likely be the kind of person to take great pride in their ancestry, and therefore would be predisposed to accept a doctrine stating the English were God's Chosen People by blood. As time passed, maintaining a link to "a British historian" provides prestige to the Identity message. The fact that Turner's work is no longer referenced within the academy is not a serious

threat to this prestige. In fact, the use of outdated academic sources is common not only within the Christian Identity Movement, but is a hallmark of pseudoscientific theories of the past in general (Fagan 2006). What is interesting is not the fact that the core of this meme has remained a part of the Identity message for over 130 years, but that when it was expanded (by different authors in different ways) to include more Europeans in Israel's bloodline the polytonality of response has not diminished its value. In fact, as demonstrated above, Identity adherents seem to have no problem espousing multiple migration theories that conflict in their details, provided the core meme—and therefore the ideological message—is present. Consider that Figure 3 above was published in an Identity source that refers its readership to the source of Figures 4-7 for a deeper analysis of Israel's migration, yet these maps conflict in numerous details. This suggests that the specific details of historic population movements are unimportant outside of the core Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme even among the most dedicated Identity proponents. Capt's shift from evidence based solely on the authority of of ancient historians to the supplementation of evidence from classical historians as based on seemingly scientific work corresponds to a shift in Western epistemology. The ascendancy of the sciences over Classics in the educational institutions of the United States and Western Europe over the last century has resulted in a need to change the grounding of this meme from arguments based on textual analysis to data sets that carry more weight as relevant source of truth. That is, scientific sources carry more weight and authority than ones based in the humanities. Capt's work addresses this need for scientific proof by referencing archaeology, including images of artifacts. Capt himself addresses this by having an impressive, if meaningless, string of acronyms following his name that presumably represent relevant scientific training and credentials. By referencing his work, groups such as Mission to

Israel and Christogenea.org borrow scientific prestige from Capt to increase the supposed credibility of theories relevant to their wishful pursuit of documentation for Israelite ancestry.

Given the centrality of the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme within the Identity message, it is not surprising that there are ancillary memes that support it. Some discussed in this paper are characterized as attaching a physical artifact—such as the Stone of Scone or the Behistûn inscription—the Identity notion of Israel’s migration into the present location of the United Kingdom. The association of artifacts with the migration memes presumes to provide both the prestige of scientific/empirical evidence, crucial to modern notions of epistemology, and the prestige of archaeologically verifiable history.

The linkage of the Stone of Scone to Jacob’s stone requires a convoluted journey from Canaan to Egypt, back to Canaan, to Jerusalem as the seat of United Israel, to Babylon, back to Egypt, to Ireland by way of the Mediterranean, to Scotland, and finally to England--quite a journey under duress for a 152 kg slab of sandstone! Not surprisingly, this meme seems to have had little currency among British Israelites who were actually British, despite being espoused by the highly influential Edward Hine. This seems odd given that it elevated the British monarchy to the Davidic dynasty. One can only assume that in the late 19th century the English had no desire to return to absolute monarchy by way of divine mandate, or perhaps this meme is untenable among a population with some degree of intimacy with the stone in question. In the United States, on the other hand, the meme associating the Stone of Scone to Jacob persists to this day. This is not as surprising when one considers the relationship between contemporary Identity adherents and the U.S. Government. During the 1990s, violent conflict often occurred when Identity members resisted perceived U.S. Government intrusion into their lives, such as the numerous conflicts involving Posse Comitatus groups (Barkun 1997), Identity affiliate militia

groups (Quarles 2004), and the actions surrounding the members of the so called Phinehas Priesthood (Davis 2010). While violent confrontation is less common now, there is still a call within the Identity movement to abolish the U.S. government and establish in its place a theocratic monarchic government (Weiland, Bible Law vs. The United States Constitution n.d.) or to establish small townships governed by councils of Identity-adherent men within the Christian Identity Movement. It seems probable than, that the value of this meme is not only to provide an artifact, but as a symbol in the creation of an ideology that promotes resistance to and/or attacks of the legitimacy of the United States government. As such, this meme expresses and legitimizes discontent with the U.S. Government, while providing a point of discussion for the recruitment of new Identity adherents from Right-wing anti-government movement members.

Another meme in service of the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme is that of the assertion that the inscription on the Behistûn Rock supports the model of Israel's migration to Europe and ultimately to Great Britain. The function of this interpretation is to provide an artifact (technically, in fact a feature in the parlance of archaeology) connecting Israel, as last known in the Bible, to Turner's pre-Saxon Scythia. This meme does little but provide access to the prestige of archaeological science and that of monumental architecture. The same values could be said to have applied to Pyramidology in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Conclusion:

It is clear that supporting memes—specific ideas and assertions whose history can be traced in the literature—are necessary for gaining converts to and justifying beliefs within the Christian Identity Movement. The memes used for this purpose, like genes in biology, have been

subject to adaptation in the context of selective pressures based on the social currency they carry within a given historical and geographical context. They are also subject to maladaptation. Failure to provide the Identity message prestige, proof, or legitimacy within a subpopulation relevant to the Christian Identity Movement requires that a meme either adapt to meet this need or become less relevant to the Identity community.

Memes such as that of Israel-Scythia-Saxon lineage have been used to explain how Israel, as a group of people, came to be the Anglo-Saxons, Germanics, Scandinavians, Celts, and kindred peoples, in the process supporting the key assertion of the Identity message—whose core belief is based upon identity and the belief that it derives specifically from a lineage based in bloodlines. This meme is directly supported by a number of other memes, such as specific interpretations of the inscriptions on Behistûn Rock, the legends associated with the Stone of Scone, and specific narratives that pertain to Israel in the Apocrypha (especially the Book of II Edras), specific biblically based prophetic interpretations, and Pyramidology.

Some memes, such as the Israel-Scythia-Saxon meme, are central to the Identity message without being tied to specific narratives. They can therefore take many different forms without damaging their credibility or losing value among Identity adherents. Failure to adapt to the changing needs of society decreases the value and adaptability of a meme, resulting in the gradual reduction of its repetition, its maladaptation, and ultimate disuse.

While memetics is useful for the analysis of a phenomenon such as the Identity movement, the metaphor of population genetics is not always applicable to this methodology. So long as written documents persist, a meme cannot become extinct. While the extinction of a genetic variance within a population means its permanent end, within the realm of belief (at least such that is encoded in cultural artifacts such as books and art) an idea may be rediscovered at

some future time and regain frequency within a group's belief structure. An example of this can be found in the rediscovery of Porter's understanding of Behistûn Rock years after it had fallen out of favor due to deciphering of the accompanying text. It is for this reason that the study of memes that are relevant to specific ideological movements is a valuable and worthwhile exercise in their analysis. Researchers unfamiliar with the history of specific ideas may mistake revival for novelty, may fail to identify all of the relevant associations with a given meme (and therefore miss important elements of an ideology), may fail to identify all of the forces at work in the popularity (or unpopularity) of a movement, or may fail to anticipate the strategies or contexts in which the revival of discarded or sidelined memes becomes an adaptive strategy. This paper has used Christian Identity as a context in which to evaluate the histories and uses of specific memes for the purposes of promoting religious and social agendas and for the creation of cultural identities. This methodology would be appropriate for other movements as well.

Appendix: Definitions of Specific Memes Relevant to the History of Christian Identity

- **Behistûn Rock Inscriptions indicate Israel's fate after conquest**

Originating with 18th and 19th century travelogues, the bas relief at Mount Behistûn, Iran have been interpreted to refer to Israel's fate after Assyrian conquest. Today's authors, such as Capt, claim that the inscription supports Israel becoming Scythia.

- **Biblical prophecy indicates that England and Anglo-America are Israel**

Many Identity works indicate that the language used in the Hebrew Bible to describe Israel cannot be applied to the modern state. However, it is claimed that the language matches present day Great Britain and the U.S. This claim is — again— not unique to the Identity message, it can be observed in many Protestant sermons, what is specific to the Identity understanding is that this is seen as a physical, rather than spiritual identity.

- **Jews are not Israelites**

While Jews were originally interpreted as kin with All Israel who had strayed from the proper path by rejecting Christ. The contemporary Identity message disenfranchises Jews from All Israel through a variety of ways.

- **Pyramid encoded prophesy**

It is believed by some Identity adherents that the Patriarch who designed the Great Pyramid at Giza was inspired by God to encode prophetic messages within the dimensions of the pyramid. Some, like Capt, claim that these messages were intended to address the current skeptical age.

- **Pyramidological connection between Israel and England**

This memetic idea links the people of Israel to the people of England, often employing the assumption that the Great Pyramid at Giza was designed by a Biblical Patriarch. The link is often made using the so-called Pyramid Inch.

- **Seedline Doctrine**

This meme attempts to disenfranchise Jews from All Israel by asserting that Jews are the literal offspring of Satan and Eve. It was developed from existing anti-African ideology.

- **The British royal family is of the Davidic dynasty**

This meme establishes a claim that England's monarch is a blood relative of the Biblical king David.

- **The Edomite hypothesis**

This meme attempts to disenfranchise Jews from All Israel by asserting that upon returning from the Babylonian Captivity in 538 BCE, the tribes of Judea interbred with Edomites who had moved into Judea during their absence; therefore corrupting the bloodline and losing their claim to Israelite identity.

- **The Israelites became the Scythians**

It is claimed that following Assyrian conquest the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel entered Europe under the title of Scythians. This claim is often based on linking the last scripturally reported location of Israel with Sharon Turner's first location of Scythians.

- **The Khazar hypothesis**

Around the 9th century CE the nobility of the Turkic Khazar people converted

to Judaism. Within the Christian Identity Movement many people believe that the entire Khazar people converted to Judaism, becoming the majority population. According to this line of thought they have since interbred with the remaining Jews of Hebrew ancestry, resulting in the corruption of the bloodline and expulsion from All Israel.

- **The Saxons, Scythians, and Israelites are a continuous ethnos**

The bases of many migration theories within the Christian Identity Movement is the idea that these three historical ethnic groups are the continuation of a racially homogeneous ethnos who are God's Chosen People.

- **The Scythians became the Saxons**

This idea is borrowed from Sharon Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons (1799), claiming that the Scythian ethnos continued under the new name Saxon.

- **The stone mentioned in Genesis 28:10-22 is an enduring symbol of Israel**

Rather than being left as a monument as told in Genesis, some Identity adherents believe that the stone Jacob slept on when he had his vision became a symbol of God's covenant with Jacob/Israel and of legitimate rule over the Tribes.

- **The stone mentioned in Genesis 28:10-22 is now known as The Stone of Scone**

Those who believe that the stone is a marker of legitimate rule and that the Davidic dynasty continues in Great Britain believe the Stone of Scone within the royal coronation throne to be the same as that of Genesis 28:10-22. This belief has been developed from existing Scottish nationalist mythology.

- **The stone mentioned in Genesis 28:10-22 was transported to the British Isles**

It is believed some Identity adherents that Jacob's stone was the marker of legitimate rule over Israel, and therefore too important to lose when Jerusalem was sacked by the Babylonians. Rather, it was gradually transported to the new home of the Tribes of Israel, the British Isles.

- **The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel**

Central to the Identity message is the belief that the ten Tribes of Israel maintained their ethnic purity, but not the knowledge of their identity, after being defeated by the Assyrians. The belief in Lost Israel is by no means limited to the Identity movement; however the belief that Lost Israel is to be found in Europe is the very basis of the Identity message.

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