

## XII

### ANGLO-ISRAEL, OR BRITISH-ISRAEL

STRICTLY speaking, I have no call to discuss this subject under the title 'New Forms of the Old Faith,' i.e. systems which have broken away from the recognized churches and formed themselves into separate organizations apart from the Church, and often in opposition to the Church. Instances of this breakaway are such bodies as Christian Science, Theosophy, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

On the other hand, Anglo-Israel, or British-Israel, while it has actually a separate organization for its own purposes, is *inside*, not outside, the Churches. Its members belong to all recognized denominations; and many of them are among our most loyal and devoted people. As a matter of fact, many British-Israelites study their Bibles, especially the Old Testament, more thoroughly than most of us do! Indeed, it is their loyalty—their sometimes quite passionate loyalty—to the promises stated there to the 'Israel of God' which gives them their distinctive character and shape.

British-Israel is only the name for a large and influential group of people, who believe that the ancient promises of God, made to Israel, are now being fulfilled in the Anglo-Saxon peoples; and because of this they stand clearly for the extension of Christian principles among our own people, and over the world. In fact, British-Israel is only a *theory* held by some millions of Christian people about the so-called British race in regard to its origin, its favour, and its destiny. I only

include this subject in my course of lectures because of many requests sent to me by puzzled people who would like to know what the movement represents and teaches.

This being so, may I say at the outset that I see no special reason for any church either to combat or denounce British-Israel as if it were a counter-denomination or an opposition camp? At the most, as I have said, it is only a theory, founded on certain readings of the Bible, and supported by some historical claims which a man can either accept or refuse. If he accepts the theory, good and well; if he rejects it, good and well. As we say, it is all 'up to him' and what he considers reasonable proof. To the best of my knowledge, so far from its members being in any opposition to the Churches, most of its supporters are active and convinced Christian people; and many of its important writers and lecturers have been ministers and clergymen.

I

Stated shortly, British-Israel is a society of people who believe that the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States of America are the descendants of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, who were carried captive into Assyria by King Sargon in 721 B.C. This Sargon, who usurped the throne from Salmanazar, says, 'I led forth 27,290 of those who dwelt in the midst of it,' and according to 2 Kings xvii, Israel was transported to Mesopotamia and Media. The other two tribes—now called the Jews—who occupied the Southern Kingdom in Palestine, were overrun by Nebuchadnezzar and taken captive by him to Babylon in 587 B.C., i.e. roughly 134 years later. There were about 10,000

of these Jews transported in this second and later captivity.

Now we know beyond any doubt what happened to these two tribes, the Jews. They came back later from their Babylonian exile under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, and reoccupied Judah and Jerusalem. All this is clearly stated in the Bible.

But what happened to the *Ten Tribes* carried into Assyria and the mountains of Media in 721 B.C.? For centuries this was regarded as one of the prime puzzles of history, and has led to endless speculation on the part of curious people. The common explanation was—and with most of us still is—that these Ten Tribes were ‘lost’ by being absorbed among the people with whom they dwelt—just as many of their southern brethren, the Jews, who refused to go back to Palestine under Ezra and Nehemiah, were absorbed into the common life of the Babylonians among whom they elected to remain—and just as the Picts in Scotland and the ancient Britons in England became part of the common stream of Scots, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, and Normans. None of these was really ‘lost,’ for they all gave their own distinctive contribution to the succeeding centuries.

British-Israel believes, however, that it can prove that these Ten Tribes migrated over Asia and Europe, and became the forefathers of the present inhabitants of Britain, and through them of the inhabitants of the Dominions and the United States of America. Believing this, they also claim that all the ancient promises of God made to Israel, through their native prophets, Elijah, Hosea, and Amos, are now being fulfilled in us. To put it shortly, the people of the British Commonwealth and of the United States, according

to this theory, are the far-off descendants of these lost Ten Tribes of Israel, and are therefore the 'heirs of all God's promises,' made to the Israelites before their captivity in Assyria.

Before we discuss this theory may I give a short note about the origin and history of the movement itself?

There is an immense modern literature on this subject, running into thousands of volumes, pamphlets, and tracts; and there are several weekly or monthly periodicals published here and in America in support of this faith. Indeed, the British-Israelites are sufficiently numerous to support a publishing house of their own, which issues a stream of books, pamphlets, and magazines dealing entirely with this theme.

So far as I can gather, the earliest published reference to this theory of an 'Israelitish origin' of the English people (and at first the theory was limited strictly to what we call the *English* people) can be traced to a book called *The Rights of the Kingdom*, by John Sadler, in 1649. In this book he tried to show how many 'striking parallels' exist between common English laws and customs and those of the Hebrews. However interesting this apparent parallelism may be, it carries no special weight in such an argument. For it is obvious surely that a nation which became Christian and studied the Bible through many generations would tend to model its laws and principles on those of the inspired Word, just as the Puritans of John Sadler's own day took even their ordinary Christian names from the people of the Old and New Testaments.

But Sadler's book, though not very impressive in itself, did one thing—it set others thinking and speculating. In 1794 a man called Richard Brothers, a half-

pay officer of the navy, and a man of rather eccentric mind and habits, published a book with the title *Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times*. This book, along with about fourteen other subsequent volumes, made the first specific claim that the English people are the descendants and heirs of the Ten Tribes of Israel. Then in 1840 the theory was adopted by John Wilson, who wrote on the subject and lectured extensively before large audiences. Regarding his book, *Our Israelitish Origin*, one writer remarks that it is, 'the first coherent exposition of the theory.' It may thus be regarded as the real foundation of this remarkable theory, i.e. where it is stated and expounded in a more or less historical and scientific treatment of evidence as such. He was followed by many others, even by the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, G. Piazzi Smith, who deduced from certain queer measurements of the Great Pyramid in Egypt that the British people were directly descended from the lost Ten Tribes.

Since then the theory has been proclaimed far and wide, and has appealed to all sorts of people, who believe its main claim—that we can establish, both from the Bible and from history, that the ten tribes were not lost or absorbed among other nations, but migrated westwards through Asia and Europe, and then, under the name of Anglo-Saxons and Celts, moved over into Great Britain, and from thence to the New World.

That is the theory. Note (i) it does not involve any question of Christian orthodoxy or heresy. It is only a view or 'theory' which many Christians 'add on' to their ordinary faith. (ii) It does not involve any breach or schism in the Church itself; its members belong loyally to all churches. (iii) Those who accept

it say that it gives them a new view of their responsibility to bring the world under the rule of God ; and they claim that it gives them a new vocation, and a sense of our national destiny and responsibility.

## 2

With this said, let us see on what the theory is founded. Speaking generally, we may say that it is founded on these points :

First, British-Israelites assert that the great promises to Israel, made by God through His prophets, have never been fulfilled, and must be fulfilled. They always interpret these prophecies literally, word for word ; and they will not allow that the prophets' words may have been fulfilled spiritually, or in other indirect ways.

Second, they assert that these prophecies are *national and political prophecies*, and must be fulfilled in some definite national unity. They are not to be fulfilled to ' individual people ' but only to ' a people.'

Third, they assert that these prophecies were made to the *Israelites*, the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom, and not to the Jews, the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom. This allows them, according to their view, to escape the awkward dilemma presented to us by the fate of the Jews, who were scattered as a people all over the world, and whose ritual religion and worship were ended and fulfilled in the coming of Jesus as the Messiah of all nations. Moreover they wince from being thought in any way related to the modern Jews who have become the hate and butt of the world's persecution. They say—I shall speak of this later—that the promises of an *extended and eternal Kingdom* were

made only to the Israelites of the north. And these are yet unfulfilled, if they are not fulfilled in us.

Fourth, they claim that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the *only race* in history who do fulfil these prophecies, as given by the Hebrew Seers and that they fulfil them in many astonishing ways. They deny that this can be due to coincidence.

Fifth, the British-Israelites claim that they have established in history the 'race-linkage' between the lost Ten Tribes and ourselves. They profess to be able to trace the migrations of the Ten Tribes from the hills of Media, where they were taken by the conquering Assyrians, through Asia Minor, where they were known as the *Sacae* or *Scythians* and the *Cimmerians* or *Khumri*, through Southern Russia, across Europe, and then into Britain as the invading Celts and Anglo-Saxons.<sup>1</sup>

Now, it must be obvious that the whole crux of proof in a question like this must lie in *history*. Unless this astonishing claim can be proved by unquestioned historical evidence, our claim to be the descendants of the Ten Tribes will be no more valid than the claims of other peoples to a similar descent! Mere 'striking parallels' between the ancient prophecies and ourselves will not count. For this reason—that other nations in their own day have had as striking parallels. The Spaniards, for instance, might have claimed to fulfil these prophecies when they were the Defenders of the Faith, and when they too occupied the 'isles' of the sea

<sup>1</sup> The etymological identifications of the British-Israelites are fearful and wonderful. The *Sacae* become the Saxons; the *Cimmerians* or *Khumri* become the *Cymri* or Welsh; the *Scuthae* become the Scots; the Goths come from the tribe of Gad; the men of Dan become the Danes; these same men of Dan gave names to the Russian rivers Don, Dneiper, and Dneister, and Danube; Judah become the Jutes. All this is etymology run mad!

and were the lords of the known world. Or the French in their amazing era of Empire and destiny.

It is worth remembering that there have been many similar claims made by other nations to be the 'heirs' of the Lost Tribes. For instance, it is the whole basis of the Mormon Church that the *Indians of North America* are the Ten Tribes, and that the revelation on which their church is founded was given to them by Mormon, the last of the great prophets of Israel. Similar claims have been made by other nations and peoples in past times, all based on '*striking parallels*' between the ancient prophecies and their own qualities and destiny. The article in *Chambers's Encyclopædia* sums these claims up as follows: 'The remnants of the ten tribes were found marauding in the Afghan passes, wandering with the reindeer in Lapland, chasing buffaloes on the American prairies, or slaughtering human victims on the teocallis of Mexico.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, to put it in a nutshell, there is no justification for believing this theory about ourselves, *unless there is clear historical evidence to prove the facts of descent*. Without this, the belief remains only an interesting and flattering speculation, pleasing for some people to think about, no doubt, but certainly not any more reasonable than the claims of other nations.

The test, then, is history. Is there any proof at all that there is a *link of descent* between the ancient Israelites and the Anglo-Saxon race? I have read as much literature on this subject as is good for any reasonable man! I admit that as the British-Israelites use the words of the prophets—always literally and never spiritually, and generally taken wholly out of their context—they can apparently make a fair *prima*

<sup>1</sup> *Chamber's Encyclopædia*, 'Anglo-Israelite Theory'

*facie* case that many of these obscure prophecies do find some sort of fanciful fulfilment in us. But all that doesn't matter. The real point is whether there is any ground in history for asserting that the Ten Tribes migrated through Asia and Europe. Is there any such proof?

Practically, there is none. Apart from some very groundless and fanciful speculation, the theory is only a form of wishful thinking.

Let me quote in full the one definite passage in literature which is the 'sheet-anchor' of British-Israel hopes. It is taken from one of the books of the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras, xiii.40-45. According to the judgment of the best Jewish and Christian scholars, this book was written in the first century of our era—most likely during the reign and persecutions of the Emperor Domitian. It is a book of 'visions' and 'dreams,' very akin in content and style to our Book of Revelation in the New Testament. In the chapter from which I propose to quote, the author tells us of a strange dream he has had, and an 'interpretation' is offered to the dreamer. In the interpretation, the following passage occurs :

'These 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 beyond the river ; and so they came into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they had not kept in their own land. And they entered by the narrow passages of the river Euphrates. For the Most

High then wrought signs for them, and stayed the springs of the river 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 Arzareth.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us remember that this is only a dream, and the interpretation of a dream which Esdras had. In any case, since this vision was written over 700 years *after* the captivity of the Ten Tribes in Media, it cannot be quoted as a historical record. At the best, all that the passage does say definitely is that this author, writing 700 years later, believed that the lost Israelites moved to 'another country.'

But we have to put another reference to these Israelites, written about the same time, alongside of this quotation from Esdras. Josephus, the accredited Jewish scholar, whose learning and research made him one of the founders of historical study, also speaks of these captive Ten Tribes. In Book XI of his *Antiquities*, Chapter V, he describes how the Jews in Babylon (the two tribes) were set free by King Darius, and how they first gathered into Babylon from all Media in order to return to Jerusalem.

Then he writes the following with reference to the Ten Tribes: 'But then the entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country; wherefore there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.' Mark that clear statement by this Hebrew historian, '*the ten tribes are beyond the*

<sup>1</sup> 'Arzareth,' according to the marginal note in the passage of the Apocrypha, means simply 'another land.' There is no trace in any records or monuments of a land named 'Arzareth.'

*Euphrates until now.*' Josephus lived and wrote about A.D. 100 : thus the words 'until now' mean only one thing, that up till the end of the first century, the Ten Tribes were known to be 'beyond the Euphrates.'

These are the only two direct references to the history of the lost Ten Tribes of which we have any knowledge and on which we can form any judgment. Both were written about the same time, i.e. in the first century A.D. One was, professedly, a *vision* in a book of visions ; the other was penned by a trained observer who was detailing facts of history known to him and whose general knowledge and accuracy have been acknowledged by historians.

One (Esdras) alleges that the Israelites, after being taken captive as slaves by the mighty Assyrians and settled in the cities of the Medes (round about 721 B.C.), marched triumphantly out of Assyria in 650 B.C.—and that, mark you, at a time when Assyria was still one of the great powers of the known world ! British-Israelites choose the date 650 B.C. for the triumphal exit of the Israelites from Media, because Herodotus the Greek historian comments on the fact that about that time a people called the *Scythians* began to appear on the shore of the Black Sea.<sup>1</sup>

Even if it were admitted as a possibility that these dispersed captives might have managed to march out as a unit against the powerful Assyrians, this does not help us in the least to link them up with any other known people. British-Israel tries to identify the

<sup>1</sup> Around 650 B.C. Assurbanipal, one of the greatest of Assyrian kings, was in full power and reigned until 625 B.C. 'His reign was the culminating point of Assyrian splendour.' He invaded Phœnicia and captured Tyre, and fought campaigns in Egypt, North Arabia, and Elam. To imagine that the Israelites could have marched out in triumph during his reign is beyond belief.

Israelites with the tribes of whom Herodotus speaks, and claims that they became known as the Scythians and the Cimmerians. If so, their aim in marching out as told by Esdras is wholly falsified. Esdras asserts that they went out *in order that they might keep their statutes of loyalty to God and the law of Moses*. In that case, all one can say is that if these loyal and godly Israelites became known as the 'Scythians,' they degenerated, in one short decade or so, into the fiercest, lowest, and most dreadful pagans of their day! The very name of 'Scythian' soon became another word for cruelty, vice, disloyalty, and the offering of human victims to pagan gods! I repeat with some moral emphasis—even if the vision of Esdras is at all likely to be true (that the men of Israel did manage to march out in spite of the unchallenged power of their Assyrian masters), and if their aim was of all things *to worship God in greater purity and freedom*, then, by all the laws of human likelihood, it is impossible for us ever to identify them with the vicious, pagan, and abominable Scythians. There are limits to what our moral decency will believe.

In any case—this should be final—no reputable historian or archæologist will agree for a moment that the Scythians were of *Semitic origin*, as there are no traces in the relics of their language and customs of any Semitic influence.

Here is an interesting point. All ethnologists agree that *customs and rites* are the last thing to change or be lost in early tribes. They persist through the ages—even if only as superstitions. Why then are there no survivals of Israel's passionately-held customs—circumcision, seventh-day observance, legal uncleanness—among the Scythians, Cimmerians, Saxons, Angles, or

Celts? Did these ingrained customs pass out like their Semitic speech?

To go further, even if we were to admit that these bloodthirsty Scythians were the lost pious Israelites—who left Media to worship God more purely—we have no possible historical data for bringing these Scythians into Russia and across Europe, and then into Britain. This kind of speculation has no historical value. Sometimes British-Israelites try to trace the alleged migration of the ‘Scythians’ through Europe by broken bits of language and a few place-names. But there is nothing so precarious as an amateur’s guesses about etymology. Certainly no reputable philologist accepts their ‘guesses at truth’ as being of any worth. ‘There is no doubt,’ says Sir E. B. Tylor, ‘that this abject nonsense has far larger circulation than all the rational etymology published in England.’<sup>1</sup>

## 3

You can believe the British-Israelite theory if you like. It is up to you. But with any historical training I may have, and any judgment of evidence, I confess that the speculation leaves me incredulously cold. I am encouraged by the fact that no reputable historian or philologist considers that there is verifiable evidence for this astonishing theory. Guesses and speculations won’t atone for the absence of historical facts—the most unfortunate guess of all is that the Ten Tribes, who sought to honour God, should grow so pagan so soon.

The least impressive thing to any student of the study of words is the British-Israelite identification of ‘place names’ throughout Europe to link up the Hebrew speech of the Ten Tribes with the western continent.

<sup>1</sup> *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, ‘Anglo-Israel’

‘ The so-called identifications on examination prove to be little more than verbal quibblings on the English letter, depending for their success on the reader’s ignorance of Hebrew exegesis. Thus one of the strongest is, that according to prophecy, lost Israel’s location must be “ the isles.” The application of this to England is at once obvious. But unfortunately for the argument, the word rendered “ island ” or “ isle ” is applied in the Hebrew text to any district on the sea-coast separated from Palestine by water—the shores around the Mediterranean and the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor, as well as islands proper.’<sup>1</sup>

Place beside this very entrancing speculation the clear sober statement of the accredited historian, Josephus. He was not recording ‘ visions,’ like Esdras ; he was recording facts in the common knowledge of his day. Let us read his words again—and remember they were written about A.D. 100, in the period of the great Roman Empire. Since that day we have a fairly definite record of the various migrations of peoples and tribes across Europe :

‘ The entire body of the people of Israel remained in that country ; wherefore 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.’

On all counts then, if it is to be a choice in historical value between the dream of Esdras and the recorded facts of Josephus, I must vote for Josephus. In other words, the lost Ten Tribes are still lost ! They are ‘ beyond the Euphrates.’

Don’t let us overlook another interesting point. King Sargon claimed that he led captive 27,290 Israelites.

<sup>1</sup> *Chambers’s Encyclopædia*, and *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*

But on any reckoning of their population, that must have been only a small relative part of the Northern Kingdom. We know what happened to that large part which remained in Palestine—they remained. Now why should the promises of God, made to the whole people, *only apply to the relatively small portion which was carried into captivity?* This seems a rather difficult point for the British-Israelites to explain.

I am not trying to influence any man's convictions. I have been asked to give my views on the British-Israel theory, that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples are the descendants of the Ten Tribes and the heirs of their promises. We may be; I do not know. All I know, and am now saying, is that there is *no historical basis* for the belief that makes any appeal to my judgment.

All the other points do not really count, if there is no historical proof of the alleged migration of the lost Israelites. There may be lots of most interesting parallels between the great promises made to the ancient Israelites and our own modern empire and destiny. But don't let us forget that others have found equally interesting parallels which they in turn have applied to themselves. The only test that ought to appeal to us is the test of historical proof. Speculation—however interesting, flattering or attractive—will not do. It proves nothing.

I cannot believe, therefore, that through this fancied descent, we are in any special sense 'the heirs of God's promises and favour.' I can believe this least of all when I remember that Jesus, Our Saviour, came to be *the Messiah of all nations alike*. Once He came to give His message to the whole world, a special notion of *favour* in God's sight is almost a heresy. 'Where there is

neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free : but Christ is all, and in all.' <sup>1</sup>

We may say with some real meaning that Israel once was ' a favoured nation ' in order that God might use it for the world's good, and especially that Jesus might be born in it, reared and trained, and that it might become a vehicle for His truth. But once He came—and came to the whole world of needy mankind—there is no such thing as a *favoured nation* any more. No longer can a nation have any special privileges over another in God's sight—Israelite or Roman, black, white, or yellow. In Jesus Christ all men and all nations are alike in need and in opportunity ; and there is no difference in the regard of God for any nation, class, or man.

## 4

If it is a help to anyone to accept the British-Israel theory, he is fully free to believe it, if he can accept its claims. Many good Christians whom I know and respect do keenly believe it. Its acceptance does not entail any heresy, or involve any less interest in the work of the Church. If this theory strengthens a man's faith, deepens his love, and makes him a finer and more active Christian, I say ' God bless him.' But on the other hand, since I have been asked to give my own judgment, I find that I am forced to reject the theory for the following concise reasons, which I give now as a final summary.

(i) There is no basis in history for the theory. According to Josephus—up to A.D. 100—the *Ten Tribes were still resident in the lands of Mesopotamia and Media.*

<sup>1</sup> Colossians, iii. 11

At that date the Teutonic peoples, among whom were the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from whom the British people have descended, were already established in Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Denmark. As we know, they fought against the Roman legions.

(ii) So much for the angle of history. But an even more impressive angle is the angle of *language*. Philologists assure us that there is no possible linkage in 'sentence-structure,' word-roots, grammar, or syntax between the Semitic language of the Ten Tribes and the Low or High German of the Teutons. There is actually a radical difference of 'word and phrase formation' between any form of the Semitic tongue and our modern speech. Unless therefore the migrating Israelites lost, not only their pure religion—which presumably they went out to establish—but also their own mother-tongue, it is hopeless to try to identify them with any modern people. Moreover—a very important point—they seem to have lost every trace of the ancient rites and customs, which were preserved so jealously by every other Semitic tribe.

(iii) I cannot accept the always 'literal' interpretation of these ancient prophecies. As I have had reason to point out elsewhere, the prophets did not come among the people to *predict* and *foretell* far-distant events in the dim future. They were there to declare moral truths in God's name for their own age, and *forth-tell* (not foretell) God's will for life and conduct among their own generation. The claim that the Hebrew prophets could 'predict' a map of the future—while Jesus Himself denied that He could foretell any coming event—seems to me to be a misreading of the facts, and a serious misunderstanding of what prophecy is.

Even if the prophets themselves did believe that they could so predict, and even if they were popularly regarded as 'true' or 'false' prophets by whether their predictions came true or not, does this of itself not show us at once that they were speaking only *to their own age*—the age that could alone judge them? They were speaking of the results of human conduct and the consequences of the will of God which their own fellow-men could judge and pronounce to be either true or false. Did not Micah, for instance, state his prophet's charter thus, 'to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin' (iii.8). 'No-one who reads through such a book as Amos could carry away the impression that its importance lay in prediction. Running through it, doubtless, is the broad announcement that national sin will issue in national ruin, but the value of this lies in its moral interpretation of history, not in its miraculously predictive quality' (Professor T. E. McFadyen. *The Bible and the Modern Thought*). Jeremiah himself asserts that the one mark of a prophet who claims to stand in the counsel of Jehovah is that he 'turned them [the people] from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings' (xxiii.22). On this general question of the right of a prophet to 'foretell,' Dr. Denney sums up the matter in one sentence, 'To ask such questions is to assume that Ezekiel and John could write history before it happened, which is not the case.'<sup>1</sup>

Have you observed the curious and startling fact that many of the queer religions and theories, by which the peace of Christ's Church has been so often ruined, find their origin always in a *strictly literal* interpretation of the obscure prophetic passages of the Old and New

<sup>1</sup> Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 232

Testaments? Now, I do not imagine that British Israelites would apply that strictly literal interpretation to *everything* in the Old Testament. For instance, they would not apply it to the so-called 'days' of creation in Genesis, but would interpret them, as we do, as a religious interpretation of God's creative power and evolving purposes. Nor would they force a literal interpretation upon the prophets' words when they speak of God taking Israel 'under His wings' or being 'a rock in a weary land.' But surely we cannot demand literal interpretation in one place and not in another. I say this because the whole case of British-Israel seems to me to depend on a strictly literal and predictive rendering of *certain selected passages*. I at least am not ready to accept this in one set of passages, and forego it in another.

(iv) British-Israel makes an unwarranted distinction between the fulfilment of passages referring to *Israel* and passages referring to *Judah*. Surely, if the one must be fulfilled—especially when they are grouped together in the same prophecy—the other must also be fulfilled. For instance, there is the famous passage in Jeremiah xxxiii which says, 'I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first.' According to British-Israel writers, this gracious promise has been fulfilled to *Israel*—in us! But why should the one side of the verse be fulfilled and not the other? In any case, if we must interpret that prophecy literally, the restoration of Israel should have been *to its own land*, where 'I will build them as at the first.' No! Literal interpretation of the prophets' words, as if they were predicting or foretelling distant historical events, is plain futility. The prophets were declaring great spiritual messages of moral and spiritual

concern, not giving national and political forecasts for ages to come.

(v) In my soul, I object to any view of special national favouritism and destiny *in our Christian Era*. God needs no longer a 'favoured nation,' one who will rule and control the world for some yet undisclosed purpose of His own. Israel and Judah—both alike—were a chosen and favoured nation for one special purpose—for the coming of the knowledge of God to all mankind in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the whole world.

In this connection, please notice one point clearly. Israel and Judah were never at any time favoured for their own sake and their own worth, but only as a means of service for the world, and as a channel for God's coming kingdom. They were, as we put it, an 'elected and chosen people'; but they were not elected to *privilege*, but only to *service*. Now once that service had been fulfilled—and so far as they were concerned, it was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ—*their 'election' was finished!* From that moment, in the message of Christ the Messiah, the future for ever thereafter lay not with a Kingdom of Israel or Judah, but with a *Kingdom of God* in this world, a kingdom for all men and for all nations, and for all men and for all nations equally and alike.

By the mercy of God we are now beyond the need of any nation's special vocation and destiny. The world is one; God's Kingdom is for the whole world; all men and women, of all classes and all colours and all races, are equally His people. In other words, we are in a new dispensation, the dispensation of Jesus Christ, who has revealed the universalism of God's love and favour. Thus, I can see no room or place

in Christian thinking for a theory that we, or any other people, are a chosen vessel for the privilege of God's favour.

(vi) Lastly, when you examine just what the British-Israel theory implies, I fear that in some ways it is dangerously near to some modern theories of *race superiority* which have only brought sorrow, shame, and insolence into men's hearts. In any case, all these disguised forms of race-favour are so essentially non-Christian! Any doctrine of a Herren-Volk, a superior race, a chosen people, an elect nation, is not only against reason but against Christ's teaching; and in modern practice, it has proved to be a poison-spray of hate and aggression. Quite seriously, I regard this type of idea as one of the final dangers to human peace and sanity. I am aware that the good folk who support the British-Israel movement would hotly deny any tinge of a Herren-Volk doctrine or any idea of a superior race in their theory. Yes, but surely there is a possible danger of this idea in some unspiritual minds who might regard this theory as a justification of a *sanctified imperialism*. Apart from that, are we not speaking as Christians? And the Christian doctrine is quite clear—not that there is *this* race and *that* race, but that there is only one race—the *human race*—the 'race of mankind' whom Jesus came to redeem.

I have only tried to give you my own reaction to this question. If however any of my hearers and readers accept this theory and believe that we are indeed the descendants of the Ten Tribes, and thus 'the heirs of the ancient promises,' may I ask them to remember one thing—no election of God was ever to privilege and favour, but only to service. Every man who accepts this British-Israel doctrine should only examine

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himself the more narrowly to make sure that he is thereby a finer, more responsible, and more *missionary* Christian. To believe in this theory of our election, and *not* be a more passionate missionary for God, is only a contradiction in terms.

THE END