"British Israelism" examined and its errors exposed, Part 2.

The second in a series of articles by Rev. Ron Johnstone, minister of Armagh Free Presbyterian Church

The first article in this series caused quite a stir amongst those who would see themselves as defenders of the teaching of British Israelism. A perusal of some recent entries in the Guest Book on our Burning Bush" website would confirm this. Despite the attempts to intimidate and silence Rev. Ron Johnstone, we are pleased to present his second article in the series. Opponents may huff and puff and make derogatory remarks but such comes far short of an answer to the charges laid against the unscriptural notion that Britain is Israel. The Editor.

We have already underlined the fact that there are and have been some believers who have espoused a form of British Israel teaching which has not led them to deny basic and fundamental doctrines of scripture. However that does not contradict the sad fact that many of those who have started down a British Israelite path have been led into serious doctrinal error. That danger is exemplified by what is probably the most professional North American 'Identity' web site on the Internet. At the beginning this group's statement of faith appears to be very orthodox. They state they believe in the Trinity, the Deity of Christ and Justification by faith alone. However they go on to say they believe that those among Israel who believe will be saved! They believe that Satan has a seed upon earth known as the Jews. They state that coloured people have no spirit and therefore cannot know salvation. In their listing of books and tapes there is a category for those, 'who can handle strong meat.' This listing includes books viciously attacking the 'Negro' and Jew and also those who maintain that Adam was not the first man but the first white man. Noah and his family were preserved during a local flood because they were the only family with pure white blood in that particular area of the world. Such nonsense clearly demonstrates the dangerous nature of extreme BI teaching and how unwary people can be drawn into blasphemous doctrines.

One Free Presbyterian who was invited to meetings held by Mr Alan Campbell told me they were given a book by this British Israelite teacher to show them why BI teaching was so important. An American, Sheldon Emery wrote 'Paul and Joseph of Arimathea'. While it contains vicious attacks on preachers (such as our own ministers) who do not hold to British Israelite views, the most serious thing about the book is the blasphemous teaching it contains. It was written to prove that 'our Race, the White Race, is God's Chosen Race.' There are many racist attacks upon the Jew and coloured people, for example—"Christianity being OBVIOUSLY a religion ONLY of the White Race." "Many of our ancestors, and many present day Bible scholars believe the Negro to be the "beast of the field" of the Bible." Vicious and unfactual derogatory comments are made against Africans and also

upon missionaries who went to evangelise such and the churches which sent them. We in the Free Presbyterian Church have missionaries in Africa and every member should be disgusted and righteously angry at such vile literature. The author goes as far as to maintain that the name gentile does not refer to non-Israelites but to Israelites who were scattered throughout Europe. That Paul spent his entire ministry preaching to the White Race is proof he understood the White Race to be BOTH the "gentiles" (Israelites in the European dispersion) and the "children of Israel" (the Israelites in Judea who had retained the name Israel). Only one Race has ever answered to His voice, the Caucasian Race." The writer argues that the modern day Jews are descended from the Canaanites and have been allowed to, "come into this wonderful land, and to defile it WITH THE SAME SINS OF CANAAN!" LSD and other drugs are claimed to be produced in Palestine by Jews in order to corrupt the White Israelite youth. The Mafia is claimed not to be Italians but actually Sicilian Jews! The book also contains what purports to be the 29th chapter of Acts which details how Paul came to England to preach. (Capitals as in the book.) Mr A Campbell has published a booklet entitled, 'The Bride of Christ.' In it a strange view of the Atonement is put forth. He argues that the Northern Kingdom, Israel had committed adultery and was divorced from the Lord. Under the Law the penalty for adultery was death and he therefore argues that 'Israel once divorced…it was impossible to return to God again as long as the husband who wrote the bill of divorcement lived. Only by his death could the divorced wife be released from the penalty of the law.' He then goes on to state that Christ shed His blood to annul the bill of divorce. I do not suggest that such extreme views are held by all that hold to a form of BI teaching. Such teaching would be abhorrent to them. However we must warn that such literature is available in Northern Ireland and we must condemn such and publicly and vigorously disassociate from it. We must solemnly warn those who start down the path of British Israelism of the grave danger that they could become more and more open to such false teaching as that described above.

Another danger, arguably not as serious as that above, is that those holding a British Israelite view see proofs for their theories where none exists. This has led leading exponents of the theory to claim that the Japanese are Israelites (Heritage of the Anglo-Saxon Race by M H Gayer published by Covenant Publishing Co.) The writer informs us that many Japanese names sound like Hebrew names. That the 'Samurai' came from Samaria. We are told the names Dungannon and Dundalk prove that the tribe of Dan passed through Ireland. (Dan being changed to Dun.) One writer states that the Irish are descendants of the tribe of Dan and that is why they like to sing, 'O Danny Boy'! Sadly some are impressed by such foolishness. A question to ask is, 'Does the fact that Birmingham ends in 'Ham' prove the English are descended from Ham?' One of the first exponents in England gave as one of the proofs that 'the smoke and fire coming up from the cities and furnaces of our land are like the pillar cloud of Israel.'

A common claim often repeated as true, is that some English words are really Hebrew terms. Some go as far as to claim that there are many Hebrew words in English, so therefore we are descended from Israel. However there are more Arabic words in English. So we must be Arabs and not Israelites! Many BI writers have stated that 'British' is in fact two Hebrew words meaning 'Covenant man.' This is then sadly accepted by the readers and then repeated as a proof for the theory. In a tape I was sent, Pastor James McConnell repeats this claim and challenges anyone to refute it. (Since the first article appeared I have

received criticism for referring to Pastor McConnell's public statements. I find this sad. When I was asked to speak on BI I never mentioned him. I was then sent a tape of his preaching on BI in which he repeatedly challenged anyone to refute his comments. In the last edition of The Burning Bush I quoted his words exactly alongside the words of the apostle Paul. Not one of the critics has even attempted to contradict the point I made. I am not attacking Pastor McConnell's person. Nor do I mean to imply that he holds the extreme views highlighted earlier in this article. However, since I was sent the tape by a person claiming to be a Free Presbyterian who stated this is what they believed, I have a right to state where I disagree with the comments made.) Critics have already poured scorn on my mental ability. So I will make it clear that I do not claim to be a Hebrew scholar. (I did study Linguistics in USA, specialising in the area of the comparison of different languages. I then worked on languages in Papua New Guinea. Hebrew was required study in the Theological Hall of our Church, which I attended.) I have spoken with those who are recognised as proficient in Hebrew and as yet I have not met one who gives credence to such a view that 'British' means 'covenant man'. Recently while in North America I sought the views of a professor of Hebrew who has taught in a Fundamentalist seminary since 1976. I was not surprised that he found such a claim amusing. The claim is made because 'Brit' sounds a little like the Hebrew word for covenant, 'Berith'. (It also sounds like other Hebrew words, one referring to a false god.) And 'Ish' in Hebrew is one of the words for man.

However the construction in Hebrew of 'berith-ish' would be meaningless. The concept 'covenant man' is not in Biblical Hebrew. The noun covenant is never given in Biblical Hebrew an adjectival force. The term 'ish' is used in names such as 'Ishbosheth' meaning 'a man of shame'. However the Hebrew idiom for man of the covenant, if it occurred, would be 'ishhabberith' or some phrase even farther removed from 'British'. British is the old Celtic 'Bret' (a Briton) plus the familiar suffix 'ish', which is used to form adjectives in many languages such as German and Dutch. N H Parker, Professor of Hebrew, McMaster University, Ontario has written that the idea that 'berith ish' ' might mean 'covenant man' is preposterous.' Of the suffix in British he states, 'To persist…to identify it with the Hebrew word 'ish' (man) might well be described as childish and foolish.' Again Pastor McConnell and others have repeated the idea that 'Saxons' really means 'Isaac's sons.' It is claimed that if the 'I' is dropped from 'Isaac' and the suffix 'on' is added we have 'Saxon' or the 'son of Isaac.' They refer to Genesis 21:12 "for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." But that text does not say that a nation would be called Isaac, even if Saxon did mean Isaac, which it does not. The text says that his seed should be called IN Isaac. In Romans 9:6-8 Paul refers to this very passage as also does Hebrews11:18-19. In neither case does it speak of people being called 'Isaac'. In Genesis 21 God was telling Abraham that the promise made to him that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (a prophecy fulfilled in Christ) should come through Isaac and not Ishmael. If the verse did mean, as British Israelites claim that Abraham's descendants through Isaac would be called 'Isaac's sons' or 'Saxons' then surely all the 12 tribes would be called by that name! The claim repeated by BI teachers that the ancient group of people known as the 'Scythians' were in fact Israelites who came from Assyria across Europe and became the 'Saxons' has been discredited. Yet it is still repeated as 'proof' that the British people are Israelites. I was sent copies of the BI magazine, 'The Ensign Message'. As proof that the 'Scythians' were Israelites they state: " Now the name for Scythian in the Assyrian language was 'Iskuza', but there has

been no explanation for the initial 'I' unless it be that the name was derived from 'Isaaca.' The Israelites may well have called themselves Isaaca, or house of Isaac…" If you take time to read carefully such reasoning you will realise that it is no wonder the Encyclopaedia Britanica states…."The theory (of British-Israelism) … rests on premises which are deemed by scholars both theological and anthropological - to be utterly unsound"

We will look (DV) next time at some scriptures that are used as 'proof texts' by British Israelites.