In my opinion that last phenomenon is an original response to the Iberian “purity of blood” regulations: just as they did not distinguish between sincere New Christians and those who were secret Jews, all of whom were subject to racial discrimination, similarly, in the consciousness of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, belonging to the “nação” was not dependent upon open religious identification nor even upon spiritual religious affinities. Here we have a social and historical situation such as had never previously existed in a Jewish community. Although the Spanish and Portuguese Jews in western Europe did not officially depart from Jewish law, their collective consciousness included a group of people within the confines of their identity who, from a halakhic point of view, could not be viewed as Jews. At the same time they rejected Jews of other ethnic background from their collective self-definition. In so doing, the internalization of the Iberian concepts of exclusion played a decisive role.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE JEWISH INDIAN THEORY
RICHARD H. POPKIN

No conference dealing with Menasseh ben Israel would be complete without a discussion of the Jewish Indian theory, which was dealt with in Menasseh’s most famous work, The Hope of Israel. Though Menasseh was far from an advocate of the view, his discussion became crucial at the time, and was revived and revived until well into the nineteenth century. The history of the theory provides an insight into the changing ways Europeans and European Americans saw their place in the world, and the changing ways they perceived the world.

This paper will deal with the crisis about interpreting the American Indians around 1650, with Menasseh’s resolution of this crisis, with the impact his resolution had on millenarian thinking and politics in the second half of the seventeenth century, with the revival of Menasseh’s theory in colonial America, with the struggle over the Jewish Indian theory in early United States history until it was rejected by President Jefferson, with the lingering aspects of the view in other nineteenth-century theories, and, finally, with its demise with the rise of racist anthropology and American nationalism.

Whenever I tell students in America that there was a serious theory years ago that the Indians were Jews, and that some of the Lost Tribes were located in America, they look blankly at me as if it’s my nonsense, or they laugh embarrassedly to be in a room were such things are said. However, I quickly try to calm their fears by pointing out that after Columbus met the Indians in 1492, there was a problem of accounting for who they were and where they came from. If everyone on the surface of the earth was a descendant of Adam and Eve and the seven survivors of the Flood, then the Indians had to be connected to the Biblical world. Columbus himself had no problem. He thought they were Asians, since he was sure that he had reached Cathay. Amerigo Vespucci was a bit more baffled. He knew that the Indians were not Stoics or Epicureans, but was not sure who they might be. The Pope declared the Indians to be fully human. Various ex-

1 The Papal Bull is dated June 9, 1537. On it see Lewis Hanke, The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America (Philadelphia, 1949); and R.H. Popkin, “The Pre-Adamite
plorers and missionaries offered theories tracing the Indians back to migrations from the Middle-East - from Phoenicia, Arabia, or maybe from Solomon's Ophir. To deny a Biblical origin for the Indians was to see them, and their history, as outside of Scripture, and Scripture as incomplete and inadequate. Only a few hardy souls in the sixteenth century dared suggest this - Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Christopher Marlowe, and maybe sir Walter Raleigh. Bruno had read about the Aztec calendar stone (which, once discovered and deciphered, was promptly buried for more than two centuries). It led him to embelish Paracelsus' theory that there were multiple origins of mankind. Marlowe had heard of the findings of Raleigh's trip to Virginia, and had probably met Bruno. Marlowe is supposed to have given a lecture in which he claimed that Indian history was 16,000 years old, hence much older than the world according to the Jewish calendar, or according to the revised dating system of Archbishop Ussher.

In the early seventeenth century various Spanish explorers and theologians debated the origins of the Indians, always indicating that the solution had to involve tracing them back to their Biblical roots. More and more refined theories developed, some just simple migration views to the effect that the Indians, like the Europeans, Asiatics and Africans, all got to where they are now living by migration after Noah's Flood and the dispersion after the Tower of Babel episode. Detailed histories of European, Asian and African travels already existed, and ones suitable to account for the Indians were added. Most of these were not intended to glorify or extoll the virtues of the Indians, who were being horribly exploited by the Conquistadores. Only the theory of Bartolomé de las Casas, the defender of the Indians, involved making them co-equal descendants of Adam and Eve, better people than the Europeans because they had not been corrupted, and some even the very best people, the Elect described by St. Paul who are to be preserved until the end of time to rejoin Jesus in his Kingdom on Earth. Las Casas and his followers, who tried to create a millennial state without Spanish Conquistadores in Guatemala, introduced a supernatural element into theories about the Indians, namely that some of them had special properties that were crucial in Providential times to come. This view may have interacted with a Marrano millenarianism that developed in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in New Spain to the effect that God would save the faithful, the hidden Jews in America.

At the same time, from around 1640-1650, a difficulty emerged in accounting for the Indians and in relating them to religious developments in European history. On the one hand, the French Marrano millenarian, Isaac La Peyrèrè, offered his theory that the Indians, like the South Sea Islanders, the Chinese and lots of other groups, were not descendants of Adam. La Peyrèrè wrote his statement of this around 1642, but only published it in 1655. He, the secretary of the Prince of Condé, showed his theory to people in various parts of Europe, and gathered new evidence for it from his discussions with scholars. His case, briefly, was that mankind existed for an indefinitely long period of time. Because the human race was such a mess, a war of all against all, God created Adam, the first Jew, as a means of saving everyone. The Adamites were called, then were rejected when Jesus came, and were now about to be recalled. Their recall, with the arrival of the Jewish Messiah, would lead to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the messianic world in which everyone - pre-Adamites, Adamites and post-Adamites - would flourish in peace and happiness. But only Jews were Adamites. La Peyrèrè insisted that his theory would better explain what we know of ancient pagan history, of other cultures found through the voyages of discovery, and also the anomalies in the text of the Bible.

La Peyrèrè's theory was answered long before it was published, by the great Dutch scholar, Hugo Grotius, who saw the work in manuscript. In 1643 he wrote a pamphlet on the origins of the American people, and claimed they were descendants of the Viking explorations. (La Peyrèrè became Europe's leading expert on the Eskimos in order to answer Grotius, and pointed out that if Grotius could solve the Indian problem by appeal to the Vikings, then what about the Eskimos, who were in Greenland when the Vikings got there?)

---

1 Bartolomé de las Casas, A Selection of his Writings, trans. and ed. by George Sanderlin (New York, 1972), Part IV.
4 Hugo Grotius, Dissertationes altera de Origine Gentium Americanarum adversus octentatorem (n.p., 1643).
5 Isaac La Peyrèrè, Relation de Groenland (Paris, 1647) and Relation de l'Islande (Paris, 1663).
Grotius' solution was just a new version of connecting the Indians to the European-Biblical world. La Peyrère sought to subdue the world's entire and restrict divine history to Jewish history. This might easily account for the many kinds of peoples in the world, but it also required a radical re-reading and re-writing of the accepted Scriptural picture. All this La Peyrère's many critics, including Menasseh, were not ready to do.

As the English began colonizing New England, the Scots Nova Scotia, the Swedes, New Sweden (Delaware), these Protestant missionaries and settlers sought to understand who they were dealing with, and where these people came from. Two of the leading English millenarians of the seventeenth century, the very pious and highly learned Joseph Mede of Cambridge, who had deciphered the chronologies of Daniel and Revelation, and his student, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More, offered a most negative theological interpretation of the American Indians. As Europe was, according to them, reaching its millennial climax, that would occur between 1650-1680, with the conversion of the Jews, God was revealing aspects of the world hitherto unknown, through allowing for the increase of human knowledge, partly through the extension of navigation and commerce. The Indians, so discovered, were the children of Satan, who had been driven out of the Old World when Jesus arrived, and now were to be destroyed by his Second Coming. The Indians were purely malevolent beings whose total defeat was to be their only contribution to the course of divine history. Henry More delighted in retelling the goriest Spanish tales about the Indians to show how demonic they were.

Although Mede carried great weight with the English Puritans, they realized that even he could be wrong. He claimed that various events in the Book of Revelation would occur in 1642, and they did not. Besides, the settler-missionaries found matters in Massachusetts Bay Colony quite different than Mede had described. They found docile, friendly Indians, some of whom wanted to become Christians. They established schools for them, and they tried to get the great Jan Comenius to use Harvard as the center of universal enlightenment for Indians and Europeans. They translated the Scriptures for the Indians. The missionaries began to suspect something radically different was going on in the environs of Boston, namely that pure English Christians were baptizing and converting Indians who were Jews. And, if the Indians were Jews, an enormous missionary effort would be needed. So, on behalf of the New England missionary society, a volume was written by a Norfolk preacher, one Thomas Thorowgood, called *Jews in America, or the Probability that the Indians are Jews*. This was to be dedicated to Charles I, but his overthow delayed the publication of the book. The job of writing a preface to it was given to John Dury, perhaps the most active millenarian theologian in the Puritan Revolution. Dury, 1596-1680, a Scot, was born in Holland, student at the Walloon Seminary in Leiden, was a pastor in Germany. He then began a life-long campaign to reunite all of the evangelical churches in Europe, and travelled all over, from Sweden to Poland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France and England. He lived for a while in Amsterdam, and was one of Cromwell's chief agents on the Continent.

He was in England when presented with Thorowgood’s text. He immediately put it in the context of some Providential data he had learned from Jews in Holland, especially from Menasseh ben Israel. The Lost Tribes of Israel would reappear just before the millennium (which Dury was sure would occur in 1655). He had heard from a Jewish jeweler in The Hague that some of the Lost Tribes had been located east of the Holy Land, in Persia or in Afghanistan. He had heard from the most learned Jewish writer of the time, his friend and co-worker Menasseh ben Israel, that a Portuguese Marrano explorer, Antonio de Montezinos, had encountered a Jewish tribe in the Andes Mountains. He knew that Menasseh had had Montezinos, who came to Amsterdam in 1644, give his account before a notary. So Dury (who was at the time planning to set up a college of Jewish studies in London, with Menasseh as one of its three professors) wrote Menasseh for a copy of the Montezinos report. He was duly sent it. Then Dury and his fellow millenarian Nathaniel Homes wrote Menasseh to see if he made out of this what they did, namely that the Indians were the Lost

---

10 Mede's view on the Satanic origin of the American Indians appears in his letter to the Rev. William Twisse, March 23, 1654/5, in The Works of the Pious and Profoundly Learned Joseph Mede, B.D. (London, 1664), pp. 980-981. Mede said, "So the Devil, when he saw the world apostatizing from him, laid the foundations of a new kingdom, by deducting this Colony from the North into America, where they have increased into an innumerable multitude."


14 So Dury indicated in his preface to Abraham Von Frankenberg's *Clavis Apologetica*, published in London in 1634 by Samuel Hartlib.

15 John Dury, *An Epistolical Discourse of Mr. John Dury to Mr. Thorowgood, Concerning his Conjecture that the Americans are descended from the Israelites*, Jan. 27, 1649, prefixed to *Thorowgood, Jews in America, or, Probability that the Americans are of that Race* (London, 1650).


17 The notarized copy was published by Dury as an appendix to Thorowgood, *Jews in America*. It also appears in the foreword to Menasseh's *Hope of Israel*. 
Tribes. The correspondence, printed in the preface to Thorogood's book, shows Menasseh being most cautious, unconvinced; until he was finally willing to say that the group encountered by Montezinos could be part of a Lost Tribe, while the rest of the inhabitants of the Americas were migrants from Asia. Homes immediately pointed out that this meant that the climax of world history was at hand, because the Lost Tribes were beginning to reappear. Menasseh was asked what was the Jewish view about the Lost Tribes and their reappearance. Rather than write another letter, Menasseh wrote his most famous work, The Hope of Israel, which appeared in 1650 in Spanish, Latin, Hebrew and English, and in Dutch a few years later. The English edition, dedicated to the revolutionary Parliament of England, was translated by a friend of John Milton's, the wild-eyed millenarian Moses Wall. This translation appeared in editions in 1650, 1651 and 1652. The last two editions included an appendix in which Wall exchanged views with a reader, and emphasized the millenarian importance of his work, and that it should help bring about the conversion of the Jews.

Even prior to Wall's translation, and Menasseh's own publication in Spanish, Hebrew and Latin, the text of the Montezinos report, and his views were having reverberations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. One Edward Winslow, in 1649, published a work entitled The Glorious Progress of the Gospel among the Indians in New England. Manifested by three Letters under the Hand of the famous Instrument of the Lord, John Eliot. The work was dedicated to Parliament and the Council of State. In the preface, Winslow said that there are two great questions which have troubled ancient and modern writers, and men of the greatest depth and ability. They have tried to resolve (1), what became of the Ten Tribes of Israel? and (2), Where did the American Indians come from? "A godly Minister of this city (no doubt, John Dury) wrote to Rabbi ben-Israel, a great Dr. of the Jews, now living at Amsterdam" to find out if he knew what became of the Ten Tribes. According to Winslow, Menasseh's answer was that they were certainly transported to America. For Winslow it was wondrous that God had opened the hearts of the Indians to the Gospel just when so many eminent divines expect the conversion of the Jews.

Dury wrote an appendix to the work in which he stressed that the Gospel being revealed to the Indians led many judicious and godly theologians to believe that the conversion of the Jews is at hand. In fact Dury reported that "It is the expectation of some of the wisest Jews now living, that about the year 1659, Either we Christians shall be Muscovy, or else that they themselves Jews shall be Christians". No indication was given of who these wisest Jews were. We know Dury was a close friend of Menasseh's, and he probably knew Rabbi Judah Leon Templo. Dury added "that those sometimes poor, now precious Indians ... may be as the first fruits of the glorious harvest of Israel's Redemption". Thus Dury connected the missionary activities of the Rev. John Eliot in Massachusetts with the imminently expected conversion of the Jews. Both the English translator, Moses Wall, and the anonymous author of the letter To the Learned Jew: Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam and to all his Brethren there and elsewhere, Grace, Mercy and Truth from the Most High God be granted and given, saw the news in the Montezinos report as evidence that the Jews should convert right away. In the anonymous letter Menasseh was urged over and over again to convert, and to convince his brethren to do so, because of the discovery that the Indians were Jews, the Lost Tribes.

Our colleagues here, Henry Mèchoulan and Gérard Nahon, have shown in their preface to the recent French translation of Menasseh's work, that Menasseh did not become a believer in the Jewish Indian theory, but held to the view that just part of a Lost Tribe had been discovered.

Menasseh, after printing Montezinos' statement, carefully delineated the problem – there are so many opinions about the origins of the Indians, that it is very hard to tell which is true. There is no Scriptural statement on the matter. Menasseh said that he had only written about solid and infallible things ("as those things are which concern our Law") But his friends asked for his view about where the Lost Tribes were. One has to have faith, Menasseh claimed, that all people are descended from Adam and Eve, and the survivors of the Flood. So, the Indians must be part of the

14 Dury, "An Epistolitical Discourse", pref ace to Thorogood, at the end.
16 Edward Winslow, The Glorious Progress of the Gospel among the Indians in New England, Muni-
human dispersion after the Flood and the Tower of Babel. Second, the Ten Tribes, as described in 2nd Esdras were scattered, not all at once, nor to one place. Then it is reasonable to expect some possibility of dispersion throughout the world - the Chinese Jews, the Jews of South India, of Ethiopia, all seem to be remnants of the Lost Tribes. So, the people encountered by Montezinos are probably also a part of a Lost Tribe that was driven from Tarytac across some land bridge in the Pacific to America. The re-emergence of the Lost Tribes fits with other evidence that the fulfillment of God's Promise is at hand, the Redemption of Israel. The Ten Tribes will emerge and return to join the other two in Israel in the near future.

Menasseh said he saw reason to doubt Montezinos' story, but as it was a human account, it could not be proven. However, it fitted with a lot of other data, and helped explain the peopling of America, with part of a Lost Tribe, plus other branches of humanity descended from our Biblical parents.

Nonetheless, in all of the excitement that followed in England, with the publication of Thorowgood, Menasseh and the Montezinos narration, the Jewish Indian theory was truly launched. Menasseh was invited to England to confer with Cromwell about fulfilling the final prophecies before the Redemption of Israel. Dury envisaged the Jews, the Lost Tribes, including the Indians, and the Caraites marching into the Holy Land. In 1660, after the Restoration, a new edition of Thorowgood was issued, in which the missionaries to the Indians in Massachusetts wanted to distance themselves a little from Menasseh's non-Calvinist theology. But they were also filled with more and more data about Indian customs, practices and languages that indicated that the Indians were Jews, albeit a bit degenerate in their behavior. Dury wrote a new preface reporting that a Dutch student had had a vision that Charles II would be restored, and that he would bring about the conversion of the Jews.

Later English colonists, like the Quaker William Penn, found it easy to discover signs of Judaism amongst the Indians. Penn wrote back after his first winter in Pennsylvania that it was like being in Duke Street in London, surrounded by Jews. Bishop George Berkeley apparently started

with a similar view until he met drunken Indians in Newport, Rhode Island.

The Jewish Indian theory had its virtues. It explained where the redmen came from, and obviated the need for revising our historical framework by adopting some kind of polygenetic theory about the origins of mankind. Some scholars showed that the evidence of Menasseh and Montezinos left much to be desired. In the eighteenth century, when "scientific" anthropology developed, one of its main tasks was to explain the varieties of mankind. Most of the workers in this new science were monogenists, insisting on a single source of human beings, but then explaining the differences as due to their being several species of men. Linnaeus, Buffon, Blumenbach, to name a few, divided mankind into four or five species. The Indians were one species, but a rather dissimil one, ranking far below the Caucasians and the Asians in intelligence, and moral character. The Biblical aspect was toned down to the mere assertion that all mankind came from a common source. The differences amongst men were due to climate, education, environment, diet, etc. Presumably the defects of Negroes and Indians could be remedied by bringing them up to the level of Europeans. (Some of the same people asserted that this could also be done for Jews, if they could be brought out of the ghettos, secularized, and made to behave like others in their locales.) In contrast, some forms of polygenesis were being propounded. Hume offered a pretty drastic version that left the blacks inferior forever. His cousin, Lord Kames, offered a more modest view, that some peoples were created after Adam and Eve. These included the inhabitants of the Americas. In view of their later origin they did not have to be connected to the Biblical world.

Against Kames a new form of the Jewish Indian theory was offered that took on Providential significance in the millenarian excitement surrounding the American and French Revolutions. Just after a pretty detailed debunking of the Jewish Indian theory by a Captain Bernard Romans appeared, offering a possibility of divine multiple creations, an English

---

34 See, for example, Henri Grégoire, Essai sur la regeneration physique, morale et politique des Juifs (Metz, 1789).
36 Henry Home, Lord Kames, Six Sketches on the History of Man, Containing the Progress of Men as Individuals (Philadelphia, 1776), pp. 13-14, 29-30 and 41-47.
37 Bernard Romans, Natural History of East and West Florida (New York, 1775), pp. 54-55.
trader, James Adair, published his *History of the American Indians* in London in 1775. Adair had been trading with the Indians in the southern English colonies of America for forty years. In this work he offered detailed linguistic, cultural, social, and historical evidence that the Indians were Jews, based on his close observation of their speech and practices. He assured his readers that "the public may depend on the finality of the author, and his descriptions are genuine." Lord Kames, on the contrary, was offering reasonings contrary "both to revelation and facts." Then Adair contended that from his most exact observations, made over forty years, that the Indians "lineally descended from the Israelites." His evidence of the Jewish characteristics of the Indians went on for hundreds of pages. At the time, Adair's evidence was taken most seriously by American historians like Hannah Adams, who wrote an important *History of the Jews*, and appended some of Adair's text. Menasseh's *Hope of Israel* was reissued. Some of the religious thinkers involved in the American Revolution saw Adair's findings as justification for a Providential interpretation of what was happening in the colonies. Charles Crawford, an English nobleman who had moved to America, and who became an important abolitionist and millenarian, saw America's role as that of bringing about the final Providential events before the millennium, the freeing of slaves, the finding of the Lost Tribes and the conversion of the Jews. More significant, Crawford indicated, was that a rabbi who converted to Christianity came to Philadelphia to live with the Lost Tribe Indians, to prepare to lead them to Jerusalem. Apparently the converted rabbi gave up and became a Catholic official instead.

A more important figure, Elias Boudinot, took up the Jewish Indian cause. Boudinot, a lawyer from New Jersey, was one of the leaders of the American Revolution, and possibly the most important figure in the beginning of American fundamentalism. Adair showed his findings to Boudinot's close ally, Governor Livingston of New Jersey, before the book was published in London. Boudinot heard about this, and was very intrigued. He bought a copy of Adair's book right after the Revolution. He wanted to make his own test. A friend who knew Hebrew sought out an Indian tribe that had never encountered Europeans before. He spoke to them in Hebrew, and decided from their responses, that they were Jews. Boudinot saw the American revolutionary events as pre-millennial developments. He served as the head of the Continental Congress during the Revolution, was the head of the revolutionary state at the end of the war. He was the patron of Alexander Hamilton. When the United States was formed he became a congress man, and later Director of the Mint (like his millenarian predecessor, Sir Isaac Newton). Boudinot became convinced during the French Revolution that the events predicted in the Book of Revelation were taking place. When Thomas Jefferson was elected president, Boudinot resigned from the government, telling Jefferson that he could not serve in a Deist government, and that he had to prepare for the Second Advent. He founded the two most important fundamentalist organizations in the United States, the American Bible Society and the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews. He checked with a United States congressman who had been a governmental Indian agent, who confirmed Adair's claims. Then Boudinot wrote *The Star in the West*, pointing out that the Indians, the Lost Tribes, would lead the way into the millennium by returning to Jerusalem. Boudinot, Crawford, Jonathan Edwards and other religious interpreters of the American and French Revolutions could see in the Jewish Indian theory an all important role for the indigenous Americans in developing God's climax to human history, and could see America as central in the drama. Othermillenarians, especially British, from Sir William Jones onward, found evidence that the Lost Tribes were in Afghanistan and that the millennial drama involved the true Christians of Europe locating the Afghan Lost Tribes, and so creating the final moments of history without need of any Americans, native or immigrant. Boudinot, Crawford and others rejected the Afghan

---

39 Ibid., p. 2.
40 Ibid., p. 3.
41 Ibid., p. 15.
43 Robert Ingram, *Accounts of the Ten Tribes of Israel living in America*, originally published by R. Menasseh ben Israel. With Observations Thereto (Colchester, 1792).
44 Charles Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel*, in which there are numerous Facts and Arguments adduced to prove that many of the Indians in America are descended from the Ten Tribes (Philadelphia, 1799), quoted in Glaser, op. cit., pp. 52-53. Crawford stated that late accounts mention that the rabbi "proved to be an Imposter and that he is now in an elevated Station in the Church of Rome".
American ethnography, headed by Dr. Samuel Morton of Philadelphia, examined the cranial history of various groups, and tried to establish human racial differences in terms of capacity differences. Morton, in his *Crania Americana* and his *Crania Aegyptica*, measured skull capacities, by filling skulls with pepper seed, and then weighing how much pepper seed could go into each skull. Morton had the largest skull collection in the world at the time. He found that the Indians and the Negroes had lower cranial capacity than Caucasians and Asiatics. He also found that Indians from Canada in the north to Tierra del Fuego in the south had the same capacity. On the basis of this, his disciples insisted that Indians and Negroes were separate races, which had separate origins. The Bible was not about them, and they had no role to play in the Scriptural world. The Mound Builders of the Ohio Valley and the uncivilized Indians were indigenous to the western hemisphere. They were an inferior race compared to the Asiatic or Caucasian ones, and had no special spiritual or intellectual destiny.

Morton's ethnology was adopted primarily as a "scientific proof" of Negro inferiority, and as a justification for continuing the slave system in America. Morton's disciples tried to convince Southerners to adopt the new ethnology over Scripture as a defense of their world. The Swiss biologist Louis Agassiz came to the United States in the 1840s, and became the leading scientific advocate of Mortonism, with its blatant racist conclusions about the status of Negroes. Frederick Douglass, the leading black spokesman before the Civil War, and Alexander von Humboldt fought against this polygenetic racism as a *desolante* theory that condemned much of mankind to perpetual slavery and inferiority.

The application of ethnology to the Indians justified taking away their lands, driving them westward, and decimating them. It is interesting that Morton's view, insisting on the indigenous, autochthonous character of the American Indians, rejected the growing interest in a theory advanced by Menasseh ben Israel, that the Indians came from the Orient. From the

---

51 Boudinot, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31; and Charles Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel*, in which there are Numerous Facts and Arguments adduced to prove that many of the Indians in America are descended from the Ten Tribes, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 1801), pp. 4-25. Crawford was willing to consider other groups as American Indians, might be part of the Lost Tribes, and this could include some Alans.


58 See Louis Agassiz's two articles in the *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, XLVIII (1850), "Geographical Distribution of Animals", and XLIX (1850), "The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races".

time of the discovery of the Behring Straits, it was realized that people could have walked from Asia to America. A Mexican Jesuit, Alexo de Orrio, joyfully announced that this destroyed the pre-Adamite theory. The Indians could be connected with the Chinese, the Mongolians, who in turn had been connected to the descendants of survivors of Noah’s Ark. Mortonism disconnected the Indians and Africans from Scriptural history, and left them to be dominated by the Caucasians and the Asiatics. Morton’s followers de-emphasized the Scriptural basis of human history, in exchange for so-called scientific factors — the amount of pepper-seed that can be held in a cranium. (And it has been found that Morton “fudged” his data to get his “scientific” results). Mortonism paved the way for a secular racist account of the Indians and Negros.

Before such a view became predominant, at least in America, one more stage of the Jewish Indian view emerged. While Boudinot, Crawford and other millenarians saw the Indians as the Lost Tribes, new evidence emerged, and two new theories were offered, one that of the leading Jewish spokesman, Mordecai Noah, the other by the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith.

The new evidence were some artifacts that were discovered: one, phylacteries that were found in an Indian burial mound in Pittsfield, Massachusetts; another a Hebrew inscription outside New Milford, Connecticut; the third, a Hebrew tomb in Ohio, added to the alleged resemblances that Lord Kingsborough thought he had found in the Aztec codices to ancient Hebrew motifs. Lord Kingsborough published nine folio volumes of the codices, magnificently illustrated, with copious notes from Menasseh, Adair and others, to prove the Indians, especially those of Central America, were Jews. Although he bankrupted himself in the process of publishing the material, he convinced only the already convinced, and became a laughing-stock to others.

The Hebrew inscription in New Milford was examined by America’s greatest Christian Hebraist, Ezra Stiles, President of Yale, who guessed it was somebody’s name. No one in the area could be found who was Jewish or who knew Hebrew, so a suggestive mystery remained. The phylacteries were a more exciting find, when it was realized that these are used by a Jew in his morning prayers. The physical object was found around 1820, halfway down a pile of Indian bones in a burial mound. Because of the Hebrew letters contained in the object, Christian scholars from Harvard were consulted, who identified the object for what it was. But how did it get to where it was found? An intensive investigation was carried on to find out if any Jewish traders had been in Pittsfield, if any captured British soldiers held there were Jewish, with negative results. The great Jewish convert, the Rev. Joseph Frey, who gave 30,000 sermons in America, said he had never spoken in Pittsfield, and the phylacteries were not his.

The literature of the period indicates that this discovery was taken very seriously as pointing to the possibility that the Indians were Jewish. No other explanation could be found for the phylacteries being where they were found. The item was deposited with the Massachusetts Historical Society for further study. By now, when some of us would like to see what was discovered, however, the item has been lost. The late Rabbi Arthur Chiel, who wrote an article on the matter, and turned up a lot of literature, some rather incredible, in the period 1820-1825, on the subject, also found that the phylacteries had been in the Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Massachusetts, but that they had disappeared.

The tomb is interesting, but also unlocatable. The important American historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his history of the native races of America, presented a chapter on the origins of the Indians, setting out the prevailing theories. The Jewish Indian theory was taken up, and disproved by Bancroft, but it was described as having strong evidence in its favor. The evidence consisted of the phylacteries and the tomb. The latter, Bancroft said, was discovered by his father, a minister in Ohio. It had Hebrew inscriptions indicating it was from the 1st or 2nd centuries, i.e. Bancroft’s father deposited it in the local historical society, from whence it seems to have disappeared.

The news of physical remains reinforced the believers. One major believer was the Jewish politician, publisher and playwright Mordecai Noah.

62 Alexo de Orrio, Father Francisco Xavier, Solution to the Great Problem of the Population of the Americas, in which are the Basics of the Holy Book There is Discovered an Easy Path for the Transmigration of Men from One Continent to the Other, and How There Could Pass to the New World, not only Beasts of Service, but Also the Wild and Harmful Animals and by This Occasion One Completely Solves The Rarities of the Pre-Adamites, which Rely on the Difficult Objection until Now Not Properly Solved (Mexico, 1763).


64 Edward King, Viscount Kingsborough, Antiquities of Mexico (London, 1830-48), 9 Vols.

65 See Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews or the Tribes in America, 2nd ed. (Poughkeepsie, Vermont, 1825), pp. 217-225.


who has usually been written off as a crank for setting up a Jewish state on Grand Island off Buffalo. To appreciate his role, one has to realize that he was the leading public Jew in the America of his time. He spoke out for Judaism in many ways. He was a public official who became the U.S. consul in Tunis. He received a letter from James Monroe firing him from his position because of his religion. (This is the only such publicly known case in American history.) Noah wrote to Jefferson, Adams and Madison and got them to write statements that Jews were co-equal citizens of the United States and could not be punished or discriminated against officially because of their religion. He also argued publicly with the millenarian Christians who wanted to convert the Jews.

His plan for a Jewish state seems to have grown out of his meeting with the abbé Henri Grégoire in Paris at the end of the Napoleonic era. Elsewhere I have shown that Noah’s Jewish state was planned as a continuation of the Paris Sanhedrin. (Noah did not seem to notice Grégoire’s millenarianism, or his hopes for the conversion of the Jews, and Grégoire defended Noah against the wrath of the chief rabbi of France, who had been one of the leaders of the Paris Sanhedrin, Grand rabbi Cologna.)

Relevant to the theme of this paper is that in Noah’s Jewish state, whose constitution was carefully worked out so it conformed to American law, and allowed co-equal status to non-Jews, all of the Jewish groups in the world were to be invited to rest and prepare for the Messianic Jewish state to come. Included in the invitation were the poor Jews Noah had met in North Africa, the oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe, the fortunate American Jews, the Caraites, and the Jewish Indians. All would be reunited as the Jewish people would come to know each other, to appreciate each other, and to prepare together to go to the ultimate redemptive state in Palestine. I think Noah’s passion for the Caraites came from Grégoire who regarded them as pure Jews, uncorrupted by rabbinical superstitions. The passion for the Indians was Noah’s version of the Jewish Indian theory drawn from Menasseh, Adair, Boudinot and others. He set forth the theory over and over again in public lectures in the United States. It is sad to report that with all of this good wish towards the poor, the oppressed, the benighted Jews everywhere, no Jew, including Noah himself, ever set foot in his Jewish state. It had a rousing inauguration ceremony at Buffalo, with a parade, speeches and music, and it promptly died. Noah was the most prominent Jewish advocate of the Jewish Indian theory, and seemed oblivious to the growing “scientific” opposition.

Another intriguing case of Jewish interest in the Jewish Indian theory appears in the missionary report by the Scottish missionaries who travelled across Europe to the Holy Land trying to convert Jews. As they started out, they stopped in Boulogne. There they met “a very interesting Jew, a person of education and agreeable manners, who spoke English fluently.” The person unfortunately is not named. He had been rich, but had used up his money in travelling for the sake of his brethren”, all over North America, investigating whether the Indians were really descended from the Ten Tribes. He lived with different Indian tribes, learned their languages, adopted their customs. And he came to the negative conclusion, the Indians were not Jews, and now was trying to regain some funds so he could go to Palestine.

A different and more religious version of the Jewish Indian theory, influenced by the “evidence” and by Noah’s views or gained some strength from them, is Mormonism.

The Mormon movement has been described as the first real indigenous American religion, building on the Biblical tradition and the American situation. It claimed new revelatory material that showed that some of the ancient Jews went to America instead of Babylon at the time of the destruction of the First Temple, that Jesus preached to them in America, and that they, the latter-day saints, were the bearers of Christianity and would lead it into the millennium. The Mormon claim is not that all Indians are Jews, but that a remnant of the ancient Hebrews exists in America and will join with the followers of Joseph Smith. The Lost Tribes are not the Indians, but are still hidden somewhere in the Arctic and will reappear at the end of time. Although Mormonism is one of the fastest growing religions, it has not made the Jewish Indian theory more acceptable to “enlightened people” in America or elsewhere.

---

65 These letters are published in Noah, *Travels*, Appendix No. VI, pp. XXV-XXXVI.
69 A.A. Bonar and R.M. McChesney, *Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839* (Edinburgh, 1842), p. 6. I wish to thank Ms. Sara Katchav for calling this to my attention.
anthropologists have moved from Morton’s theory of the indige-
nian, to the Mongolian origin theory, with the forebears of the
Indians having crossed over the Behring Straits about 25,000
years before the present time. The idea that the Mongolians
were the first to cross the Straits is based on the assumption
that they are the ancestors of the modern Siberians. In
the Biblical world, late nineteenth-century anthropology
suggested that the Mongolians were the forebears of the
Indians as well. American developments made them
dispossessed in the country. Nobody would want to relate
the Bible, or to any other group than the Siberians or the Mon-
golian origin theory fell victim to a scientific movement aimed at
the scriptural framework of human history and substituting
one, of migrating peoples. If there were superior providential
they could be British Israelites (a late nineteenth-century claim
Anglo-Saxons are the Lost Tribes) or Aryans. But the easiest
they were measure people by their technical abilities and their
reliance on modern industrial society.

A significant change in the evaluation of peoples left the Jewish Indian
as a joke, an anachronistic hangover from an unfortunate reli-
ance. If anyone still believed it, he or she was a menace to the sci-
end of the millennium, the sense anymore.

collapse of the Jewish Indian theory in the face of nineteenth-
science is a casualty of the war between science and theology. Part
of science has been paid is that we have lost our ability to understand
and significance of the theory for at least two hundred years, and
uate Menasseh ben Israel’s serious contribution to this area. Fur-
as made it difficult or impossible to interpret or evaluate evidence
not fit with the Mongolian origin theory.

Gordon has marshalled a fair amount of evidence in his book Be-
that there were Mediterranean contacts with America going
Phoenician and Roman times. Scientists are afraid to take his
seriously because they see the Jewish Indian theory looming up
ordon has pointed to Phoenician inscriptions in Georgia and
Roman and Hebrew coins found in Central and North America,
their Mediterranean artifacts. He has posed a plausible, non-

Gordon, Before Columbus; Links between the Old World and Ancient America (New York,
Indian in his secular place, as inferior inhabitant of North and South America. Later anthropologists made him a descendant of Mongolians rather than of the original people of Scripture. Only in Mordecai Noah’s version or in Mormonism was there still place for the Indians, or some of them, in providential history. The Jewish Indian theory has become an intellectual pariah to be avoided even if there is evidence in its favor. Even in the present resurgence of millenarian and messianic thought, the American Indians seem to have been left aside, to be accounted for as wanderers from Siberia who have nothing further to contribute. Thus a theory that could have been such a vital explanation and source of hope for two centuries has been discarded as science and American rationalism found other ways of explaining the Indians and their minimal place in history. The displacement of the Jews from national history from the French Revolution until Zionism left no need to relate Jews and Indians. They could both be outcasts in one world or another. The present flowering of Judaism in America and Israel needs no connection with the ancient inhabitants of the New World to account for what is happening. And so, there seems little left for the theory to explain, and little desire to have it explain anything. So perishes the glory of what was an exciting and intriguing theory!

MENASSEH BEN ISRAEL AND THE WORLD OF THE NON-JEW

HENRY MÉCHOUAN

This paper aims to show how Menasheh ben Israel perceived the non-Jewish world in his writings and to examine the language he used and its attendant theological, moral and political connotations. Several authors have brought hardly sympathetic, even unjust judgments to bear on him for they do not consider the rich, difficult and complicated age in which our rabbi lived, and fail to take into account the fact that his discourse was addressed to two kinds of non-Jews: the Christian world on the one hand, and the world of former crypto-Jews on the other. The latter indeed threw off their mask of assumed Catholicism but arrived in Amsterdam from the Iberian Peninsula stripped of all Jewish learning. They confused the observance of a few holidays and Biblical scholarship in its broadest sense with Judaism itself, and they knew no Hebrew even long after having settled there. Menasheh ben Israel had therefore two battles to fight: against the heterodoxy created by his own community (we should not forget that he lived through the huge crises provoked by Uriel da Costa, Spinoza and Juan de Prado), and against Calvinist orthodoxy which made no secret either of its anti-Judaism, nor of its identificatory empathy. With only few exceptions which he emphasizes, Menasheh ben Israel had to constantly confront Christian proselytizing from which he was able to keep his distance with a benevolent and rigorous steadfastness. We must bear in mind that he was the contemporary of Voetius and Hoornbeeck, who were hostile to the Jews and awaited their conversion as an event necessary to the Second Coming.

1 See my introduction to Espéirance d’Israël (Paris, 1979), pp. 37-38. Graetz and Gebhardt are amongst the harshest critics of our rabbi.
2 Menasheh ben Israel, Conclusión . . . (Frankfurt, 1632). Al lector, unpaginated: “Va esta escritura en la pobreza de mi romance porque escrito conforme el tiempo me da lugar, pretendiendo aprovechar a los señores de mi nación española (a quien dedico esta obra) que por la mayor parte carecen de la intelección de la lengua hebrea . . . .” Abraham Pereira, in La Certeza del Comun (Amsterdam, 1666) confesses that he is one of those who do not know Hebrew: “. . . los que carecemos de las sagradas letras” (prologue, unpaginated). See my edition, Hispanidad y judaísmo en tiempos de Espinosa (Salamanca, 1987), p. 103.