

ARE THE INDIANS OF HEBREW ORIGIN?

WILLIAM PENN gave the clue to many subsequent Biblical scholars in declaring that he had found in the American Indians the lost tribes of Israel. The superficial resemblance between the two peoples was so striking that he was led to say: "When I look at their children I imagine myself in the Jewish quarter of London." The Rev. J. Wesley Annas says in *Zion's Herald* (Boston) that as late as 1889 a well-informed representative of the Moskoki tribe, when questioned concerning the legends of his people, replied: "They are all in the Old Testament. Read them there, without the trouble of taking them down from our people." Corroborative of this is the statement of Dr. W. W. Warren in his history of the Ojibway Nation that in response to parts of the Bible which he translated for this people they said: "The book must be true, for our ancestors have told us the same stories for generations." The theory here presented is not new, the "Jewish Encyclopedia" giving the substance of it without pronouncing upon its credibility. The writer meets the objection to the theory based on the great distance between the habitations of the two peoples by citing the books of Esdras:

"They affirm that after the captivity the Hebrews resolved to separate themselves from the heathen and to seek a spot where they might religiously observe the law, for the violation of which they had been so severely punished. Accordingly he reports them to have migrated to a country which was uninhabited, and so far distant that they journeyed for a year and a half, or even more.

"This theory is further supported by the writings of the famous Manassah Ben Israel, who tells us that America and Asia, now separated by Bering Strait, were formerly one continent, and that during this early period these Hebrews penetrated to America by land.

"Adding to these statements the fact that the Indian legends all affirm that their ancestors came into the country from the northwest, and we seem to have three connecting links in the chain of our evidence."

Still more conclusive proof is found in a comparative study of the language, religion, customs, and traditions of the two peoples. Such resemblances as these are noted:

"Like the Hebrews, the Indians, when first visited by the Europeans, were a very religious people, yet they had entirely escaped the idolatry which was common to almost all ancient peoples. They acknowledged but one God—the Great Spirit—and the name by which He was known was 'Ale,' the old Hebrew name for God.

"In their dances they were heard to say distinctly, 'Hallelujah,' or praise to Jah—the very word which was used by the Hebrews themselves.

"They kept annual festivals, which resembled those of the Mosaic ritual. They performed morning and evening sacrifices, and offered of their first-fruits to God. They practised the rite of circumcision, and celebrated a feast like that of Tabernacles. They had 'cities of refuge,' to which even a murderer might flee and be safe.

"The Indians reckoned time in the same manner as the Hebrews, and their year began at the same season. The same superstitions seem to have marked their burial-places, and the same creeds were the rule of their lives, both as to the present and the future.

"The Indians, as well as the ancient Hebrews, lived in tribes ruled by a chief, and their forms of government were almost identical. The clan system of the Indians has preserved a clue to some of the mysterious rites of the early Hebrews. What is now known about the clan system of the Iroquois explains what was formerly mystical about the tribes of Israel.

"Each tribe had a totem, usually some animal, such as a deer, a bear, or a panther. So, also, had the Israelites such a totem, and this explains why, in the blessing of Jacob upon his sons, Judah is surnamed a lion, Dan a serpent, Benjamin a wolf, and Joseph a bough."