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An Introduction to *The Parousia: A Careful Look at the New Testament Doctrine of the Lord's Second Coming*
by **James Stuart Russell** (1878) // Written by **Todd Dennis, Curator**

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History of British Israelism

By Adelaide Revival Center

HISTORY OF BRITISH-ISRAEL (THE AOG SPLIT)

Have you ever noticed that strange statement at the bottom of the Revival Centre 'We Believe' list? The first point starts off, "We believe in the infallibility of the Bible...". Sounds great. A few other beliefs follow. Then, hidden at the bottom, is "We believe the Bible identifies the Anglo-Saxon people with the Old Testament nation of Israel ...". What? Where on earth did they come up with that one!?

In fact, how the Revival Centres inherited this doctrine, called 'British-Israelism', is quite interesting.

Hundreds of years before the first Revival Centre, the first 'British-Israel' manifesto was issued. British-Israelism was first hinted at by the British Member of Parliament, John Sadler, in his *Rights of the Kingdom* (1649). But the movement began in the eighteenth century after the self-styled 'Nephew of the Almighty', Richard Brothers, published his book *A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times* (1794). Brothers was, as one source puts it, "a Canadian madman". He became troubled by visions, and said that the British parliament was the 'beast' of Revelation. Brothers believed he was a descendant of King David, and that only he had the right to be king of England. Unfortunately for him, King George III disagreed. The *Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia* (1994) says:

> Brothers, Richard (1757-1824) British religious fanatic and ex-naval officer, born in Newfoundland, Canada. He announced himself in 1793 as the 'nephew of the Almighty', apostle of a new religion, the Anglo-Israelites. In 1795, for prophesying the destruction of the monarchy, he was sent to Newcastle and subsequently to an asylum.

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Taylor of London expanded the theory into the field of Pyramidology. In the book *The Great Pyramid, Why Was It Built and Who Built It?* John Taylor tried to show how Israelites built the Pyramid of Cheops, and how British Inches and measurements could be found in its design.

In 1928, a man called Tom Foster visited the pyramids of Egypt and seems to have been 'hooked'. When, in 1930, he became 'born again' he retained his ideas about it with a new Christian slant - seemingly taking on these new teachings about Pyramids and Lost Tribes.

Getting in to more modern times, the Revival Centre position on British-Israel can be traced back to the one-time Assembly of God ('AoG') preacher, Leo Harris. Leo was on a Revival tour in Victoria in 1941. He and his brother Allan were staying in the house of a Miss Finlayson, who was very interested in Bible prophecy. She informed them that Tom Foster would be speaking in the Ballarat City Hall on Sunday 30 November, 1941 (3PM). When they found out that the talk would be on British-Israelism, they informed Miss Finlayson that they held opposing views and were not interested. In the end, they went with the elderly lady to satisfy her. They left, after the meeting, thinking it was the end of the matter.

When, however, Tom showed up to their AOG meeting at the Manchester Unity Hall, Leo Harris was quite upset. He told his brother Allan to 'do the courtesies', but Tom stayed behind and eventually got into conversation with Leo. Leo reluctantly agreed to get together with Tom for general fellowship on 1 December, 1941. Now, that morning, Leo became very impressed with Tom's views of Revelation. Over lunch, he also acceded to the British-Israel teaching. Because of these new views, the Assemblies of God no longer accepted Leo Harris in their fellowships.

In 1944-5, Leo came to Adelaide and started up a 'National Revival Crusade Centre' (in 1963 they became known as the 'Christian Revival Crusade'), and taught British-Israel. From Adelaide, Leo Harris planted assemblies in other Australian cities. In 1949, a car salesman named Lloyd Richard Longfield was baptised and 'slain in the Spirit' under Tom Foster. During World War II, Lloyd had been a staff sergeant in the AIF in Egypt. He also had visited the Great Pyramid, and was also 'hooked' (*Voice of Revival*, Vol.14, No.2). From there the story is well known. After disagreements, Lloyd Longfield left the fellowship. With Noel Hollins of Geelong, the "two Victorian Assemblies in 1958 aligned themselves as the Melbourne and Geelong Revival Centres".

We know from old Revival Crusade books that they taught British-Israel and Pyramidology until about 1977. But after Leo Harris' death in that year, British-Israel theology gradually disappeared from their 'belief' list. The Revival Centres International, however, continued to teach British-Israel, and the doctrine was ardently preached by Lloyd Longfield in National Conventions. In 1995, when the Revival Centres split, both the Revival Centres International (Melbourne) and the Revival Fellowship (Adelaide) continued to teach British-Israel.

What do reputable historians and anthropologists say about British-Israelism? The theory can quickly be set aside as having no basis. One anthropologist, Dr. Calvin Kephart, says that the Anglo-Saxons and the Israelites are genetically different races. So, they cannot be the same peoples! In his book, *Races of Mankind* (1961), page 150, he states, "Since the original Hebrews were Kassites, of typically Turkic build, i.e., with tawny complexion, of medial height and stocky build, with prominent nose, and brachycephalous, all efforts to identify Aryan Nordic people of Europe as descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel are doomed to failure. A more futile task is inconceivable".

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