

Father Lafiteau was so much excited by coincidence in sound of some of the Iroquoian names and expressions with the language of the ancient inhabitants of Thrace and Lycia that he based thereon a theory of descent. On similar grounds ancestors of the Indians have been found among the Phœnicians, Scandinavians, Welsh, Irish, Carthaginians, Egyptians, Tartars, Hindus, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, and all the islanders of Polynesia. It is not wonderful that, with the choice of three hundred Indian languages, besides their dialects, from which to make selections of sounds, some one should be likened to some other language, for all spoken languages can in that manner—i. e., by a comparison of vocables—show identity of sound and a percentage of coincidences of significance. Philology now applies more discriminating rules of comparison.

But all arguments that the Indians are descended from the "lost tribes" are demolished by the fact, now generally accepted, that those tribes were not lost, but that most of their members were deported and absorbed, their traces remaining during centuries, and that others fled to Jerusalem and Egypt. If any large number of them had remained in a body, and had migrated at a time long before the Columbian discovery, but later than the capture of Samaria in the seventh century B. C., their journey from Mesopotamia to North America would have required the assistance of miracles that have not been suggested except in the Book of Mormon.

For brevity, the term "Indians" may be used—leaving the blunder of Columbus where it belongs—without iterating their designation as North American, though I shall not treat of the aboriginal inhabitants south of the United States. This neglect of Mexico and Central and South America is not only to observe my own limits, but because some of the peoples of those regions had reached a culture stage in advance of the northern tribes. To avoid confusion, the term "Israelites" may designate all the nation. Although the tribes became divided into the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah, when it is necessary to speak of the northern tribes they may be designated as the kingdom of Samaria. The shortest term, Jews, would be incorrect, as the people now scattered over the world and called "Jews" are chiefly the descendants of the southern branch or fractional part of the children of Israel, and have a special history beyond that common to them and their congeners.

The parallel presented is not selected because its two counterparts are more similar to each other than either of them is to other bodies of people among the races of the earth. A similar parallel can be drawn between both the Indians and the Israelites and the Aryan peoples, from which I and most of my hearers are supposed