

**ETHNOLOGICAL AND PHILOLOGICAL
ESSAYS: I. PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE
AMERICAN INDIANS, II. QUESTION
OF THE SUPPOSED LOST TRIBES OF
ISRAEL**

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Ethnological and Philological Essays: I. Probable Origin of the American Indians, II. Question of the Supposed Lost Tribes of Israel by James Kennedy

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JAMES KENNEDY

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ETHNOLOGICAL
AND
PHILOLOGICAL ESSAYS.

BY
JAMES KENNEDY, Esq., LL.B.
LATE HER MAJESTY'S JUDGE IN THE MIXED COURT AT HAVANA.

- I. PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS.
- II. QUESTION OF THE SUPPOSED LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL.
- III. THE ANCIENT LANGUAGES OF FRANCE AND SPAIN.

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Aut nova aut novè.
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ON THE
PROBABLE ORIGIN
OF
THE AMERICAN INDIANS,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THAT OF THE CARIBS.
BY JAMES KENNEDY, Esq.,
LATE H. B. M.'S JUDGE IN THE MIXED COURT AT HAVANA.
Read before the Ethnological Society the 15th March 1854.

BARON Von Humboldt, in his first work on New Spain (Book II. ch. 6.), has expressed an opinion, which I believe he has never since either retracted or modified, that "the general question of the first origin of the inhabitants of a continent is beyond the limits prescribed to history, and is not perhaps even a philosophical question." To this latter declaration, made by one so justly eminent in literature, I think it becomes our duty to demur, as members of a Society devoted to the study of that new and important science of Ethnology, which takes for its ground of philosophical investigation the origin and relationship of the inhabitants of every portion of the globe. In the pursuit of the inquiries we have in this study to institute, we certainly have often to proceed beyond the limits of history, and often to act independently of it, without, however, at any time conceding our claim to have those questions recognised as philosophical questions: for as we are told in law that circumstantial evidence is sometimes more trustworthy than positive testimony, so our inquiries may sometimes lead to results more satisfactory and convincing than the direct statements of authors, founded, as they often are, on uncertain traditions, or mistaken information. The only history on which we can confidently rely for the correctness of its statements, where a distinct record is given, is that one contained in the Holy Scriptures; and as the fullest investigations have only served to authenticate and verify their statements, the more we take them for our rule and

guidance, the more certain we may feel of our travelling in the right paths.

I venture to make these observations here primarily; 1st, as leading me directly to the arguments which I have to adduce in support of my theories; and 2dly, because the learned Baron, in another part of the same work,³ and again in his last publication, "Cosmos," seems to countenance the ideas of some others, who have held that there were originally various distinct creations of beings of the human race, contrary to our faith that "God hath made of one blood all the nations upon earth." In the same chapter he says "Perhaps this race of copper-coloured men, comprehended under the general name of American Indians, is a mixture of Asiatic tribes, and the aborigines of this vast continent;" as if the two races were essentially distinct from each other, and as if the copper-coloured men, comprehended under the general name of American Indians, with all their mixtures, could not all of them have been only different migrations of Asiatic tribes, earlier or later arrived on the new continent.

In his last work, "Cosmos," Baron Von Humboldt expressly acknowledges the unity of the human species, but he seems at the same time to qualify this admission, by quoting approvingly a passage in the works of John Müller thus, "Whether the existing races of men are descended from one or from several primitive men is a question not determined by experience."

Supposing that the translations from which these quotations are taken have been correctly rendered, it is not clear what these writers require for experience on such matters, or for philosophy itself; but whatever may be their views on these points, I proceed at once to the position I assume, that all the experience we possess, and all the conclusions we can in reasoning deduce from it, only tend to prove the correctness of the account given us in the Mosaic history, taken merely as history.

From this history we learn that the world, after the flood, was peopled from one stock, diverging into three families,

* See Prichard's Origin of the Celtic Nations, page 2.

evidently typifying the three varieties into which we see mankind divided, of which families some one or more of the branches might naturally be expected to carry out their distinguishing characteristics more decidedly than the others, according to circumstances, and yet, at the same time, only form connecting links in a graduated chain which united them in one universal relationship. As the different branches of each family diverged proportionately from each other, they might thus be expected to extend further their peculiar characteristics, until at length the extremes of each would become necessarily the apparent opposites of the others. As in every day's experience in private families we see children of the same parents of very different complexions, so each of them might transmit the different shades to their descendants, until, in the great family of nations, we might expect to find one very fair, another extremely dark, and a third brown or copper-coloured, consistently with the fact of their common origin. In the three continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia, we find three great families of mankind so distinguishable, as white, black, and copper-coloured, with a variety of intermediate gradations, sometimes dependent upon local circumstances, sometimes consequent upon intermarriages, and yet, according to our hypothesis, all arising from natural causes. There are other writers however, who, taking up these differences as radically existing, contend that there are primarily five, or seven, or various greater numbers of races of man, which numbers indeed, if we allowed any real foundation for their suppositions, might be extended to the utmost limit. For thus they might, upon their assumptions, be entitled to divide, not only the dark, but also the white-complexioned people into different races, distinguished by the colour of their hair and eyes, and shades of complexion, which are variations as decided as those they point out among the darker-coloured branches of the human family, though we have become so familiar with those differences amongst ourselves, as to consider them of only minor importance, or of a cognate character.

When, however, we thus find writers of the greatest talents, who have made the human frame their peculiar study, not agreeing amongst themselves as to the conclusions to be drawn respect-

ing the physical history of our species, it may be fairly allowed to those who have not entered professionally into that study to assume, that if there is no certainty attainable in it from their speculations, then the origin of nations becomes a question more peculiarly for philologists to discuss. It is as a philologist therefore alone that I profess to enter upon it, following the course adopted by one of the most eminent in those inquires, our late respected President, Dr. Prichard, in the belief that it is to the study of languages, after all, that we are to look for the most satisfactory elucidation of the question. It is by this means we may best hope to ascertain the affinities of nations, and, tracing the several families of mankind back to their sources, where the branches diverged from their parent stem, may obtain a full confirmation of the belief of their original unity.

In taking for consideration the subject of the probable origin of the American Indians, I trust that these preliminary observations may not be judged inapposite, when so many writers—as Professor Agassiz, Dr. Morton and others—directly, and so many—as Malte Brun, Humboldt, and others—indirectly, have advocated the doctrine of distinct races having been created, like the lower animals, suited peculiarly to particular climates and localities, and have, upon this assumption, assigned for those whom they call the aborigines of America a different origin and creation from the other branches of the human species. Treating of the subject historically, it would certainly have been a great omission to have passed by those theories—without a notice, especially when it is the direct object of my arguments to shew the futility of such speculations by the evidence of facts.

But besides those theories founded upon scepticism under the guise of philosophy, there are others accounting for the origin of the American Indians, which can neither be passed over unnoticed, though we may assign no value to them to require any lengthened remark. The first to which I allude is, that the Indians of America were descendants of antediluvian inhabitants of the world, who were not comprehended in the general destruction of the deluge: the second, that there probably was, in some early period after the deluge,

some great convulsion of nature, as in the days of Peleg, when some writers suppose the earth was divided into its present proportions, previously to which there were direct communications by land over the whole extent of the globe, either on the Atlantic or the Pacific side of the American continent, or both; so that the first ancestors of the American Indians could have reached those shores without any obstacle intervening of an ocean to be crossed over.

The first of these theories may scarcely be thought requiring an answer, though it may receive one as involved in that which the second certainly has reason to claim. To this second theory, then, of the American continent having been, at some early period, joined to the other continents by lands, over which animals as well as men had originally passed, it is alone that I direct a reply. That the world has been, at different periods, subjected to convulsions of sufficient extent to break up any connecting lands that might have formerly existed between Europe and America, or America and Asia, is indubitable from what we have recorded in history, as well as from geological deductions. With the exception, however, of Plato's myth respecting the island Atlantis—on which, notwithstanding the authorities that may be cited in its favour, I do not think any reliance can be placed, as it appears to me to admit of other satisfactory explanations—there is no record or tradition in any part of the world of such changes having been made since the deluge in those particular parts where the connecting lands can be supposed to have existed. If they ever did occur, it must have been at a very early period, which, indeed, is the supposition of those who advocate this theory, to account for the numerous population found by the Spaniards in America, divided into so many distinct nations, speaking entirely distinct languages. If we could not account for this state of the population in America by other more probable means consistent with the habits of man as a migratory being, then we might feel bound to assent to that theory, notwithstanding the absence of all historical authority in its favour. But when we can find facts of constant frequent recurrence, of men seeking voluntarily, or driven violently into new abodes, I think it would be extremely unwise to strain after a