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OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY AND THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL: A Study of the Teaching of Jesus[1]

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A common use of the Old Testament by Christians, almost the only use made of it in some Christian circles, is to search its pages for predictions of events in twentieth-century politics, with a view to plotting their future course and, often, calculating the nearness of the final denouement. This Qumran-like use of Scripture has gained fresh momentum since the official establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. God is at last fulfilling his very longstanding promises of territorial restoration for his covenant people, and many Christians are firmly) convinced that this is the beginning of the end.

At the same time those compulsive spoil-sports, the theologians, and particularly the German ones, seem to be driving an ever thicker wedge between the Jewish people and the Christian church; they assert boldly that the former has no claim on the Old Testament promises, that it is in the Christian church, the true Israel, that those promises are already being fulfilled, that a political state of the people of God has been replaced in Christ by a spiritual kingdom drawn from all nations.

Inevitably the debate is highly charged, both politically and emotionally. Anyone who dares to question the relevance of Old Testament prophecy to the Jewish people of today and the political state of Israel is quickly, and often quite unfairly, charged with anti-Semitism (a strangely inappropriate word when applied to a political conflict in which both sides are overwhelmingly Semitic!). The long history of Christian in-

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justice to Jews seems to place the Christian already in the wrong, and it is not surprising that sensitive Christians are reluctant to appear hostile to Jewish ideals and aspirations. To talk of the Christian church as the true Israel is surely very literally to add insult to injury.

But presumably our theology should not be based on sentiment or on political expediency, but, as far as possible, on objective exegesis. The question we should ask of the view that the church is the true Israel, the inheritor of the Old Testament promises, is not how palatable it is to present-day attitudes, but whether it is a true expression of Christianity's original rationale, as we find it in the thought of the New Testament.

Many have asked that question in recent years.[2] Most of the discussion has centred on Paul, for the very good reason that he is the one New Testament writer who sets out explicitly to unravel the theological problem of the relationship between Israel and the church. Rather than retread this well-travelled ground, this paper aims to go further back, and ask what guidelines Jesus himself gave on this issue. This approach is chosen not only because this is relatively less frequented territory, but also because the attitude of Christianity's founder is surely crucial to the debate. More specifically, I shall concentrate on the saying of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

Any attempt to discuss the teaching of Jesus must first reckon with the question of authenticity. A subject like the relationship of the church with Israel, which was necessarily in the forefront of first-century Christian thought, raises the

[2] Among works which deal more or less directly with the subject, the following appear significant: N.A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (Oslo, 1941); J. Munck, 'Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament', *SNTS Bulletin* 1 (1950), 26-38, reprinted *JTS* 2 (1951), 3-16, and taken further in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (ET, London, 1959) and *Christ and Israel: an Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (ET, Philadelphia, 1967); J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (ET, London, 1958); J. Jocz, *A Theology of Election: Israel and the Church* (London, 1958); W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Mathäusevangeliums* (1959; 3rd ed. München, 1964); G.B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (London, 1965); L. Cerfaux, 'Le peuple de Dieu' & 'La Survivance du Peuple Ancien à la Lumière du NT' in *Populus Dei: Studi in onore del Card. A. Ottaviani* (Roma, 1966) 803-864, 919-926; F.F. Bruce, *This is That* (Exeter, 1968) 51-67; P. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge, 1969); *idem*, 'The Israel-Idea in the Passion Narratives' in *The Trial of Jesus* ed. E. Bammel (London, 1970) 1-10; K.W. Clark, 'The Israel of God' in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* ed. D.E. Aune (Leiden, 1972) 161-169; G.E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1974) 243-261.

question with particular urgency. Matthew in particular clearly had strong views on the question, which have left their mark on his account of Jesus' words and deeds. That being so, have we any right to speak at all about the teaching of Jesus, rather than about that of Mark, Luke and Matthew, and the churches they represent?

The case cannot be argued here. I have given my reasons elsewhere[3] for believing that, while the Synoptic Gospels give ample[4] evidence of deliberate selection, rearrangement and rewording of received sayings to allow a fruitful redaction-critical study, the hypothesis of largescale attribution to the earthly Jesus of sayings which in fact derive from the post-Easter church is both unproved and improbable. That being so, I propose in this paper, with G. E. Ladd, 'to interpret the Gospels as they stand as credible reports of Jesus and his preachings.'[4] The argument of this paper rests not on a few eccentric sayings but on a general orientation in the Synoptic accounts of the teaching of Jesus, and this general orientation seems to me sufficiently clear to survive disagreement over this or that individual saying.

The question before us is, then, what future Jesus saw for the nation to which he and his first disciples belonged. What relationship did he see between Old Testament Israel on the one hand and himself and his disciples on the other? In particular, what reference did he make to Old Testament prophecies about the future of Israel, and where did he look for their fulfilment?

1. *The Note of Fulfilment*

Mark' introduces Jesus' ministry with the declaration, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand'. (Mark 1:15) Luke, makes the same theme even more prominent by opening his account of the ministry with the dramatic episode of Jesus' manifesto in the synagogue at Nazareth, focused on the declaration, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'. (Luke 4:21) At the other end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus sums up his ministry by expounding ‘in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.’ (Luke 24:27, 44-47) Within

[3] “The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus" in *History, Criticism and Faith*, ed. C. Brown, forthcoming from Inter-Varsity Press.

[4] *The Presence of the Future* xiv.

this framework occur a remarkable variety of quotations of and allusions to Old Testament prophecies of all sorts, united by the conviction that in Jesus they are finding their fulfilment. It is a commonplace that while other Jews looked forward to the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes, the New Testament writers looked back and saw them already fulfilled in Christ. The constant occurrence of this idea in the recorded sayings of Jesus suggests that it was with him that this conviction originated.

There are, first and most obviously, the various 'messianic' prophecies appropriated by Jesus. These have been frequently discussed and we can here take them as read. It is relevant to our theme to notice that the messianic figures which occur most prominently in the sayings of Jesus are among the least prominent in the Old Testament, and those least emphasized in later Jewish thought, particularly the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, and the mysterious figures who appear, sometimes in roles of suffering and rejection, in Zechariah 9-13. Strikingly absent from his selection is the traditional picture of the royal Messiah, son of David, the restorer of Jewish political sovereignty: his one reference to the son of David seems specifically intended to play down this aspect of Messiahship (Mark 12:35-37).[5] Two conclusions relevant to this paper therefore suggest themselves. (a) Jesus saw in his own coming the age of fulfilment of the messianic hopes of the Old Testament; the emphasis is on present, not future, fulfilment. (b) His conception of Messiahship had as little as possible to do with the political future of the Jewish nation.

Less often noticed is the fact that Jesus made several references to eschatological prophecies of the Old Testament in which no messianic figure appears. Those prophecies which introduce an individual deliverer other than God himself (which I take to be the definition of 'messianic') are in fact a minority among the eschatological hopes of the Old Testament. More often the judgments and blessings of the age to come are seen as the direct work of God himself. These hopes too

[5] This subject if explored in detail in my *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London, 1971) 97-150; see esp. the summary on pp. 148-150. Much of the material in this paper is a development of lines of thought suggested by the research embodied in *Jesus and the Old Testament,* and rests on the detailed exegesis presented there. In the circumstances, I trust that the frequent footnotes referring to that book will be forgiven.

were referred to by Jesus as finding their fulfilment in his ministry. A few examples will illustrate Jesus' way of applying these prophecies.[6]

His reply to John the Baptist's question about his messianic status (Matt. 11:5) is drawn not only from the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1, but also from Isaiah 35:5-6, part of an account of the idyllic scene when the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion: it is being fulfilled, he implies, in his ministry.[7] When he ejects the traders from the Temple it is with the explicit aim of bringing about Isaiah's vision of the Temple as a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17, quoting Isaiah 56:7); it is generally assumed that he also had in mind Zechariah's vision of a Temple without traders when the day of the Lord comes (Zechariah 14:21). In Mark 9:48 he apparently regards as already present the punishment of the wicked predicted by Isaiah for the time when God makes the new heavens and the new earth (Isaiah 66:24). Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant must have been in his mind when he presented to the disciples his 'blood of the covenant', whether or not we accept the longer text of Luke 22:19-20 with the explicit phrase 'the new covenant'. When he announced that his mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) he was, surely consciously, echoing Ezekiel's description of God as the shepherd who will rescue his scattered flock (Ezekiel 34, esp. verses 16, 22). And more than once he referred to John the Baptist as fulfilling Malachi's prediction of God's messenger, and of the returning Elijah, who will usher in the day of the Lord's coming to judgment (Mal 3:1, 23-24, referred to in Mark 9:12-13; Matthew 11:10,14).

It is never easy to pronounce which of the predictions of the Old Testament prophets should be regarded as 'eschatological', and which refer more specifically to the immediate future of the prophet's own day. Ultimately the distinction is probably a false one, at least from the point of view of the prophet's own perspective. But in as far as any prophecies may be singled out as looking beyond the immediate future to God's ultimate intervention to deliver his people and to create a new order of peace and blessing, most, if not all, of

[6] For further details see my *Jesus and the Old Testament* 88-97.

[7] Further possible allusions to Isaiah 26;19 and 29:18-19 in this saying would be on the same principle.

those mentioned above would occur in the list. That they were so understood in Jesus' day seems certain. And it is these prophecies which Jesus quotes as finding their fulfilment in his time and through his ministry. None of these passages mentions as individual Messiah, but this does not inhibit Jesus' appropriation of them. The inevitable conclusion seems to be that Jesus presented his ministry as the fulfilment of the whole future hope of the Old Testament, the day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah. Even where the original reference seems to be focused on a political restoration of God's people (so esp. in Isaiah 35) Jesus can find the fulfilment in his own ministry.

There are, of course, some cases where Jesus looks to the future for a fulfilment of certain Old Testament prophecies. But it is a remarkable fact that these are apparently entirely prophecies of judgment. Thus he expects a future judgment on the basis of Daniel 7:13-14 and of other passages like Joel 4:1-12 and probably Zechariah 14:1-5. (So esp. Matthew 25: 31ff, also 19:28; Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62.) In this judgment, whether it comes within the living generation or at the end of all things, Jesus himself is the central figure, the judge and the king. It is an extension of his eschatological ministry already begun on earth. But I have found no instance where Jesus expects a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy other than through his own ministry, and certainly no suggestion of a future restoration of the Jewish nation independent of himself. He himself is the fulfilment to which Old Testament prophecy points, the ultimate horizon of the prophetic vision.

2. *The Note of Warning*

J. Carmignac has recently argued[8] that the rather unexpected popular identification of Jesus with Jeremiah in Matthew 16: 14 is to be accounted for by the reputation of Jeremiah as a prophet of doom. In contrast with the fierce optimism of the apocalyptic hopes of Qumran, Jesus, with his constant warnings and threats of both personal and national disaster, must have seemed to his contemporaries a second Jeremiah, a one-man opposition to the nationalist hopes of his fellow-citizens.

[8] In *Tradition and Glaube: Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn*, ed. G. Jeremias *et al*. (Göttingen, 1971) 283-298.

If the Gospel records are to be trusted, this is hardly an exaggeration.

Several times Jesus is recorded as condemning 'this generation' for their stubborn lack of faith (e.g. Matthew 12:39; 16:4; 17:17; cf. 12:34). Frequently he takes up phrases from the invective of the Old Testament prophets against the ungodly attitude of Israel, and directs them against his own contemporaries. Thus he uses Isaiah's vineyard parable (Mark 12:1 is drawn in some detail from Isaiah 5:1-2), Jeremiah's 'den of robbers' (Mark 11:17, from Jeremiah 7:11), Hosea's attack on superficial worship (Hosea 6:6, quoted in Matthew 9:13; 12:7), and Moses' 'perverse and crooked generation' (Deuteronomy 32:5, alluded to in Matthew 17:17). He even goes so far as to state that two of Isaiah's denunciations, aimed originally at his eighth-century contemporaries, were in fact prophecies about his own hearers (Mark 7:6-7, quoting Isaiah 29:13; Mark 4:12, alluding to Isaiah 6:9-10, with the fulfilment formula of Matthew 13:14).

'This generation' then is in rebellion against God, and it follows from the perspective of the Old Testament prophets that it is ripe for judgment. John the Baptist had already come with an eleventh-hour warning ('Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees'), and had issued his urgent call to repentance. Jesus took up this theme: 'Unless you repent you will all likewise perish,' he warned those who told him of Pilate's ruthless slaughter (Luke 13:1-5). There is a note of urgency about his mission to Israel, seen most strikingly in the instructions to the Twelve to travel light, not to waste time in greetings, and to keep moving on without staying to plead with the unresponsive (Mark 6:8-12 and parr.; Matthew 10:23).[9] This is the last chance to repent; if it is refused now it will be too late (Luke 19:42-44).

But Jesus' ministry was not far advanced before it became clear that it would be refused. Israel as a whole rejected his message, and would not repent. There follows the certainty of judgment, which is to fall upon 'this generation'; indeed, this generation must bear not only its own sins but the cumulative punishment for all the martyred prophets since Abel (Luke 11:49-51). Not only does Jesus pronounce woes against the unbelieving towns of Galilee, comparing them un-

[9] See G.B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation,* 8ff.

favourably with the notorious heathen cities of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, and predicting for them a more devastating judgment even than these (Matthew 11:21-24). His attention focuses primarily on Jerusalem, the heart of the life of the Jewish nation and, he implies, the centre of its rebellion against God.

He sets off for the capital to die, 'for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem' (Luke 13:33). This grim irony leads on in Luke's version to the first of a series of laments over the fate of Jerusalem, which is now inevitable: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken.' (Luke 13:34-35)[10] More poignantly still, he weeps as he sees the city which has failed to see 'the things that make for peace', and predicts its total destruction, 'because you did not know the time of your visitation.' (Luke 19:41-44). And even as he is on the way to execution, he warns the women of Jerusalem that they should not weep for him, but for themselves and their children: the coming anguish will be far greater, 'for if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?' (Luke 23:28-31)

But it is on the Temple in particular that his message of doom is centred. The expulsion of the traders from the Temple, to which so many interpretations have been given, must include at least a violent expression of Jesus' repudiation of the way the Jerusalem authorities were conducting the worship of God, and Mark, by recording the incident between the two parts of the story of the cursing of the figtree (which is generally interpreted as a symbol of judgment on unfruitful Israel: see below), has made it clear that he regards the episode as an act of judgment on the worship of rebellious Israel.[11] That he actually threatened the destruction of the Temple itself was one of the charges at his trial (Mark 14:58; *cf.* 15:29). While such a threat

[10] See below p.76 for the suggestion that the following words may imply a future favourable response by some of the nation. If so, and the exegesis is far from certain, this in no way detracts from the certainty of the imminent fate of Jerusalem.

[11] See R.J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Oxford, 1969) 65-66; B. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1965) 107-108.

is necessarily implicit in his predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem, a more specific threat, coupled with the promise of restoration in three days, is demanded by the accusations. John has preserved a saying to this effect in connection with the cleansing of the Temple (John 2:19), which we shall consider later. But the threat (although without the promise of restoration) is preserved in considerable detail in the three Synoptic accounts of Jesus' so-called 'Apocalyptic Discourse' (Mark 13; Matthew 24; Luke 21). While estimates of the extent to which this discourse refers to the destruction of Jerusalem vary, there can be no doubt that this is its primary theme. First comes the disciples' admiration of the Temple, and Jesus' reply that 'there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down,' which in turn gives rise to the disciples' question when this will happen. It is in answer to this question that the discourse is given. I have argued elsewhere[12] that the whole discourse up to verse 31 (Mark) refers to this event, and it is only with verse 32 that an eschatological reference comes in. Be that as it may, there is enough material of undisputed reference in the discourse to justify us in regarding the coming destruction of the Temple as a prominent theme in the Synoptic accounts of the teaching of Jesus.

In it is no wonder that Jesus could be compared with Jeremiah, as a prophet of doom. Of course he did not gloat over the coming disaster: it was his own people whose downfall he predicted, and he did it in grief not in triumph. But the verdict, however unpalatable, is clear: the rebellion of God's people has culminated in their rejection of his last call to repentance, and they are on the edge of disaster.

3. *The Rejection of the Jewish Nation?*

Jeremiah had predicted disaster, and it had come, but that was not the end of God's covenant with his people, and he had restored them again. Their whole history had been one of rebellion and its punishment, followed by restoration by their covenant God. So when Jesus again predicted God's judgment on his people, is there any reason to see this as anything more than another temporary punishment? Did not

[12] *Jesus and the Old Testament* 227-239.

Jesus, like Jeremiah, see hope for the nation after the judgment? Is there any warrant for the common Christian conclusion that Jesus saw this as Israel's *final* punishment, their rejection from the status of the chosen people of God, to be superseded by an new 'Israel'?

In view of Jesus' constant sparring with the leaders of the nation, it is not surprising that a good deal of his threatening language applies specifically to them. There can be little doubt that the tenor of his remarks adds up to a rejection of their leadership of the people of God. Typical is his remark about the Pharisees: 'Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up' (Matthew 15:13); Isaiah had spoken of the true Israel as God's plant (61:3; *cf*. 60:21), so this is tantamount to denying them a place in the true Israel. Several of the parables point to the same conclusion. But Israel's leaders had failed before, and had been rejected and replaced by others. To pronounce the rejection of the Pharisees or of the priestly hierarchy is not necessarily to declare the whole nation rejected.

The scope of Jesus' predictions of judgment seems, however to extend more widely. He foresees nothing less than the total destruction of the Temple, of Jerusalem as a whole, and even of country towns like Bethsaida and Capernaum. And there is in his warnings an inescapable note of finality. The blood of all the prophets from the beginning will be required of this generation: it is the final reckoning. The Lucan version of the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem contains the solemn words, ‘These are the days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written’ (Luke 21:22). The note of climax we have seen in Jesus' declaration that in him all the hopes of the Old Testament were finding fulfilment is paralleled by this idea of the coming disaster as the culmination of all Israel's rebellion. Matters have come to a head, for good and evil.

It may be a coincidence, but it is an intriguing one, that Jesus' predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem contain echoes of prophetic warnings of each of the three most devastating national disasters of the past. Luke 23:30 echoes Hosea's graphic description of the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC (Hosea 10:8); Matthew 23:38 echoes Jeremiah's vision of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC (Jeremiah 22:5; possibly also Jeremiah 12:7); and Daniel's account of

Antiochus' desecration of the Temple in 167 BC provides both the phrase 'abomination of desolation' (Mark 13:14, echoing Daniel 11:31, 12:11) and the idea of the trampling of Jerusalem for a limited period (Luke 21:24, based on Daniel 8:13).[13] The bringing together of these three national disasters as foreshadowings of the one great judgment to come may be a further indication that this is to be the final and culminating disaster. Jesus' use of Old Testament types frequently includes this note not only of a repetition of the pattern of God's working in the past, but of a repetition on a higher plane, a culmination of what has gone before in God's final, decisive work of judgment and of salvation.

The note of finality is even stronger in the metaphors used in Mark 13:24-25 in connection with the fall of Jerusalem.[14] The words of these two verses are drawn from two Old Testament passages, Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4, which are predictions respectively of the fall of Babylon and of Edom. Here, as in many prophetic oracles, astronomical metaphors are used to depict catastrophic changes in the life of nations, and in both it is apparently the *final* destruction of the nations concerned that is in view. Jesus' application of this prophetic imagery to the coming destruction of Jerusalem suggests a similar prediction of its final eclipse.

All this adds up to more than a hint that this time Israel's rebellion has gone too far, and that the nation is heading for the final showdown. But it is in some of Jesus' parables that this message becomes most explicit. The most obvious is the parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard (Mark 12:1-9), which clearly recapitulates the history of Israel's rejection of the prophets, and sees in their final rejection of 'the son' the last straw, which will lead to their destruction, and the choice of new tenants for God's vineyard.[15] The primary target of the parable was, of course, the Jerusalem establishment (Matthew

[13] For details of these allusions see my *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 71-73. On Luke 21:24 see further below pp. 74ff.

[14] See my *Jesus and the Old Testament* 227-239 for the exegesis of Mark 13 as referring to the fall of Jerusalem as far as verse 31. Verses 24-25 are dealt with *ibid*. 4, 233-234.

[15] See L. Cerfaux, *Populus Dei* 829-832 (see p.1 n.1 above) for a defence of this 'allegorical' interpretation as Jesus' original intention. The vineyard, surely an original feature of the parable if any of it is, must inevitably have indicated to an audience familiar with Isaiah 5.1ff that the parable was about the fortunes, and failure, of God's chosen people.

specifies the chief priests and Pharisees, Luke the scribes and chief priests), who 'perceived that he had told the parable against them.' But was it only against the *leaders*? Is a divorce between leaders and led, however convenient, a realistic way to interpret Jesus' message? Notice again the note of finality in the parable. Is it an adequate exegesis of this to regard the transfer of the vineyard to new tenants as a manifesto merely for a change of government in Jerusalem? Certainly Matthew did not so understand it, for he includes the unambiguous interpretation, 'Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a *nation* producing the fruits of it.' (Matthew 21:43)[16]

Matthew has further reinforced the message of this parable by framing it between two others with a similar force. The parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32), aimed specifically at the chief priests and elders who questioned Jesus' authority, teaches that it is not profession which matters, but performance, and that on this basis 'the tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.' The parable of the Great Supper (Matthew 22:1-14) shows the rejection, by their own refusal, of those first invited to God's banquet, and their replacement by a motley collection from the streets, and throws in for good measure the destruction of the first invitees and the burning of their city. The total impact of the three parables is devastating, and while the focus is undeniably on the Jewish *leaders*, Matthew at least clearly implies that their rejection involves the rejection of the Jewish nation as a whole, and their replacement as God's people by those they despised.

Matthew, then understood Jesus in this sense. But was it only Matthew? Just before the three parables mentioned comes the strange episode of the cursing of the figtree, and this is not only in Matthew but in Mark (11:12-14, 20-22). This is commonly regarded as a prophetic action, and Mark, by reporting the cleansing of the Temple between the beginning and ending of the story, has given an indication of his understanding of it in this sense, with reference to God's judgment on Jerusalem. The same sense probably attaches to the parable of the unfruitful figtree recorded by Luke (13:6-9).[17]

[16] For Matthew's understanding of the parable see more fully W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel* 65.

[17] Notice the context, immediately after Jesus' warning that 'unless you repent you will all likewise perish'. For the use of the fig as a metaphor for Israel in the quality of its response to God *cf.* Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 24:1-10.

Thus while the idea of a final judgment on the Jewish nation particular importance to Matthew, it would be rash to attribute its origin to him. We have seen evidence of this theme more generally distributed through the Synoptic tradition, which would suggest that it originated with Jesus.

The other side of this coin is the idea of the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God, now that the Jewish monopoly is ended. This has been clearly hinted at in the parable of the Great Supper, where the servants bring in the outcasts from the streets to the banquet. It is presumably also implied in the 'others' to whom the vineyard is to be let out after the failure of the original tenants. It becomes devastatingly explicit in Jesus' saying recorded by Matthew on the occasion of the Gentile centurion's remarkable confession of faith, Matthew 8:11-12. Found in different contexts in Matthew and Luke, in formally distinct but equally trenchant forms, this saying can not be passed off as a Matthean creation.[18] In it Jesus predicts the coming of 'many from east and west' to sit at the banquet with the Hebrew patriarchs, while the 'sons of the kingdom' are thrown out. In the Matthean context of the Gentile centurion whose faith Jesus found superior to that of any in Israel, these 'many' must be the Gentiles, while the ‘sons of the kingdom’ would be understood to mean the Jews, who regarded themselves as the rightful inheritors of the kingdom and guests at the banquet. So here the complementary aspects of Jewish rejection and Gentile inclusion come explicitly together. The loss of the Jews privileged status as the exclusive people of God could hardly be put more clearly.

Further indication of Jesus' intention that Gentiles should be included in the true people of God may be found in his citation of the examples of Elijah and Elisha as giving Gentiles preference over equally needy Israelites (Luke 4:25-27); in his cleansing of the Temple to be a house of prayer 'for all the nations' (Mark 11:17); and in his prediction of the gathering

[18] J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* 56, argues for the early date of the saying on the grounds of its overwhelming Jewishness both in thought and expression. This is not, of course, a decisive argument for its authenticity as a saying of Jesus; this would depend more on its coherence with the general tenor of Jesus' teaching which is the subject of this paper.

of the elect from all the corners of the earth (Mark 13:27) after the gospel has first been preached to all nations (Mark 13:10). Jeremias has built up a strong case for Jesus' expectation of an 'eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles to the mountain of God', based on the Old Testament:[19] though whether 'eschatological' should be understood here as meaning 'not yet' is doubtful in view of the note of *current* fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus outlined above. But that Jesus saw the true people of God as henceforth transcending national boundaries is clear, and the evidence reviewed in this section indicates that together with this positive aspect went the negative, that the Jewish nation as such could no longer claim to be the people of God.

4. *Jesus as the True Israel*

Christian claims to be the true Israel often contain the assertion that it was in Jesus, the one true servant of God in contrast with the disobedience of the rest of the nation, that Israel's ideal was realized and its destiny achieved, that the people of God became focused in this one true Son of God, so that Jesus is Israel, and it is to this fact that the Christian church, the body of those who are 'in Christ', owes its status as the people of God.

In reply to this claim it is rightly pointed out that Jesus is nowhere called 'Israel' in the New Testament. But that is hardly a sufficient answer. Are there other indications of this way of thinking?[20]

Jesus was tried on the charge that he claimed to be 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:2, 26, 32, etc.). No such claim is recorded, and it is unlikely that Jesus would have used such 'political' language explicitly, though his deliberate enactment of Zechariah 9:9 ('Lo, your king comes to you') when he rode into Jerusalem points that way, and Luke tells us that the

[19] *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, chapter III.

[20] P. Richardson, 'The Israel-Idea in the Passion Narratives' 6-8, dismisses a series series of Christological titles and themes, and even 'the Old Testament allusions and quotations as Jesus used them' as 'marginal to the question we raise'. He considers only the title 'King of the Jews' and the references to Isaiah 53, and concludes that the evangelists did not regard Jesus as 'Israel'. But can the allusions to the Old Testament be so easily disregarded? Richardson's discussion of Jesus' teaching in *Israel in the Apostolic Church* 48-69 is similarly selective, and pays insufficient attention to the implications of Jesus' use of Old Testament passages.

crowd so interpreted it (Luke 19:38). But he did make explicit use, of two other Old Testament figures, the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah and the Son of Man in Daniel 7, both of which, like the king in Old Testament thought, combine individual and representative features. Just as the king was Israel, so the Servant is addressed as 'Israel', and the Son of Man turns out in the latter part of the chapter to be a figure for 'the saints of the Most High'. Jesus' frequent allusions to these two figures[21] suggests that he saw it as his mission to represent Israel, to sum up Israel's ideals in himself. C. H. Dodd concludes from Jesus' use of the Servant idea: 'The Messiah is not only founder and leader of the Israel-to-be, the new people of God; he is its "inclusive representative". In a real sense he is the true Israel, carrying through in his own experience the process through which it comes into being.'[22]

But we have more to go on than inferences from the 'messianic' passages Jesus chose to explain his mission. The Synoptic Gospels give some evidence of a tendency by Jesus to apply to *himself*, without further explanation, Old Testament texts which originally referred to *Israel*.[23]

The most obvious case is the use of three texts from Deuteronomy 6-8 by Jesus in the Temptation narrative. All three are concerned with the experiences of Israel, particularly the lessons which Israel should have learned from the years of testing in the desert (see esp. Deuteronomy 8:2-3). Their relevance to Jesus at this time was surely more than the mere coincidence of a desert location. The selection of three texts from the same short section of the Old Testament indicates that he saw a theological parallel between Israel's experience and his own. Israel had been disciplined 'as a man disciplines his son' (Deuteronomy 8:5), but had not learned the lessons well. Now Jesus, newly declared 'Son of God' at the Jordan, has that sonship tested along similar lines. But where Israel failed, Jesus proves to be a true Son of God. In him Israel's promis is fulfilled. 'L'histoire d'Israël est assumée par lui et portée à son accomplissement.'[24]

[21] See my *Jesus and the Old Testament* 110-148 for a detailed discussion of their importance in his view of his own mission.

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[22] *The Founder of Christianity* (London, 1971) 106.

[23] The remainder of this section is based on my Jesus and the Old Testament 50-60, where points are argued in detail which must here be taken as read.

[24] J. Dupont, *NTS* 3 (1956/7) 304. Dupont's article, *ibid* 287-304, is a valuable

Another Israel text probably applied by Jesus to himself is Hosea 6:2, Israel's hope of restoration 'on the third day'. More than once Jesus claimed scriptural authority for the prediction that he would rise 'on the third day' (Luke 18:31-33; 24:46; *cf*. the 'must' of Mark 8:31; Luke 24:7). While this could be derived from a typological understanding of the experience of Jonah (Jonah 2:1 (EVV 1:17); *cf*. Matthew 12:40), it is widely accepted that Hosea 6:2, which is verbally closer to Jesus' predictions of his resurrection, was a major source of this conviction.[25] Hosea 6:1-6 is all about Israel's (abortive) hope of national 'resurrection'. Jesus could only apply it to himself if he saw himself as in some way the heir to Israel's hopes. 'The resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of Israel of which the prophet spoke.'[26]

Similarly on several occasions Jesus saw his own experience in the light of psalms which probably related originally to the suffering and vindication of Israel. The clearest of these is Psalm 118, quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:10-11 and Matthew 23:39. The rejected and vindicated stone of Psalm 118:22 seems to have referred originally to a dramatic victory of Israel against the odds. Psalms 22, 41 and 42-3 (quoted or alluded to in Mark 15:34; 14:18; 14:34 respectively) are expressed in more individual terms, and may have been used by Jesus as typical expressions of the theme of righteous suffering, but a national reference in such individually worded Psalms is widely agreed.

The evidence that Jesus regarded himself as the true Israel is not overwhelming. But some such idea is needed to do justice to the use of the Old Testament in the passages we have been considering, if we are not to credit Jesus with a blithe unconcern for the context and original meaning of the passages he referred to. Such an idea would fit in well with the other themes of Jesus' teaching outlined in this paper, and with the varied use of Israel-language with reference to Jesus in the rest of the New Testament.[27]

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discussion of the typology involved in the Temptation narrative. *Cf*. also J.A.T. Robinson, 'The Temptations' in *Twelve NT Studies* (London, 1962) 53-60; G.H.P. Thompson, *JTS* 11 (1960) 1-12.

[25] See e.g. B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London, 1961) 60ff; M. Black, *ZNTW* 60 (1969) 4-5.

[26] C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952) 103; *cf ibid* 77.

[27] See C.F.D. Moule, *NTS* 14.(1967/8) 300 for 'a great convergence of Israel-

5. *The Church as the True Israel*

Jesus never called his disciples 'the true Israel', nor is such an expression used for the church anywhere in the New Testament. But again we need to examine the language used about his disciples, and particularly the use of Old Testament words and passages, to see whether Jesus gave any countenance to the idea.

A common Old Testament metaphor for Israel is the flock of God. Jesus frequently takes this up, picturing himself as the shepherd, and his followers as the flock. In Luke 12:32 he addresses them as the 'little flock' to whom the Father will give the kingdom. He takes up Zechariah's picture of the smitten shepherd, and applies it to himself and to his disciples as 'the scattered sheep (Mark 14:27, quoting Zechariah 13:7). Thus an Old Testament figure for Israel is applied specifically and exclusively to the disciples.

Another interesting use of Israel-language is in Matthew 5:48. The Sermon on the Mount is, of course, full of Old Testament language, and the grounding of the Christian cornnuinity on Old Testament ethics is taken for granted. This by itself does not prove that Jesus saw the church as the true Israel, but merely that he regarded the Old Testament law as applicable outside the limits of the nation. But in Matthew 5:48 the obligations of membership of the Christian community are summed up in an echo of a formula which occurs several times in Leviticus with specific reference to the obligations of Israel as the covenant people of God: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy' (Leviticus 19:2; *cf.* 11:44, 45; 20:7). Leviticus 20:26 bases this demand on the fact that 'I have separated you from the peoples; that you should be mine.' Its appropriation for the Christian community may imply a parallel status.

The word *ecclesia* occurs only twice in the teaching of Jesus, and it is commonly dismissed as a Matthean term. It is the regular LXX translation of *qahal*, one of the two main terms for the 'community' of Israel, and its use presumably implies a parallel between Israel and the Christian community

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titles and other collectives' which is 'a symptom of an estimate of Jesus as incomarably more than the mere verifier of predictions. This marks him as, in the estimate of Christians, the climax of the pattern of true covenant-relationship.'

as the assembly of God's people. But did Jesus have any intention of founding a 'church' in this sense? If Matthew 16:18-19 is authentic, he certainly did, and G.E. Ladd has argued persuasively for the authenticity of the passage, and therefore both of the term *ecclesia* and of the idea of the Christian community as God's true *qahal* as deriving from Jesus.[28] The subject is too complex to discuss here, but it is relevant to notice the main point of Ladd's argument, that 'the saying in Matthew 16:18f is consistent with Jesus' total teaching. In fact, the saying expresses in explicit form a basic concept underlying Jesus' entire mission.'[29]

Consistent with this view is Jesus' choice of twelve disciples as the inner circle of his followers. The number was presumably not accidental, and Matthew 19:28 makes the point clear: 'In the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' The influence of Daniel 7 is clear in this saying, particularly the reign of 'the saints of the Most High' which is the climax of that chapter. In Daniel it was Israel as a whole which was to receive dominion; in this saying it is Jesus himself as Son of Man who sits on the throne, and derivatively the twelve leaders of the community of his followers. The twelve tribes over whom they rule (assuming that 'judge' carries its frequent Old Testament sense of 'govern') are the ideal Israel of the age to come, perhaps, but not certainly, to be identified as the church. If there is uncertainty about the details of the exegesis, at least it is clear that the Christian community was provided with a leadership of twelve in deliberate parallel to the twelve tribes of Old Testament Israel.

The Israel-language we have considered so far in this section has related primarily to Israel *as a whole*. The Old Testament also contains the idea of a godly minority within the nation, the 'remnant', and this language too is found in Jesus' sayings about his disciples. The Beatitudes, for instance, apply to them the terms 'poor' and 'meek', standard Old Testament terms for the godly minority. Matthew 5:5 clearly echoes the promise of Psalm 37:11 that 'the meek shall possess the land', which is tantamount to identifying his disciples with the

[28] *The Presence of the Future* chapter 10, esp. 244-246, 258-261.
[29] *Ibid* 258-259.

godly. minority envisaged in that psalm. The same idea is probably present in the designation 'little flock' mentioned above.

The Christian community, then, is in direct line of succession from the true people of God in Old Testament times. Talk of a 'new' Israel is inappropriate. But Jesus seems to have thought along more radical lines than a mere spring-cleaning of the old order.

This may be seen, for instance, in his sayings about the Temple. He predicted, as we have seen, that it was soon to be destroyed. Later New Testament thought sees its replacement in the Christian church, God's true temple.[30] Did this idea originate with Jesus? His alleged predictions of the destruction of the Temple, whether by himself or others, include the note of rebuilding 'in three days' (Mark 14:58; 15:29; *cf.* John 2:19). John is probably right to interpret this saying as at least in part a cryptic reference to his own resurrection (John 2:21-22), but the relevant point here is that Jesus looked not only for the destruction of the Temple, but for its replacement, and that replacement was to be centred on himself. Some such idea may well lie behind the cleansing of the Temple,[31] and it is clear in the saying 'Something greater than the temple is here' (Matthew 12:6), where in context the ‘something greater’ must be Jesus himself in his messianic authority. The institution of a new covenant 'in his blood' (Mark 14:24 etc.) is a further indication that he regarded his death as rendering the sacrificial worship of the Temple obsolete. While there is in the sayings of Jesus no explicit identification of the Christian community as the 'new temple', there is enough evidence of Jesus' thinking in this direction to lead Gärtner to conclude, 'He transferred the activities of the temple from Jerusalem to another entity. This entity was Jesus himself and the group around him as Messiah . . . A new fellowship with God would be set up through his death and resurrection; in effect he himself would become the replacement for the temple.'[32] From this it is not a long step to the

[30] See R.J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Oxford, 1969) for a detailed study of this theme.

[31] See B. Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the NT* (Cambridge, 1965) 110-111; R.J. McKelvey, *op. cit.* 65-67.

[32] *Op. cit.* 114. Gärtner, *ibid* 105-122, and McKelvey, *op. cit.* 58-74, give full documentation for this understanding of Jesus' teaching.

New Testament view of the church as God's true temple.

This 'radicalism' in Jesus' view of the impact of his ministry is focused in one of his most deliberately significant acts, the institution of the Lord's Supper. Variation in the wording of the different records does not affect the central point, that he presented the wine as his 'blood of the covenant'. Whether or not the actual phrase 'new covenant' is taken to be original (with 1 Cor 11:25 and the longer text of Luke 22:20), Jeremiah's new covenant prophecy (31:31-34) was undoubtedly in his mind. The phrase 'blood of the covenant' (in Mark and Matthew) alludes to Moses' words in Exodus 24:8, the covenant ceremony from which Israel's status as the people of God stemmed. It is this covenant that Jeremiah said would have to be replaced, and this Jesus is doing, sealing it with the sacrifice of his own death. It is his people, redeemed by his death, who 'do this in remembrance of him', who are the beneficiaries of this new covenant. It is they who are now the true people of God.

Two elements in the teaching of Jesus must therefore be held in balance, Israel, as represented by the Jewish nation of his day, can no longer be called the people of God, and a new covenant community is taking its place. Yet there is not a complete break, for this new community is the godly remnant of Israel, in whom all Israel's hopes and ideals are coming to fulfilment. 'The new community is still Israel; there is continuity through the discontinuity. It is not a matter of replacement but of resurrection.'[33]

One final point is of direct relevance to the question from which our enquiry began. On more than one occasion Jesus alluded to Old Testament predictions of the regathering of Israel from exile to their own land. After what we have seen, it should not surprise us to discover that he applied these prophecies not to the Jewish nation, but to a people of God gathered from all nations. Matthew 8:11-12, which, as we have seen, predicts the gathering of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, and even declares that the (Jewish) 'sons of the kingdom' will be excluded, uses language which finds its closest verbal parallels in passages about the return of scattered *Israel* to their land (Psalm 107:3; Isaiah 43:5-6; 49:12). Mark 13:27, whether it applies, as I believe, to the

[33] C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* 90.

period subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem, or, as it is commonly interpreted, to an eschatological event, uses phrases from Deuteronomy 30:4 and Zechariah 2:10 (EVV 2:6) in its description of the future gathering of 'the elect' from all over the world; both these Old Testament passages referred also originally to the regathering of exiled *Israel*. The Matthean version of the same saying (Matthew 24:31) also includes in the 'loud trumpet' a possible allusion to Isaiah 27:13, a passage with a similar original reference.[34]

It seems, therefore, that, far from looking for some future regathering of the Jewish people to Palestine, Jesus actually took Old Testament passages which originally had that connotation, and applied them instead to the gathering of the Christian community from all nations, even, in one case, to the exclusion of some Jews! This is a graphic illustration of the conclusion towards which this section has been leading, that Jesus 'saw in the circle of those who received his message the sons of the Kingdom, the true Israel, the people of God . . . who, having received the messianic salvation, were to take the place of the rebellious nation as the true Israel.'[35]

6. *Israel and the Jews*

Our results so far suggest a quite consistent orientation in Jesus' teaching about 'Israel'. The Jewish people, and particularly their leaders, have not lived up to their calling as God's chosen people. Their rejection of Jesus' appeal is the climax of their continued acts of rebellion, and their last chance to repent has been lost. They now face not only a temporary punishment such as they often received in the Old Testament period, but the final loss of their privileged status. At the same time, in Jesus himself the hopes and promises of Old Testament Israel are all coming to their fulfilment. He represents Israel as it should have been, and in him, and derivatively in his disciples, the true people of God is now located. Membership of God's people is no longer a matter of race. There is a place now for Gentiles alongside the minority of the Jewish nation who have responded to Jesus' teaching and become the nucleus of the Israel of the messianic age. As John the Baptist had already declared, descent from Abraham is now

[34] For details of these allusions see my *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 63-64.
[35] G.E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 261.

essentially irrelevant. The people of God are those who repent and believe the gospel, and bear fruits that befit repentance, and these are qualities which are open to Gentiles as well as to Jews.

There was, of course, never anything anti-Jewish about Jesus' teaching or practice. If his actions sometimes raised orthodox eyebrows, he was undoubtedly a faithful Jew with a profound respect of the Old Testament law. There is no suggestion that his disciples should become any the less truly Jewish as a result of their Christian profession: rather the opposite. He directed his mission almost exclusively to the Jews, and instructed his disciples to concentrate there too. He loved his nation, and mourned over its rejection of his message. There is nothing vindictive about his warnings of judgment on Jerusalem. But the fact remains that his teaching forbids us to regard the Jewish nation as a whole any longer as the true Israel. It is in Jesus, and in those who follow him, of whatever race, that Israel's destiny is to be fulfilled.

Whatever may be thought about individual sayings, this overall pattern of thought is clearly present throughout the teaching of Jesus as the Synoptic Gospels present it.

What then is the future of the Jewish nation, according to Jesus? In particular, does Jesus give any encouragement to the attempt to find scriptural justification for twentieth century developments in Middle Eastern politics?

Such a use of the Old Testament would seem directly contrary to his teaching as we have seen it in this paper. In addition to the overall direction of his teaching, we have seen that he actually took Old Testament prophecies about the restoration of Israel, and applied them to the gathering of a Christian community from all nations. Moreover, there is a striking finality in his predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem.

There is, however, one passage which seems to go against this overwhelming consensus in Jesus' teaching. In Luke 21: 24 the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem contains the clause, ‘Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.’ Does this imply a future restoration of Jewish nationhood, after ‘the times of the Gentiles’? If so, what are 'the times of the Gentiles'?

Much of the language about the fall of Jerusalem in the 'Apocalyptic Discourse' is modelled on Daniel's descriptions of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. Luke 21:24 is based primarily on Daniel 8:13,[36] where it is predicted that the sanctuary will be trampled for 1,150 days,[37] before it is 'restored to its rightful state', which presumably referred originally to the rededication of the Temple under Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BC. This limited period of Gentile domination probably lies behind the phrase 'the times of the Gentiles'. Most commentators therefore take Luke 21:24 to refer to a limited period during which Gentile powers will control Jerusalem.

Some however, take the 'times of the Gentiles' to refer to period of *opportunity* for Gentiles to enter the kingdom of God. In fact, of course, the two interpretations are not mutally exclusive, and several commentators believe both were intended,[38] though it would be rash to suggest that the 'times of the Gentiles' must have the same duration in both senses, or indeed that the two ideas are in any way logically connected. If this idea of the period of Gentile opportunity is included, this might suggest a similar conception to that developed by Paul in Romans 9-11, of a period of Jewish 'hardening' 'until the full member of the Gentiles come in', after which all Israel will be saved.[39] If this is so, the idea is of spiritual restoration, not of political resurgence. But there is little in the context of Luke 21 to support any such idea, nor is it clearly paralleled elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus.[40] If a choice must be made, a 'political' sense for the 'time of the Gentiles' seems more consistent with the context, and with the sense of the Old Testament passages alluded to.

But there is nothing in Luke 21 to suggest what will happen to Jerusalem when the 'times of the Gentiles' are over, and the total lack of any other suggestion in Jesus' teaching, or indeed in the whole New Testament, of a political or terri-

[36] The idea of the 'trampling' of Jerusalem occurs also in Psalm 79:13; Isaiah 63:18 Zechariah 12:3 (LXX), but without the explicit limitation of the period contained in Daniel 8:13.

[37] Taking the '2,300 evenings and mornings' to refer to the number of sacrifices missed, two each day.

[38] E.g. Plummer, Creed, Grundmann.

[39] So e.g. I.H. Marshall, *Luke, Historian and Theologian* (Exeter, 1970), 186-187.

[40] See below p.76 note on Mt. 23:39/Lk. 13:35.

torial restoration of the Jews must surely make us cautious in assuming such an implication here. If this clause hints at some light at the end of the tunnel for the Jews, it does so obscurely, and without any indication whether the restoration might be political or spiritual, or both. It is perhaps more likely that no sequel to the 'times of the Gentiles' is envisaged other than the ultimate consummation. As Grundmann comments, 'Die Zeit Israels ist durch die Zeit der Völker abgelöst. Die Zeit der Völker aber findet ihr Ende in der Zeit Gottes, da seine Herrschaft kommt.' If that is so, no room would be left for a restoration of Jerusalem to the Jews.

At any rate, a passage which gives rise to such varying interpretations can hardly be taken as a warrant to reverse the whole tenor of Jesus' teaching, which, as we have seen, is not concerned with the future of the Jewish nation as such (beyond its imminent downfall), but with the 'little flock' of those, Jew and Gentile, who show themselves by their response to Jesus' message to be the true people of God. It is in them that the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel must now be sought.[41]

7. *Conclusion*

This paper has touched on various related themes in Jesus' teaching which bear on our subject of 'Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel'. To summarize briefly: 1. Jesus spoke consistently of his own ministry, not of some unconnected future event, as the locus of fulfilment of the hopes of the Old Testament. 2. He warned his Jewish contemporaries that their

[41] A hint of a future for Israel is sometimes found in Mt. 23:39/Lk. 13:35, where the prediction of Jerusalem's destruction ends, 'I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" '. There is no consensus on the exegesis of this passage, whether the acclamation of Jesus as king implies the conversion of at least some Jews, or whether it is a reluctant admission of his sovereignty when he comes as judge. On the former view, this may be a foreshadowing of the idea of a future conversion of Jews voiced by Paul in Rom. 11:25-26 (taking "Israel" there, as I think we must, of the Jewish people, whose fate is the subject of the whole of Rom. 9-11). See, however, W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel* 87-90, for an argument against this interpretation of Mt. 23:39 on the basis of the whole tenor of Matthew's thought. It should be noticed too that the future event is expressed indefinitely (it might be paraphrased 'You will only see me again on condition that . . .'), the emphasis in context falling on the negative main clause rather than the second part of the sentence. But on any interpretation there is nothing in this passage to detract from the line of argument followed above; it gives no hint of a *political* future for Israel,

constant rebellion, culminating in their failure to respond to his Message, would entail their imminent punishment in the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. 3. He saw this as not just a temporary punishment, but the final loss of the Jews' privileged status as the people of God, and looked forward instead to a kingdom of God in which Jew and Gentile would share. 4. His use of Old Testament Israel-language suggests that he regarded himself, and, derivatively, 5. his disciples, as the godly remnant, the true Israel to whom God's Old Testament promises applied, including even those which speak of a restoration of Israel from exile. 6. There is no warrant in his teaching to look for a future for the Jewish nation as a political entity.

I have deliberately restricted the scope of the paper to the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, for the reasons stated at the outset. The result has been a consistent picture, and a rather one-sided one, in the sense that little or no support seems to be given to those who would still see a place for the Jewish race as such as God's special people, and who would therefore see a theological significance in current political developments in the Middle East.

How far the rest of the New Testament might redress the balance is a subject which lies outside the scope of this paper, and which others have discussed at length. But at least it is important that we should be clear how the Founder of Christianity conceived the significance of his mission in relation to his own nation. His followers, and Paul in particular, tackled the question of the Jews more fully than it is treated in the recorded words of Jesus, and came up with some more positive predictions about the future of the nation. But when we interpret their words, it would be rash to ignore the pattern of their Master's teaching, and to assume that they worked out their theology in a vacuum. If Jesus regarded the community of his disciples as the Israel of the New Covenant, it would be surprising if his followers went back to an Old Covenant perspective.

In fact, the New Testament writers never suggest that Old Testament prophecy is to be fulfilled in a political restoration of the Jewish nation. When Paul asserts that the 'hardened' part of Israel will one day be reintegrated into the true people of God, and so 'all Israel will be saved', he gives no hint that

he is thinking of anything other than their spiritual conversion. Whatever uncertainties may remain about the spiritual future of the Jews, the New Testament writers consistently follow their Master's lead in looking to the Christian church for the fulfilment of the destiny of Israel. A *Christian* use of the prophecies of the Old Testament can hardly ignore the hermeneutical lead given by Jesus and his disciples.