

Zeitschrift: Judaica : Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums
Herausgeber: Zürcher Institut für interreligiösen Dialog
Band: 13 (1957)

Artikel: Israel and the incarnation
Autor: Torrance, T.F.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-961070>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 26.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

JUDAICA

BEITRÄGE ZUM VERSTÄNDNIS DES JÜDISCHEN SCHICKSALS
IN VERGANGENHEIT UND GEGENWART

ISRAEL AND THE INCARNATION

By T. F. TORRANCE, Edinburgh

The Israel of God

From the very beginning the Christian Church thought of itself as Israel in the new phase of its election marked by the Incarnation. That is apparent in the favourite term employed by the New Testament to designate the Church: *ekklēsia*¹. In profane Greek *ekklēsia* was used to describe the assembly of citizens summoned together by a herald (*kērux*) for public duty. Something of that naturally remains in the New Testament term, particularly the calling out of the Church through the proclamation (*kērygma*) of the herald, but it is the special use of *ekklēsia* in the Septuagint that gives the New Testament its technical term for the Church. In the LXX *ekklēsia* refers to the congregation regarded collectively as a people and as a whole, rather than to the actual assembly or meeting of the people. Behind the Greek *ekklēsia* there lies the Hebrew *qahal* or some cognate word from the same root. The Old Testament as a rule employs two terms to describe Israel as the congregation of God, *'edhah* and *qahal*, and both are translated at different times by two Greek words, *synagōgē* and *ekklēsia*. More and more the Old Testament writers, in its later books, prefer

¹ See for the following the article on *ekklēsia* in Kittel, TW² NT.

the term *qahal*, usually rendered by *ekklēsia*, but Judaism came more and more to prefer the term *synagōgē*. Thus when the Christian Church came to refer to itself as the *ekklēsia* rather than *synagōgē* (with one or two exceptions), it was clearly claiming to be “the Israel of God” in distinction from the Synagogue.

Two further elements in the concept of *qahal-ekklēsia* should be noted here. (a) The fact that *qahal* comes from the same root as *gol*, the word for “voice”, suggests that the OT *qahal* was the community summoned by the Divine Voice, by the Word of God. It was the people of the voice of the Word of God. Of that *ekklēsia* is a very apt translation, indicating as it does the community of “the called” (*klētoi*) of God. *Ekklēsia* is Church not in any sociological or political sense of assembly, and not therefore in any sociological or political continuity with Israel. It is Church as act of God, as the community called into being and created by God’s Word. (b) In line with that is the fact that the OT *qahal* was first established at Sinai when God came and spoke, when His voice was heard by all Israel, and His Word founded the Covenant-Community. That was known as “the day of the *qahal*”, and so *qahal* came to have a special significance as the community brought into covenant-relation with God for sacrifice and worship, and for the special end of revelation. *Qahal* denotes the OT Church actively engaged in God’s purpose of revelation and salvation, that is caught up in the mighty events whereby God intervenes redemptively in history, and involved in the forward thrust of the Covenant toward final and universal fulfilment. *Qahal* is the community expecting eschatological redemption. In that sense it is appropriated in the New Testament to denote the community in which the Covenant promises of God to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the pouring out of His Spirit. Far from being an off-shoot of Israel, the Christian Church is Israel gathered up in Jesus Christ who recapitulates in Himself the historico-redemptive service of Israel and after fulfilling and transcending all its hopes, launches it out again in its servant-mission laden with the Word of Reconciliation for all mankind.

What place are we to assign to God’s ancient people, the old Israel, under the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

The Old Israel and the Incarnation

(1) The whole historico-redemptive movement revealed in the Old and New Testaments is to be regarded as essentially one. The Old Testament speaks of the Coming One, and the coming Kingdom; the New Testament speaks of the One who has come, and of the Kingdom as having arrived in Jesus Christ Himself. The Old Testament is the revelation of the *verbum incarnandum*; the New Testament is the revelation of the *verbum incarnatum*: the centre of gravity in both is the Incarnation itself, to which the Old Testament is stretched out in expectation, and the New Testament looks back in fulfilment. This one movement throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament is the movement of God's grace in which He renews the bond between God and man broken and perverted at the Fall, and restores man to communion with Himself. God does that by giving Himself to man in such a way as to assume human nature and existence into oneness with Himself. That is what took place in the Incarnation of the Word, in the midst of Israel, in the midst of mankind.

(2) Throughout the pre-history of the Incarnation, which was itself in a profound sense part of the movement of the Incarnation, God prepared a way, manifested His truth, and assumed man into a life-relation with Himself. This triple activity of grace God carried through in Israel. In Israel He prepared a way of covenant-love in which He established a union between Himself and Israel; within that covenant relation of love God manifested Himself as the Truth, bringing Israel into communion with Himself; through union and communion God bound Israel to Himself as the Lord, the Giver of Life, and so set up His Kingdom in the midst of estranged humanity. He began to open up through Israel a new and a living way for the redemption of mankind, that was to find its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

(3) The activity of grace within the covenanted people of God involved the self-giving of God and the assuming of Israel into oneness with God in terms of Prophet, Priest and King. According to the Old Testament's understanding of itself, the Covenant was established in the once-and-for-all events at Mt Sinai in which

God decisively revealed Himself and enacted His revelation in the midst of Israel. He gave Himself to the people of Israel to be their God and He took Israel to be His people. What God did He give to Israel? The God who proclaimed His Name to Israel in these terms: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation" (Exod. 36. 6ff.). God gave Himself to Israel without any diminishment in His nature as Holiness and Love — that is why Sinai occupied such unsurpassable significance in the history of Israel. Such a Selfgiving of God which is the Self-giving of the Self-affirming God, *I am that I am*, was made in the unity of law and cult, i. e. the unity of Word and Mediation, of Truth and Reconciliation. And so the Covenant came to rest upon the twin foundation of the Sinaitic law and the Levitical liturgy, as represented supremely in Moses and Aaron, prophet and priest in essential complementarity and unity. Once this covenantal basis was consolidated in Jerusalem, God manifested His coming Kingdom through the Davidic line of kings, and the Messianic kingdom came to overarch the covenantal relation of Word and pardon, prophet and priest. Together prophet, priest, and king were made to point forward to the Messiah, the archetypal Prophet, Priest, and King. He was the King of the Kingdom who provided in Himself the way, the truth, and the life, and so provided the way of restoration to the Father.

(4) This triple activity of God's grace and Self-revelation was not static but was carried through the most harrowing and profound historical experience the world has ever known, in the whole life and agony of Israel. The three modes of divine activity and grace had to be worked into the innermost existence and being of this people if it was to become the instrument of God's ultimate Self-giving to man. This nation was a beggarly and despised people, and it proved itself to be the most stiff-necked and rebellious of peoples, but it was chosen out of pure love and on that basis alone was brought into covenant relation with God. The keeping of

the covenant did not depend on Israel's worth, but on the contrary, was conditined by the pure outflowing love of God in the continuous act of grace, of grace for grace. What a magnificent account of that covenant-love is given by the prophet Hosea! But it became very clear that God could only keep faith and truth with this rebellious people by judgement, by punishment, as well as by mercy. He held on to His purpose of love, binding the covenant-people to Himself, refusing to divorce it in spite of persistent rebuffs. The covenant grounded in mercy (*hesed*) and truth (*'emeth*) was maintained by God in utter faithfulness, that is in the utter consistency of truth, and in the utter steadfastness of love. In that covenant-relation of truth and love Israel had to suffer, for it shattered itself on the unswerving persistence of the divine purpose of love. Israel suffered inevitably from God, for God would not let His people go.

(5) God used the historical experience of Israel to reveal Himself more profoundly and to give Himself more completely to Israel. He used the suffering and the judgement of Israel to reveal the terrible nature of sin as contradiction to God's love and grace, to uncover the enmity of man, in his persistent self-will, toward God in His Self-giving. But transcending all, God used this nation in the ordeal of history and suffering to reveal His own infinite love and the undeflecting persistence of His will to bring forgiveness and reconciliation, until His love achieved its purpose of final union and communion of man with God in Jesus Christ. In that ordeal the Word and the cult were not mere letter and liturgy, but were worked out into the very existence of Israel: that was surely the great prophetic burden of Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah. Law and cult have no place in God's will merely as such; they have their place as they are kneaded into the very existence and understanding and life of Israel. That was the reason for the suffering of Israel, for word and truth and love had to be wrought out in the breaking and making of Israel as the Servant of the Lord. The whole conception of the Suffering Servant represents the activity of God whereby He begins to draw together the cords of the Covenant in which He had bound Israel to Himself as His partner; it represents the activity in which He began to narrow down His assumption of Israel into union with Himself toward the point of the In-

carnation where, in the midst of Israel, He was to assume man into oneness with Himself in the ultimate act of reconciliation. The great sign of the Covenant made with Abraham and Isaac was circumcision, for in it the Covenant was cut into the flesh of this people and remained throughout the generations as the sign that the promises of God could be fulfilled in the life of this people only as the Word of God could be translated into its flesh, into its very existence. It was the sign that at last the Covenant had to be written into the heart, in the "crucifixion" of self-will, in the putting off of "the enmity of the flesh". But once the Covenant came to be enacted so deeply into the existence of Israel that it was written into the "inner man", its whole form would change. It would be a New Covenant. Such a "total circumcision" was fulfilled at last in the flesh of Christ, for through His crucifixion, the New Covenant was inaugurated, and the new and living way was opened up in the Humanity of the Son of Man.

(6) Israel suffered most throughout its history as bearer in its existence and life of the divine Revelation. It suffered from the mighty arm of the Lord, that is, at the hands of the Word of God, because it had ever to be broken and remade, reshaped, and realigned with the Covenant-will of God. Thus the very covenant-relation of Israel to God through which it became *laos*, God's people, *klēros*, God's inheritance, entailed political and national disaster for Israel in its will to be *ethnos*, a nation like the other nations of the earth. That was part of the deepest agony of Jeremiah. The astonishing thing here is that the more God gave Himself to this people, the more He forced this people to be what it was in its sin and self-will, to be in truth what it actually was, a rebel. The very Self-giving of God in holy love not only revealed Israel's sin, but intensified it; it intensified the enmity between Israel and Jaweh and intensified the contradiction between Jaweh and Israel hence "the Suffering servant". God insisted on giving Himself to Israel in spite of its enmity to Him, and insisted on assuming Israel in its sinful contradiction into partnership with Himself — hence the profoundest agony of the psalmist and prophet alike, and hence also "the identity by assumption" of the suffering of Israel with the suffering of Messiah so poignantly described in Isaiah 53. More-

over, in the intensification of the relationship between Israel and God, in a profound sense God's Self-revelation had to blind Israel, and His Self-manifestation had to hide Himself from Israel. *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* How could it be otherwise when God entered into the heart of Israel's estrangement in order to make atonement, when the assumption of refractory Israel into oneness with God intensified judgement upon Israel's self-will as well as fulfilled the Self-giving of God to Israel in love? To us, no doubt, as we look back from the Incarnation, the experience of Israel becomes clearer and clearer, but Israel itself became blinder and blinder — "Who is blind but My servant?" — as God's Self-giving pressed toward the ultimate act of Incarnation and atonement.

(7) In the ultimate act of union between God and Israel, and in the ultimate conflict which that entailed, in Israel's refusal of the Messiah, the rejection of Israel had to take place. God gave Himself to Israel and assumed Israel into covenant-partnership with Himself — and that covenant provided in the midst of humanity a revelation of God's will to be man's God in spite of his sin. It was therefore with Israel in its sinful existence and indeed in its refusal of God that God bound Himself in the Covenant of love, while Israel, on its part, was unable to escape the decision of God's love that had overtaken it in the covenant of grace gathering it into partnership with God. Israel suffered from that Covenant, but suffered because of its persistent refusal of grace, suffering more and more until in the ultimate act of God's Self-giving in the Incarnation, Israel rejected it in the crucifixion of the Messiah, and in so doing shattered itself on the Cross — theologically, the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A. D. 70 had to follow upon the crucifixion of the Son of Man. But at the very heart of that great darkness it was supremely revealed that God had given Himself to man at his very worst in his ultimate rejection of grace, and in spite of man's ultimate rejection of grace God had joined Himself to man for ever. The ultimate refusal of God which took place in Israel was the very means whereby the holy love of God achieved its final victory over sin, for by it (the crucifixion of Christ) man was brought into reconciliation and communion with God. That took place in the Mediator who as

true God and true Man had chosen Israel as the people in whose midst He penetrated into the innermost existence of man in his estrangement from God, and in the heart of that estrangement He consummated an eternal union between God and man in Himself. This Man was Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Mediator: henceforth all men come unto the Father by Him. The miracle was that just when man shattered himself against the judgement of God, he was called out of death into resurrection, out of destruction into life, out of darkness into light, out of bondage into freedom; just when Israel destroyed itself in the crucifixion of the Son of David, just when the vine of God's choosing and planting was cut away down to the ground, there sprang up out of the earth a new shoot, a new vine, for He who has willed to be Israel and was crucified rose again as a root out of the dry ground to be the true Vine. That meant also, as we shall see, the resurrection of Israel, the Israel of the Covenant, but here we must note that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus revealed the pattern of experience adumbrated all through the long ordeal of Israel's suffering. In its completion the pattern is seen to be essentially cruciform, but now in the light of its full manifestation, it is not difficult to see how the pattern of the recurring death and resurrection of Israel throughout its history was bent forward by the finger of God to point to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the Israelite in whom there was no guile but the Israelite who took upon Himself the role of Israel, recapitulating in Himself the ordeal of the Servant in order "to stand in the gap", to be made a curse for the atonement of Israel, and in the midst of Israel for the atonement of all mankind.

(8) But now it is possible to look back and see something else, that the activity of grace which selected one particular people and one particular course of history in that human and historical particularity enacted a covenantal relation of union and communion with God that was essentially universalistic from the very beginning. It was essentially dual in its nature: particular and universal. That was apparent in the choice of Abraham, one particular man, but the covenant-promise was given that in him and his seed all nations would be blessed. In the enactment of the Covenant between one particular people and Jaweh at Sinai, the bond of the Covenant

was the Decalogue which was essentially universalistic. The movement was paradoxical in character — the more particular it became, the more universal it also became; the deeper the bond between God and man was driven into the human existence of Israel, the closer redemption made contact with creation; the more intimately Israel was tied to the one and only God, the God of all, the more the activity of grace broke through the limitations of national Israel and reached out to all the world. That was particularly apparent in the election of Israel to be God's *laos* upon which Israel's aspirations to be *ethnos* were shattered again and again, for to be bound to God as Israel was, was essentially to become the *qahal* or the *ekklesia* of God, and so to transcend the sociological and political husk of Israel to become the one people of the living God. It was characteristic of the whole activity of God's grace that it should suborne the very refusal of Israel to be *laos* to minister to its purpose of universal blessing and redemption. And so the more like a single particular *ethnos* Israel became the more it had to be scattered in *diaspora* over the face of the whole earth. At last in the acute particularisation of the covenantal bond between Israel and God in Jesus, it became absolutely universal for all men. That was already apparent in the suffering servant portrayed by the cult-prophets. The suffering servant was Israel assumed into oneness with the Word of God, and it is in that duality that "the Servant Songs" are surely to be understood. But even there it is evident that as the Word became one with Israel, it became more and more one Israelite, for that is the only way in which the Word assumes human nature and existence into oneness with itself. Thus while in one sense the suffering was Servant Israel assumed into oneness with the Word, it is primarily to be understood as the Word identifying Himself with Israel, and becoming one particular Israelite, an individual personal Messiah. Thus the ultimate Self-giving of God to Israel in its historical particularity narrowing down to one particular Jew meant the universalisation and the transcendence of the Old Testament form of the Covenant, and the setting of the relation of God and man on a wholly new basis in which redemption was more than the restoration of Israel, more than an event that penetrated back to the foundations of creation;

it was a new creation in which the fulness of the eternal purpose of God was to be realised in an altogether transcendent way.

(9) Now it is also possible to see more clearly than anywhere in the Old Testament itself that the life and ordeal of Israel were the election of one people as the instrument of divine love for His redemption of all creation. The election of one for the salvation of all characterized the whole story of God's dealings with Israel. But within Israel that activity of grace reached its climactic fulfilment in a singular event, in the Incarnation. In Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord, the election of one for all has become ultimate fact within our human existence; in Him election and substitution combined in the most unique, most intense and personal concentration, with a view to universal redemption. It is in Christ who is the real meaning and substance of the life of Israel that we are to understand Israel's ordeal in history and place in the divine purpose. In Jesus Christ it is revealed that the election of one for all becomes salvation for all in the rejection of one for all. What took place on the Cross revealed what was happening to Israel in the election of God: because it was an election of man in his enmity to God, and acceptance of man in his sinful existence, election involved the reprobation of man's will to isolate himself from God and of his refusal of God's grace. The election of Israel as an instrument of the divine reconciliation, an instrument which was to be used in its very refusal of grace that in its midst the ultimate Self-giving of God might take place, meant, not only that Israel was elected to be confronted with the ultimate events, the last things, before which its refractory self-will was to be exposed to the full judgement of God, but also that Israel was elected to act in a representative capacity for all peoples in its rejection of Christ. The consequent rejection of Israel is to be understood in the light of the substitution of Israel for all other peoples.

(10) How can we express this, for human words are too inadequate here? On the one hand, it is clear, the election of Israel to be the instrument of God and the sphere within which the Son of God should come not only as the divine Judge of men but as man judged by God, peculiarly involved Israel in the ultimate wrath of God. On the other hand, we cannot but acknowledge that the

election of Israel to be the sphere in which the Son of God willed to let Himself be condemned as a sinner and to be put to death on the Cross, meant that Israel could only fulfil the gracious purpose of God by rejecting Christ and condemning Him to a sinner's death. The Jews carried that out in fearful wickedness, in the ultimate refusal of grace that sin involves, but throughout it all the Son of God remained in sovereign control. Surely that was a great part of His unspeakable agony, that He was in control: how could He, the incarnate love of God, let men become guilty of the ultimate wickedness, of putting the Son of God to death? And yet He came in love to do this, to penetrate into the blackest heart of evil, to expose it and to take it all upon Himself. And so at the last He pressed hard upon Israel with the finger of God, shutting it up to becoming infinitely guilty of the rejection and murder of the Son of God. It was not that He made the Jews more guilty but that He exposed the infinite guilt of man's hatred of grace, drawing it out in all its enmity that He might bear it and bear it away as the Lamb of God in holy and awful atonement. As such He bore that infinite guilt, not only of Israel but of all men revealed in the guilt of Israel, that He might acquit and justify the ungodly. In that, He bore the guilt of those who standing in a representative relation to all others carried out the crucifixion of Jesus. He bore to the full the guilt of Israel that He might acquit and justify Israel. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Who is blind but my servant?" — wilfully blind, no doubt, but blinded in the role for which Israel was chosen. It was chosen as the sphere of revelation and of atonement, and as such Israel was regarded by God as His first-born son. It was as such too, God's servant, God's beloved son, that Israel was involved by election in the rejection of the Messiah and therefore in the ultimate wrath of God. But the wrath that has come upon Israel through the Cross has to be understood as the chastening wrath of the heavenly Father. There is an outpouring of the wrath of God which is not the chastening of a son but the banishing of the disowned and disinherited into the outer darkness upon which God has for ever turned His back, and Jews and Gentiles alike may bring themselves under that curse. But the judgement and wrath in which

Israel as a people is involved mean not the final casting off of man, but God's descent within the relation of existence between the Creator and the creature perverted by the fall of man, and His negation of the contradiction we have introduced into it by our sin. God's wrath here means, therefore, in unmistakable terms, that what He has created He still affirms as His own handiwork and that He will not curse it or cast it off into nothingness. Even in wrath God wills to remain man's Creator and man's God. His wrath against Israel does not mean that He banishes Israel from His covenant of love and truth but that He affirms that covenant, negating everything that threatens to dissolve it. God's wrath against Israel does not mean His abandonment either of His eternal purpose or of His covenant-promises, but on the contrary it is the act of His holy love within the Covenant in which He asserts Himself as holy and loving Creator in the midst of man's perversity, in the midst of his refusal of grace. God's wrath is judgement of sin, reprobation of our refusal of God, but as such it is already part of atonement, part of recreation, for His wrath is in fact His reaffirmation of His creature in spite of his sin and rebellion — certainly, it is reaffirmation in judgement against sin, but it is a reaffirmation that the creature belongs to God and that He wills to remain its God. God's wrath insists that we remain His children, and that we belong to Him body and soul and it is within that belonging that judgement takes place.

(11) It becomes clear then that the rejection of Israel is not its abandonment but the reaffirmation of Israel in the fulness of the Covenant and its promises. The Covenant remains. God keeps His promises, and His faithfulness is not made of none effect by the faithlessness of His ancient people. The rejection of Israel as a people is only to be understood in the light of the substitutionary nature of the Cross, for Israel's rejection is bound up by God with the atoning rejection of the Man on the Cross, or rather in His acceptance of the sentence of our rejection. — *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* Paul did not hesitate therefore to speak of the rejection of Israel as the reconciling of the world in almost identical language with His assertion that by the death of His Son we were reconciled to God. But it is precisely on the same ground that Paul can speak

of the restoration of God's people Israel. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5. 10). "For if the casting away of them (i. e. Israel) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11. 15). Three facts of supreme importance emerge here (a) While Israel's fall, and blindness, and rejection, resulted from its refusal of grace, from its crucifixion of the Messiah, nevertheless its rejection was involved in the substitutionary work of the Cross, for God used that very refusal and crucifixion in order to bring forth salvation for all. Thus the rejection of Israel worked out to the riches of the Gentiles. That must determine our whole outlook upon the Jew — he was blinded for us, that we might see; he was stripped and deprived that we might become rich with the Gospel. We can only see him where he is still held by God in the shadow of the Cross. We are his debtors in Christ. (b) But the very substitutionary nature of Israel's rejection means also the restoration of Israel, for it is already involved in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the rejected Son of Man. Thus the restoration of God's ancient people will have a part in the eschatological events of the consummation, and even the full blessing of the Gentiles depends upon the fulfilment of the Covenant-promises to Israel. If the rejection of Israel brought reconciliation and riches to the world, what will the restoration of Israel involve? (c) The restoration of Israel, however, takes a way as unique as Israel's instrumental place in the redemptive purpose of God, and is to be looked for along the line of the representative capacity which it still has in the election of God. The way to Israel's salvation, therefore, lies somehow through rejection; the way to its enlightenment lies through its blindness; the way to its fulness lies through its impoverishment — these are ways of God past finding out, for they belong to His unsearchable judgements, to the deepest mystery of the Cross. But this much is revealed, that through darkness God's ancient people will come into the light of the resurrection, and all Israel shall be saved. That does not simply mean that Jews will eventually become Christians and members of the One Holy Catholic Church, but that within the one Church of Christ, the Israel of

God, there will be a special place for Israel as a people, and that even in its present blindness or rejection Israel has a unique mission in the world, for by His election of Israel God has once and for all bound the salvation of mankind with Israel.

The New Israel and the Old

We have now to consider the place and function of Israel in the Christian era, particularly in relation to the Christian Church as the New Israel.

(1) Although Israel was like a tree cut down to the stump, it remains to remind the Church of its origin and root, for the Church of the Gentiles is grafted on to the stump of Israel, like branches cut out of a wild olive tree and grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree (Rom. 11. 16—24). That is a fact of such supreme importance that the Christian Church inevitably goes astray when it forgets it: that the Christian Church has no independent existence over against Israel. It is the root that bears the branches, not the branches the root. It is Israel that bears the Church, not the Church Israel. But have we any right to use the term "Church" in this way, over against Israel? The Old Testament *qahal* was already the Church of God, although it existed under a different form and it was on to that one Church, the true Israel, that the Christian Church was grafted. The grafting was done in Christ who willed to be Israel and who gathered up and recapitulated the whole life of Israel in Himself and was as such the true Vine. And the grafting of the Gentile Church was carried out through the Apostles, who represented the twelve branches of Israel or rather who replaced them in the new growth of the Church in the Gentile world. The Apostles belonged both to the Old Israel and to the New and as such they, together with the Prophets, formed the basis of the New Testament Church, and provided it with its essential continuity with the one Church of God throughout the historico-redemptive activity of God's grace among men. This Hebrew rooting is an indispensable element in the proper conception of the Church's Apostolic Succession.

(2) The historical particularity of Israel covenanted with God persists throughout the Christian era. God has not cast off His ancient people (Rom. 11. 1f.), for the Covenant with Israel as God's people remains in force, and cannot be "spiritualised" and turned into some form alien to the stubborn historicity of its nature without calling in question the whole historical foundation of God's Revelation in Old Testament and New Testament. No doubt the historical persistence of Israel, maintained by act of God throughout the Christian era, has often proved an "offence" to the Gentile Church, but that is part of the "offence" of Jesus the Jew from Nazareth who insisted that not one jot or tittle of the Law would pass away unfulfilled. The fact that the Covenant made with historical Israel remains in force and presses toward historical fulfilment reminds the Gentile Church that it cannot arrogate to itself alone the claim to be the Church of God, and poses for the Gentile Church the problem of schism within the one Church, as schism between the Old Israel and the New Israel. The Christian Church (i. e. of Gentiles and Jewish proselytes) cannot be perfect, cannot reach its fulness apart from Israel (i. e. the historical people of the Old Covenant). So long as Church and Israel are divided, each is impoverished. No doubt, as we have seen, initially the impoverishment of Israel in its peculiar election as one people for all peoples, meant the enrichment of the Gentiles, but the fulness of the Gentiles depends upon the fulness of Israel. As St Paul saw it, the grafting in of the Gentiles as wild olive branches into the good olive tree, served to quicken the old stock. Its dead branches had been pared away and were replaced by the Gentile Church, so that it partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree, but the resuscitation of the old tree would mean even greater enrichment to the Gentiles.

(3) What then is the hope of Israel? The hope of Israel can only lie ultimately in the acknowledgment of the crucified Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, as Son of David and Son of God, but the way of Israel toward that goal lies evidently along the line of its election to fulfil a representative function in shattering itself against the mercies of the Covenant. Not only in the era of the Old Testament but also in the era of the New Testament, Israel has had to undergo

an ordeal of unparalleled suffering and rejection — and no doubt it is through that ordeal that Israel is to recover its sight. Two possible lines of recovery are perhaps discernible today. (a) For the first time since the days of Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah the concept of the Messiah as the suffering spirit of Israel has emerged into the open, particularly out of the concentration camps of Europe. And now in the State of Israel that conception of the Messiah wrestles with the other conception of the hero-Messiah, the mighty Deliverer that will come out of Sion: but these two conceptions wrestle with one another in an arena where the ubiquitous cross points to the Crucified as the only One in whom these two conceptions of the Messiah come together. When we recall the remark of C. G. Jung that in the majority of his Jewish patients analysis has revealed that the root causes of their mental illness have been associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we may well ask whether the Spirit of God is not working with Israel in a decisive way pressing it to the point of looking upon Him whom it had pierced.

(b) The creating of the new State of Israel is surely the most significant sign given in God's dealings with His covenanted people since the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, for here once again the ancient struggle between Israel and its Lord is renewed in the conflict between the "ethnic" aspirations of Israel and the "laic" nature of the Covenant. May it not be that our best way to help Israel is to help it toward a "laic" criticism of its "ethnic" aspirations? And may it not be that Israel's representative function is to be the one people among all the peoples of the earth where there will be manifested the pattern of a new kind of "ethnic" life which would be the result of serious acknowledgment of its "laic" nature? Whether this is so or not, there can be no doubt about the fact, that the Gentile Church will not be able to serve God's purpose for Israel and so help Israel, until it acknowledges far more profoundly and sincerely that it is a debtor to Israel, that it can only exist as Church grafted on to the stock of Israel, and at the expense of Israel.

(4) It belongs to the perpetual need of the Church that it should perceive its root in Israel, and acknowledge that the Church does

not bear the root, but the root the Church. Israel remains the servant of the Lord and He uses it to bear witness to the nations, unwilling witness though it be. Only when the Church listens to that witness can it understand and participate in the revelation and in the reconciliation that have reached it through Israel, and only then can the Church properly understand itself. There can be no doubt that the grafting of the wild olive branches upon the good olive tree resulted in rich fruit for the Church; thus through the grafting of Greek modes of thought upon the Hebraic tradition enabled the divine Revelation to reach a fulness of expression in Christian theology that would hardly have been possible otherwise. But here Christian theology must remember that it does not bear the root, but the root bears it; and that once theology detaches itself from its rooting in Israel it turns into an alien and sterile philosophy. The long ordeal of Israel out of which God has delivered to us His Self-revelation represents the struggle of the Word of God with the mind and will of man, and the preparation for the work of reconciliation between God and man wrought out at last in Jesus Christ in the midst of Israel. Thus the Biblical modes of thought have a sacrosanctity not because they are Hebraic but because they represent both the way in which God's revelation and reconciliation have taken within the mind of man, and the covenanted patterns of response and obedience to that revelation and reconciliation. Apart from that prepared sphere of revelation and reconciliation no one could have grasped the bewildering miracle of Jesus or begun to understand the Incarnation and the Atonement. It is still necessary to be schooled in Israel, to be disciplined through the Old Testament Revelation, in order truly to apprehend the reconciling revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Our Gentile ways of thought cannot by-pass the ordeal of Israel, for even though Israel went through that ordeal as one people in substitution for all other peoples, we cannot enter into its rich inheritance apart from being refashioned in the mould of the Biblical Revelation and a sharing in the ordeal of Israel as it was continually being broken and remade in the hands of God. Far from meaning that Gentiles have to become proselytes to Judaism, this means that Gentiles grafted on to Israel in Christ bear a fruit as Gentiles which would

have been otherwise wanting. It is not the substitution of Jewish for Gentile modes of thought that is to be envisaged here, but a "learning obedience" to the Word of God which Gentile modes of thought can only gain in the midst of Israel where the Mind of God and the mind of rebellious man have at last been brought to reconciliation, after long discipline in the history of Israel, in Jesus Christ. This continues to be one of the main ways in which Israel serves the Church, for even in Israel's persistent refusal of the Messiah, God uses Israel to summon the Church back from its temptations to detach itself from the historical covenant, and to call it back from its abstract and impersonal philosophies to the Biblical way of knowledge, to a personal Lord who encounters us face to face in His Word, and to a rational obedience to His Will. On the other hand God uses the fact that Israel, in spite of being the root and stock of the Church, has become blind in the study of the oracles and hardened in the ordinances of grace, to remind the Church that even as Church it can refuse God's grace, become blind and hardened without knowing it by becoming wise in its own conceits, as St Paul puts it. Not only of the events in the history of Israel in the Old Testament era, but of the events in the history of Israel in the New Testament era, may we say that all these things happened to them for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.

(4) It is surely clear that it belongs to the Christian Church as one of its greatest tasks to wrestle with Israel in the prayer for understanding and reconciliation. Only through the Church that enters into the fellowship of Israel's sufferings can Israel find its way through the *Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?* into resurrection and new creation. So long as Israel persists in unbelief the Church itself is denied its fulness both in regard to Revelation and in regard to Reconciliation. The Church needs the enlightened eyes of Israel to discover for it the full riches of the Gospel of grace and it may well be that apart from Israel the Christian Church will never be able to find its way out of the present divisions into true wholeness and unity. God has coupled together the hope of Israel and the hope of the Church for ever.