PART VII THE CONCLUSION

During the past century, the approach to the study of the Old Testament has been subjected to confusion and violent attack by historical-critical scholarship. The scholars of this school of criticism mostly stop short at their historical investigations and have failed to make the results of their study relevant to our faith today. On the other hand, some evangelical scholars do not take the progress of revelation history seriously. They easily spiritualise Bible verses, taking everything to have been fulfilled in the person of Christ, and claim that now we, the church as a new Israel, inherit all those promises through Christ. Both of the above types of scholars have taken away the consideration for the important position of Israel in revelation history and in our faith. The Jew has been ignored because of the wrong attitude of Christians.

Our investigation testifies that Israel has not been forsaken for one single moment without the care of God through history. Israel was adopted as the chosen people of God through the covenants with Abraham, with the people at Sinai, and with David. When the people went astray, they were severely punished by being taken away from their own land. However, since the history of Israel started by God's sovereign initiative, their existence was not entirely dependent on the people's side, either. Since the existence of Israel was directly related to God's choice, the disgrace of the people of Israel from the nations resulted in profaning God's name (Ezk 36:16-20). But God was concerned for his holy name, and declared "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone" (Ezk 36:22). His decision was firmly expressed by his declaring that He would gather the people from where they were scattered and bring them back to their land which He gave to Jacob, their
forefather (Ezk 39:25). He would no longer hide his face from them, but would pour out his Spirit on "the house of Israel" (Ezk 39:29).

Although the Old Testament passages strongly stress the salvation of Israel, Yahweh's final purpose is not limited to Israel, but to the universal kingdom of God. The universality of Yahweh's kingdom is seen at the very beginning of the nation of Israel, namely the covenant with Abraham. The promise for the nations is not forgotten by the prophets, as it is even found in the salvation oracles of Israel. It can be stated that the purpose of the salvation of Israel was that "the nations will know that I am the Lord" (Ezk 36:23; 39:27-28). In other words, through the work of salvation, the nations become the people of Yahweh.

The great revival of Israel starts with the work of the Spirit upon the dead body of Israel (Ezk 37:1-14). The dead cannot rise from the graves by themselves, but only by God's mighty power. The nation of Israel will be re-established by the people of both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (Ezk 37:15-24). Yahweh's servant David will be king over them forever (Ezk 37:24; cf. Jr 23:5; 30:9; 33:14-17; 34:23f). Yahweh will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (Ezk 37:26). Their sins will be forgiven; a new heart will be given to them; they will follow Yahweh's laws. He will put up his holy sanctuary and dwell among the people forever (v 26). "They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived" (v 25). They will enjoy prosperity with peace (Ezk 34:25-30; 36:33-38; Jr 31:5; 31:12-14; etc).

All these promises were given to those very same people who were scattered among the nations. Gathering and bringing them back to their own land is one of the most dominant promises. The land which was given to their forefathers (sometimes Jacob) is none other than the land of Canaan although some scholars spiritualise this as the heaven where we Christians may dwell. The strongest argument of spiritualisation, which is that of the new covenant being
fulfilled by Christ in the new believers (from the Gentiles) also cannot be sustained. The new covenant was given to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer 31:31). It was repeated to those in exile, and all the references came with the promise of the return (Jer 32:40; Ezek 34:25; 37:26). The new covenant is solely based on Yahweh's remembrance of the old covenant (the Sinai covenant) (Ezek 16:59f). Thus the continuity between the old and the new covenant is strongly stressed. The new covenant does not introduce any new provision, but makes the provisions of the old effective and durable forever by God's own hands. Therefore the theory of two different covenants, namely that the old covenant was for Israel and the new is for the church, cannot be maintained.

When the new covenant was sealed, Yahweh solemnly swore an oath:

"This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars...: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight...will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (Jer 31:35f).

Again He says:

"Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done", declares the Lord (Jer 31:37).

Who can change the decrees of nature? Who can measure the foundations of the earth and below? Then how can anyone claim that the nation of Israel was finished because of their hardening? This is a mystery which lies beyond human reason. However, this mystery is not an enigma (in a sense of a riddle), it is rather the plan of salvation revealed by God.

It is often argued that Haggai and Zechariah realised that these promises were fulfilled in their time. However, this is not true. The post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, still restate all the promises of restoration. Even Zechariah keep repeating the promise of returning to the land (Zech 8:7f; 10:8-12). The situation of the returned community is far from the reality of the eschatological community (Hag 2:10ff; Zech 7; 11:4ff). Those prophets rather envisage the eschatological hope of the future salvation. Those post-
exilic prophets also contained all three aspects of the restoration. Haggai emphasised the religious aspect in connection with the temple, while Zechariah provided long descriptions of restoring the nation (in the sense of the natural and political realm) in the visions and the apocalyptic. The priestly-kingly Messiah is distinctively introduced by Zechariah. The religious and political restoration of the nation will be accomplished by the priestly-kingly Messiah.

In the New Testament, the restoration of Israel is described more in terms of the religious aspect, meaning that the people once again become the people of God. However, other aspects are also not neglected. The Gospels say that the kingdom of God will come (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Lk 10:9; etc.). Luke 1:31-33 introduces the Messianic kingdom in connection with the Davidic covenant, saying that the Davidic king is to rule over the house of Jacob. However, the restoration of the nation cannot be understood to be like the old earthly kingdom of Israel. It is the Messianic kingdom. It must come at the end of earthly history. Ammillennialists, like Verhoef (1967:14-28), deny the application of the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom to the millennial kingdom on earth. However, there can be no such a kingdom on earth before the second coming of Christ. Then, without spiritualising all the prophecies of the Old Testament, there would be no reason to deny such a Messianic kingdom on earth after the end of this earthly history.

The Messianic Kingdom will come about in all three dimensions, viz., the spiritual (religious), the political, and the natural. Considering the natural aspect, we are convinced that the kingdom will be on earth. But it will not be the same as the old kingdom of Israel, if we also take the other aspects into account. Under the rule of the Messianic king, the people of God will enjoy all kinds of blessing of nature. Yet it does not mean the old Davidic dynasty will be restored. The people will enjoy real communion with God. God will place his sanctuary among the people and He will dwell with the people permanently. With regard to the holy sanctuary, we must stress the true meaning of it, namely Yahweh's presence among the people. In this sense, the restoration
in the religious realm may not mean a return to the old cult. The sacrificial system along with the articles and the structure of the temple will become reality in the true sense. All these have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the spiritual sense, but they are waiting for the completion and the consummation when Jesus returns to earth again.

Considering the "spiritualisation" of Old Testament passages, one can say it is true that the church shares the promises of God given in the new covenant. But the church shares not only the promises of the new covenant but also those of the Abrahamic covenant. If the church shares the promises with Israel, it does not mean that the former has simply replaced the latter. The nations take the promises through the offspring of Abraham of which Jesus Christ is the representative (Gn 22:18; 26:4; Gl 3:16; see Part VI, 4.4.2.1). Christ is the mediator of the blessing for the nations. Jesus is not the body of the new covenant, but He is the medium of the new covenant. It means that He does not take all the promises into his own person or work, but that He brings the new covenant into effect. By means of Jesus, the Gentile believers enjoy the promise of the new covenant.

There is continuity between the church and Israel in terms of God's people. In the Old Testament, God's people were only called by the name of Israel, while in the New Testament, they are called by the name of the Church. In the New Testament time people from the nations come together with Israel to the people of God (Eph 2:12ff). The Gentile believers are grafted onto the people of God, in which the true Israel of the physical descendants of Abraham remains (Rm 11:17-24). The true Israel is not spiritualised to participate in the people of God, the church, but only the Gentile believers. The tree of Israel, which has a holy root (the patriarchs), is not cut down, but some bad branches are pruned away only.

At the present time Israel suffers because of her stubbornness. But she has a future. The new covenant passage was introduced by the eschatological
phrase, "Behold, the days are coming" (Jr 31:31). This eschatological hope continues through the exilic and post-exilic prophets. Although there seemed to be no hope among the Jews in the time of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Paul, all still envisaged a future for Israel. All those inspired prophets and Apostles had hope for the future of Israel, and yet why do we not have it?

The hope, for those prophets and the Apostle, was based on God's election of his people and this fact renders the idea that He should now reject them impossible (Munck, 1967:107). Paul's argument for the question, "has God rejected his people" (Rm 11:1f) sounds the promise of the Old Testament: "For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people" (1 Sm 12:22); "He will never forsake his inheritance" (Ps 94:14) (cf. Cranfield, 1979:543). The historical particularity of Israel, being the covenanted people of God, has persisted throughout revelation history: The time of Moses and Joshua, the time of David, the time of the exile and the post-exilic period. The covenant with Israel still remains in force at present (Rm 9:1-4) (Nygren, 1978:392). It cannot be denied or spiritualised "without calling in question the whole historical foundation of God's Revelation in the Old and the New Testament" (quoted by Coetzee, 1965:170, from Torrance).

The hope for Israel does not diminish the hope of the church. The hope of the church comes from the full number of the salvation of Israel and the nations. Yahweh's election of the people of Israel and his faithfulness to that election make the hope of the church stronger. As He works faithfully according to his promise to Israel, likewise, He will work faithfully according to what He has in mind for the church as a whole.

The restoration of Israel must be understood in terms of "continuity" and "discontinuity" of the new covenant from the old. Although we are living in the eschatological stage already fulfilled, we cannot think that everything has been fulfilled now. On the one hand we refute the theory that all promises
have been fulfilled in a spiritual way in the church (by seeing "continuity");
and on the other hand we also reject the assertion that those certain promises
are being fulfilled by the establishment of the modern state of Israel (by seeing
"discontinuity"). Ezekiel never speaks of the revival of the secular state of
Israel, or the return to the state of the old Israel, but the revival of the
nation through their conversion to the true religion of Yahweh. The funda­
mental element of revival is the restoration of the true relationship between
Yahweh and his people. The restored kingdom of Israel will be ruled by
David, the servant of Yahweh, namely the Messiah, and not by a secular
leader. The kingdom will endure forever; and the people will dwell in safety
and peace. The restoration of Israel must begin with their return to Yahweh
by believing in Jesus Christ. The people Israel will finally return to the true
worship of Yahweh. They will share the holy land along with the Gentile
believers. Under the rule of the Messianic king the people of God will enjoy
all the blessings which were given to them by the prophets. Yahweh will dwell
among the people permanently. The true relationship between Yahweh and
the people will be established. The city of Jerusalem will be dedicated to Him,
and the whole city will become Yahweh’s dwelling place, namely the sanctuary.
It will be said: "The name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD
IS THERE" (48:30-35).

OUR DUTY AS CHRISTIANS TOWARDS ISRAEL

The church has neglected its duty towards the unbelieving Jews, by thinking
that salvation history closed for them when the Gospel turned from them to
the Gentiles. But now, after we have proved that this thought of the main-line
church is wrong, and that the Scriptures testify to the future hope of Israel,
what can we do for the unbelieving Jews?

First we must recognise the facts of the existence of Israel (or the Jews).
Why and where did they come from? Is there no special meaning for their
existence, and are they nothing more than a nation (or a people) in the world? Look at the history: How long and how far they have been wandering all over the world; how much have they suffered; how much have they been shamed; how have they succeeded in keeping and preserving their identity and peculiarity? If we, so-called Bible believers, have a doctrine that everything in history is in God's hand, can we dismiss any meaning of the existence of Israel today? Ridderbos states:

"To be sure, Paul then returns in his remarks to Israel and expresses a new hope for her future. But the main point of his entire profound reasoning does not concern itself with Israel's existence as a nation, but with consistency of God's election of Israel as an election of grace. This should teach us not to shift the main issue when arguing about the future of Israel in our day. God will never forsake his promises, but in these promises He never submits Himself to the will of man. This truth applies to individuals; it applies also to Israel (1971:319)."

We firmly believe that "the zeal of Yahweh Almighty will accomplish" what He promised (Is 9:7). Then shall we wait for Him to do it?

What should we do for Israel? Once again let us borrow Ridderbos's words (1971:322):

"I am convinced that before they can join us in our belief we have to join them. I would nearly say, in their unbelief, at least in their distrust in what we as Christians are saying to them. For they have heard and they have suffered too long from us to be ready to believe in Christian prophecy. Perhaps one of the reasons that Jesus cannot yet come back is that it will take many, many long periods of time before Christian prophecy can again reach the ears of Israel. Therefore, my friends, let us be vigilant, pray and watch and be sober. Pray that God may bring the full number of Israel in his eternal kingdom. Pray for that great day when God will bring together all his children from all nations, also from Israel."

FIELDS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following issues are suggested as fields for further study:

1) The conversation between Jew and Christian: A number of publications have come out of this area, but most Christian publications came from the New Testament background. A large area of common ground between the two is also to be found in the Old Testament background.
2) The restoration in the millennium kingdom: Amillennialists (mainly covenant theologians) deny the restoration of nature and the earthly rule of the Kingly messiah. And premillennialists or dispensationalists tend to apply eschatological predictions too literally. Since our study does not define the fulfilment of the promises, a balanced work is needed to continue our study. This study will also help to diminish the danger of the extreme view of certain dispensationalists who like to apply Bible verses to events of the world.

3) The damnation of Israel: Since our study is limited to dealing with the restoration aspect of Israel, the other aspect of judgment upon Israel needs to be researched. Since the history of Israel has been a repetition of damnation at the hand of Yahweh, the meaning of judgment should be defined. Such a study of judgment will illuminate the subject of restoration more fully.
ABBREVIATIONS

A  GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

1p  first person
2p  second person
3p  third person
ANE Ancient Near East
ca  "about"
cf  compare
ch, chs chapter, chapters
ed, eds edited, edition, editor; editions
e.g. for example
esp especially
ET English translation.
et al and others
f, ff following, followings
fm feminine
fn in the food note
ibid in the same place
i.e. that is
impf imperfect
LXX Septuagint
m masculine
MS, MSS Manuscript, Manuscripts
MT Masoretic text
NT New Testament
op cit in the work cited
OT Old Testament
p, pp page, pages
pl plural
si singular
Targ Targum
viz \(\times\text{\textphi\textpsi\textpsi\textomicron}\) as above
vol volume
v, vs verse, verses
Vul Vulgate

* The abbreviations for chapter(s) and verse(s) of the Bible will be used without period (e.g., v and ch). If they are used with period (e.g. ch.), they will refer other reference books than the Bible.

B ABBREVIATIONS FOR MODERN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

AmT An American Translation
ARV American Revised Version
ASV American Standard Version
GNB Good News Bible
JB Jerusalem Bible
KJV King James Version
LB The Living Bible
NAB New Afrikaans Bible
NAmB New Americal Bible
NASB New American Standard Bible
NEB New English Bible
NIV New International Version
RSV Revised Standard Version
TEV Today's English Version

C ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT

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**NEW TESTAMENT**

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Phlp  Philippians
Col  Colossians
1 Th  First Thessalonians
2 Th  Second Thessalonians
2 Jn  Second John
3 Jn  Third John
Jude  Jude
Rev  Revelation

D  Abbreviations for Periodicals, Series, and Reference Works

ASTI  Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem
Bib  Biblica
BASOR  Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research
BJRL  Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
BKAT  Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BS  Biblica Sacra
BWAT  Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament
BZAW  Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBAA  The Catholic Biblical Association of America
CBQMS  The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBQ  Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBSC  Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
CTMis  Currents in Theology and Mission
CTMon  Concordia theological monthly
EvT  Evangelische Theologie
Ext  Expository Times
HAT  Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
Int  Interpretation
IB  The Interpreter's Bible
iCC  The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
# TRANSLITERATIONS OF HEBREW

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