The Mysterious Destinies of Israel

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IT WAS at the well of Jacob that Jesus, foretelling a worship new, messianic, not restricted to one place—neither to Mount Gerizim nor even to Mount Zion—spoke the mysterious words: "Salvation is from the Jews." Salvation is from the Jews because the Saviour is a Jew. "I know that the Messiah is coming," said the Samaritan woman, "and when He comes, He will tell us all things." To which Jesus replied: "I who speak with you am He" (Jn 4:21–26).1 We too know that salvation comes from a Jew. Acknowledged and worshipped by some Jews, rejected and given over to be crucified by others, more vocal then and more powerful, Jesus of Nazareth, in and by His shame, was made the cornerstone of the world redeemed.

Salvation comes from the Christ, and the Christ was born of a virgin of the house of David—a flower on the tree of Jesse, sprung from the patriarchs as root. How mysterious and how little noted: Jesus is the only Messiah, the one Redeemer of all; still, one people, in preference to so many stronger, richer, and more cultivated peo-

1. Recently David Daube again drew attention to the "I am of the messianic presence." There are several texts in St. John’s Gospel, in addition to his account of Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman (for instance, 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8; see also Mk 13:6 and Lk 21:8), in which the Greek ego eimi, "I am," means nothing less than "The Messiah is here." So strong, so awesome, were these words that when the Temple police and the servants of the high priest, who had come to arrest Jesus, heard Him say: "I am He," they were terrified and were thrown to the ground. It is significant, Daube points out, that a similar usage survives in the Passover Haggadah. As it recounts, over the Seder table, Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, it enlarges on the words in Ex 12:12: "I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—I, Yahweh," and has the Lord say: "I myself and not an angel, not a seraph, not the messenger. I, Yahweh, ani hu, I am He. . ." Whether or not the reference here to "the messenger" implies a combative mood toward the gospel, the "I am He" of the Passover Haggadah emphatically bespeaks the personal presence and intervention of God the Redeemer, as it does on the lips of Jesus. For a further discussion, see Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (London: Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 325–329.
ples, was chosen to be bound, by a strange, indeed unique, lot, to the messianic hope and to the drama which is the redemption of the world. So intimate is the link that not only Israel's spiritual destinies—that goes without saying—but even its temporal destinies, with their share of the banal and commonplace, will be forever dependent on the most staggering supernatural mystery it is given us to know.

This solidarity cannot be broken or shaken off. But the way in which Israel is made aware of it, though always divine, varies from age to age with Israel's stand toward salvation. In the first epoch, Abraham's children were made a people, shaped and sustained by the mystery of messianic waiting. God held them like a son; His glory dwelt among them; He swore His covenants with them through the patriarchs and Moses, and made known His will to them in the Law. Theirs was a true worship, theirs the messianic promises, and theirs the high privilege of giving flesh to the Messiah, "who is over all things, God blessed forever" (Rom 9:4–5).

Then came the second epoch, which saw the separation between the "Israel of the spirit" and the "Israel of the flesh."² That which was purest and holiest in Israel the Spirit made into the living core of the Church. On the Israel of the flesh, however, there lies heavy the mystery of that redemption it failed to recognize. When Jerusalem refused to come under the wings of the Messiah, it was destroyed, city and Temple, for once Christ was gone its peace was gone (Mt 23:37–38). But even years before Jesus' tears were fulfilled—before the Temple was burned, the city laid in ruins, hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants slain; before the Romans could strike coins that showed a woman bent in mourning with hands chained, coins that bore the inscription Judaea devicta, Judaea capta, "Judaea the conquered and captive"—Paul's heart was torn. Toward those of his

² The contrast here between the Israel of the flesh and the Israel of the spirit follows St. Paul's contrasting of the two Covenants (Gal 4:21–31; Rom 9:6–8). The first receives its children by fleshly descendence, the other by the spiritual birth of baptism (Jn 3:5). In no way is the term "Israel of the flesh" intended to label Israel as carnal (in the modern sense of the word) or as sinful; rather does it identify it as an ethnico-religious community which as such remains outside the orb of the Church. Still, the Spirit, breathing wherever He will, can awaken in it saints, true children of God, who, without knowing it, belong, in an initial way at least, to the Israel of the spirit, that is, the Church of Christ (I shall have occasion to speak of this again). And even before the coming of Christ, the Israel of the spirit existed in formation not only within the Israel of the flesh but also within the world of the Gentiles (see Rom 2:10, 14–16).
kinsmen who had not accepted Christ's offer of peace, Paul repeated
God's cry in Isaiah that all the day He had stretched out His hands
to a people drawing away from Him and walking after their own
thoughts (Rom 10:21; Is 65:2). He repeated the cry, for he knew
that, though the Israel of the flesh is opposed to the Good News, still
it is "most dear for the sake of the fathers" (Rom 11:28).

It is this love, God's fidelity, that in the end will lift from Israel
the heavy weight of its resistance. There will be a day, the third epoch,
when it will understand and accept the mystery of the Cross and sing
hosanna, *hoshi'ah nna*, "Save us we pray!"; when the whole people
will once again, and forever, welcome Jesus with the blessing from
the ancient liturgy of thanksgiving: Blessed in the name of Yahweh
be He who comes.

There will be a day when the Israel of the flesh
will again be one with the Israel of the spirit—the great ingathering
of which the Apostle says that it will be like "life from the dead"
(Rom 11:15).

THE ISRAEL OF WAITING

If one searches the Scriptures for the meaning of Israel's existence,
this much is immediately clear: Israel was meant to be the servant of
the living God. To worship Him and not idols, which are but wind
and vanity, things of naught; to give witness to Him in a world that
is blind; to live not for its own pleasure but for His glory—these
were its given task. If one searches further, one sees, with St. Au-
gustine, that it was not only one or the other in Israel who was
prophet of the Messiah but the people as a whole, and that its king-
dom was prophetic of the Christian kingdom. Israel was thus chosen
to announce the coming of the Christ, to prefigure the world's ransom

3. These words are from Ps 117. There, to the cry of pilgrims entering the
Temple: Hosanna, save us, Lord, we pray; prosper us, Lord, we pray! the priests
respond with a benediction invoking the name of Yahweh on them as they come
to sacrifice. We are accustomed to read this blessing: "Blessed be he who comes in
the name of the Lord," but "in the name of Yahweh, in the name of the Lord," should be attached not to "comes," rather to "blessed." How fitting—though they
did not know it—that it was in these words that the people of Jerusalem greeted
Jesus as He entered the Holy City on the way to His Sacrifice (Mt 21:9)! And
how fitting that these same words will, in the days to come, acclaim Him as Saviour
and Victor (Mt 23:39)!

by His blood, and to foreshow the messianic kingdom, the kingdom of heaven now in the garment of a pilgrim but one day to be vested in glory.

**THE ELECTION**

We say, for the Scriptures say, that Israel was chosen. What does this chosenness really mean? While the Gentiles remained under that regime in which the movements of grace—true supernatural grace—were in some way concealed beneath the best impulses of natural instinct (a regime the theologians therefore call that of the law of nature), Israel was chosen to move, first with the patriarchs, then with Moses and the prophets, into a privileged regime, that of the covenants and of the Mosaic law. In this privileged regime, Israel was invited to prepare, for itself and for all of mankind, the coming of a definitive regime of salvation: salvation was to come from the Jews when the Messiah would appear among them to announce the spiritual deliverance of the world. Israel’s election means, then, that it was chosen not so much to be supernaturally saved itself as to be, in some measure, supernaturally saviour of the other peoples; not simply to be itself redeemed but to be, before the Redeemer’s merciful coming, coredeemer of the rest of men.

It would be a fundamental misunderstanding of Israel’s singularity were one to forget, even for a moment, that its end was not the good of Israel only but of the whole human race. “In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” God said to Abraham (Gen 12:3). Great though the privileges were that were granted to his children, salvation was open to the Gentiles too, and not one of them was condemned except by his own fault. Even sanctity was mysteriously offered to them. Did not the author of the book of Job make his protagonist—the just man *par excellence*—a non-Israelite? Salvation was open to both, to Israel and to the nations, because of the future Messiah; for neither the law of nature, which ruled the Gentiles, nor the much higher regime of the Mosaic law, had of itself the power to save. Both regimes were provisional, dependent in some way on the New Covenant, from which their whole significance came and before which they were destined one day to efface themselves. Still, by a mysterious anticipation of the fruits of Christ’s passion, divine grace visited with its gentle attentions every soul, whether under one
regime or the other, demanding less of the Gentile, who had received less, demanding more of the Jew, who had been so much more favored, but striving to save each and all of them in view of Him who was to come.  

A misunderstanding more basic yet of Israel's election would be to deny its uniqueness, its supernatural transcendence, trying to imprison it within the limits of the general providence by which God governs all creatures according to their structure, or to explain it by the simple play of natural and cultural forces. To Spinoza, for instance, God's guidance is just another word for the chain of natural events, and it is by this, he thinks, that the Jews surmounted so many great perils. All their election means to him is that they enjoyed temporal happiness and the advantages of independent rule, for there is, he says, no other way by which nations are distinguished from one another than by their social organization and the laws under which they live.  

Indeed, to pose the question of Israel's choseness is to pose the very question which divides the modern world so radically and dangerously, the question of the supernatural. To it one must answer either, with the Bible, that the supernatural is a sublime reality or, with Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, that it is an empty illusion. One must declare either that it is supremely reasonable to believe, if they are attested to, things not against but above reason, or that it is supremely reasonable to treat revelation from the outset as a myth. Finally, one must resolve to believe either in the folly of a God who became man to save men or in the adventure—it will be bloody and catastrophic—of man who undertakes to make himself God.  

Supernatural is Israel's vocation: its place in history cannot be fully accounted for by nature, by geographical or sociological forces. Far be it from a theologian to belittle the importance of access to navigable waters, inches of rainfall, acreage of arable land, the size of the population, the map of its migrations, commercial and cultural links to other nations or the lack of them, or any similar factors, for all of nature is God's. But they simply do not add up to Israel's role, which is obviously without parallel.

5. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Rom 2:7–16.
6. Theologico-Political Treatise, chap. III, "Of the Vocation of the Hebrews, and whether the Gift of Prophecy was peculiar to them," passim.
THE SPIRIT OF RANSOM

Chosen so that the entire world might be healed, lovingly formed by God for His redemptive design, the center of Israel's being must needs have been impregnated with the spirit of ransom. It is this spirit that one day would lead the purest of its children, the Son of Man, to cast His life into that divine commerce in which it would be profitable "that one man die for the people," and more, "that He might gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (Jn 11:50–52). Consequently there must have been present here and there in Israel's history this redemptive spirit, in embryo of course; present too a liking for those pacts with God, those mystical dealings and speculations, which are appeals from God to God Himself, from His punishments to His promises, from the demands of His justice to the demands of His mercy.

There is, for instance, what Léon Bloy calls that "wondrous bargaining, that merciful and lovable Jewishness of the beginning when even the name of the Jews was not yet." He is speaking of Abraham and his "marvelous negotiation for an amnesty for Sodom," of the patriarch who begged that fifty, or forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten just be weighed against the townful of wicked; who dared plead with God that He not make His pity prisoner of His wrath, that He, the Judge of all the earth, should not, in His anger against sin, destroy the innocent with the evil, rather spare the evil city for the sake of the innocent (Gen 18:16–33).

We find this same redemptive spirit at work in Moses. When God, having seen the rebellion of His people, having seen them dancing around the Calf as if it were their deliverer, was ready to wipe them out, Moses implored Him to let His blazing wrath die down, to relent and to remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, His servants, to remember above all His own great promises. Moses did not halt there: he offered his own life as ransom that the Lord might pardon the idolators.  

9. "If you would only forgive their sin! If you will not, then strike me out of the book you have written," was Moses' plea (Ex 32:31–32). Some take this to mean merely that Moses was so much one with his people that he did not care to
The most towering instance of Israel's God-given sense of ransom, by then manifestly vicarious expiation, is in the 53rd chapter of the book of Isaiah. There is foretold the Servant of Yahweh, who bears our sufferings and is laden with our miseries. That we may be made whole, He is wounded for our sins and crushed because of our guilt. Evidently, Isaiah's prophecy soars far higher than Moses' offer and Abraham's plea; yet of them all can be said what Bloy exclaimed of the patriarch's humble but so daring colloquy with God: "Such are the Jews, the authentic Jews." 10

It is clear that this spirit of heavenly barter, which, before the coming of the Messiah, when the Church was still in seed, lived in Abraham and in all the true sons of his loins, must now be the magnificient and inalienable privilege of the Israel of promise, the Church now flowered forth. Being the Body of Christ the Redeemer, she cannot but be His coredemptrix; filling up in her flesh what is lacking of His sufferings (Col 1:24), she helps Him ransom the world.

MESSIANIC HOPE

What supremely marks the chosen people is the awakening in them of a living and powerful belief in a God who will not be represented by any image, nor allow any goddess or god beside or even beneath Him; in a word, belief in a transcendent and jealous God. No doubt, human reason can rise to the knowledge of the true God and of His everlasting power (Rom 1:20), but this knowledge cannot remain pure, constant, certain, and trustworthy without an influence from above. 11 Hence if one keeps in mind, first, the cultural and religious

live if they had to die. But is this really an adequate explanation? In the days of Ezekiel, when prophets were speaking falsely, priests despising the Law, princes ravening like wolves, and the people wronging the poor, oppressing the stranger, the Lord lamented that He had sought for a man to stand in the breach before Him on behalf of the land, and had found none (Ez 22:26-30). There was then, in the days of Ezekiel, no intercessor like Moses, and Jerusalem was not spared. Jewish tradition too attributes to Moses the spirit of ransom, though the way it pictures his offering of his life is somewhat defective. When Moses realized that the worship of the Calf would mean the death of Israel, since the Law demanded the death of idolaters, he deliberately broke the Tables of the Commandments, a rabbinical legend tells. Then the legend makes him say to God: Now I too have sinned. If you will forgive them, forgive me also. And if you will not forgive them, do not forgive me either, but strike me out of the book you have written. (Ex. R. 46:1; cf. Midrash Rabbah, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, London: Soncino, 1939, III, 527.)

10. Le Salut par les Juifs, p. 182.
background against which Israel’s faith stood out so forcefully; then, the effort, so much against the grain, by which it had to assert and preserve itself, always struggling against Israel’s own tendencies; and finally, the deeply religious and not just philosophical outlook it elicited—an outlook prayerful, confident, and humble, fleeing sin and begging pardon—one sees that this faith resists a purely natural explanation. Clearly here is a moral miracle.

The God of Israel, so attentive and so demanding, infinitely surpasses the God of philosophy. He is not a God merely thought about; He is the God who has spoken. He has revealed Himself, and His revelation is guaranteed not solely by the witness of the prophets, who are its instruments, but by its own purity and excellence, by the moral context in which it is enshrined, and by the spiritual goals toward which it never ceased to orient Israel.¹²

What one encounters, then, at the bottom of Israel’s faith is the inspiration of Moses and of the prophets, who claimed, with unmistakable signs of authenticity, to speak in the name of Yahweh. Their claim and authentication, which do not leave the order of observable facts, are enough to show that here God’s might entered into the fabric of history. But why did the one, transcendent God, who created heaven and earth and on whom all mankind depends, reveal Himself in a special way to Israel, rather than to so many peoples more numerous, more powerful, more cultivated? Why, if not because it was His design to use this little nation, nothing in itself, to make Himself known, on the appointed day, to all the great nations of the earth? If God surrounded Israel with such singular care, it could only be to pour out on it the first fruits of a justice and of a love which were

¹². That we may appreciate the singularity of Israel’s faith in the living God, Hilaire Duesberg, O.S.B., reminds us in his Les Scribes inspirés (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938–39) that Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, sprang from an idolatrous stock. “When one adds the almost irresistible attraction the surrounding world had for them, their continual vacillation between the baals and Yahweh—which Elijah picturesquely called ’limping on both feet’ (3 Kg 18:21)—the infidelities of kings, the complicity of sinful priests and false prophets, one understands that their belief in the one and only God was not called for by any psychological tendency, any ancestral recollection, or any intellectual need. Yet this belief was held by them to the exclusion of nations older than they, who long before them had walked the ways of civilization. Far from being the unshared prerogative of a school of thinkers, it . . . aimed to win over people as much as priesthood. . . . No doubt, Israel’s unalloyed monotheism was the portion of an elite, but an elite of virtue, not of thought. It is in this sense that it was universal or open to every soul” (I, 487).
bound to reach out from the one people to all men. Here is still another mark which distinguishes this revealed faith as much from simple philosophical monotheism as from the monotheism of Persia or China: seeking all men, it would be, by its very nature, in intention and in the issue—one would like to say on the due date—missionary. Looking toward an imminent expansion of God's kingship over all the world, Israel became the people of messianic hope.

THE EXPECTATION OF THE KINGDOM

There are thus two wonders concerning Israel: that it is unbelievably loved by God, and that it is loved for the sake of others. When Israel was a child in Egypt, the Lord loved him; He took His people into His arms and drew them with cords of kindness, with bonds of love. Even after they had sinned, Hosea declared around 750 B.C., He did not give rein to His anger, but spoke tenderly to them and showed them compassion (II:1-4, 9; 2:23). But prophetic knowledge did not stop with this. It knew Israel had been taken into the Lord's service that through it He might become known to all nations.

Because of these elementary certitudes, the prophets were able in a way to read the hidden meaning of the ebb and flow in Israel's history and thus to run ahead of the course of events. Intuitively anticipating the future, they announced the punishments that were to fall on Samaria and Jerusalem, the deportations, the return from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple. Yet these more immediate predictions never made them lose sight of Israel's supreme destiny, which was to prepare the roads for a vast and wondrous kingdom.

Unlike the empires of earth, the new kingdom would be spiritual and supranational. Hence, on the one hand, only a remnant, not Israel simply as it was, would enter it, and on the other, all the nations would be invited.

And all nations shall stream unto [the mount of Yabweb],
and many peoples shall go and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mount of Yabweb,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
That He may teach us of His ways,
and that we may walk in His paths."

(Is 2:2-3)
Such was the vision of Micah (4:1-2) and Isaiah, about a generation after Hosea. Indeed, the hand of God would be extended even to Israel's ancient foes. "One of the peaks of prophetic thought" speaks of Egypt and Assyria as united with Israel and sharing in its privileges, and tells how Yahweh, the angel-surrounded, would bless them: "Blessed be my people, Egypt, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance" (Is 19:25).

Here the vision of the kingdom so widened as to embrace even the enemy. Ministering to God's ever-unfolding design, the prophets sought also to deepen the hope for the messianic kingdom. After the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Jeremiah, then a refugee in Mizpah, and especially Ezekiel, an exile in Babylon, started to stress, without questioning in the least the fact of communal responsibility, the importance of personal responsibility. Stating that each soul shall bear the burden of its sin and that each shall be judged according to its ways, crying too that the sons of Israel must cast away their transgressions and make themselves a new heart and a new spirit, Ezekiel insisted on a division that cut right through the community of Israel: the just and the sinners.

Then there is Daniel, also taken captive to Babylon at the time of the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In the book of Daniel, the division within Israel is drawn more strongly yet, prefiguring even here below the lasting separation of the good and the wicked: those who have forsaken the Covenant shall see everlasting horror, while the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever and ever (12:2; 7:18).

What Père Lagrange has said of the book of Daniel, that, as to the fulfillment of prophecy, "history was not clearly distinguished from eternity," can also be said of the other prophetic writings: earth and

14. The authenticity of Is 19:16-25 has been challenged, and conjectures as to its date vary. But surely, whatever the scholarly conclusions about the actual penman, the thought is clearly Isaianic.
16. Ibid., p. 69.
heaven are frequently seen together. No doubt, the prospects of national restoration and temporal well-being are not absent from most of the prophecies. They speak of a time when Israel will dwell again in its houses, when Jerusalem will be rebuilt around a marvelous temple, when the land will be fertile and the stars bright, when the pride of the nations will be broken and wars abolished, when the wild beasts will harm man no more, when the wolf and the lamb will go side by side. But here is the main point which, in the eyes of a Christian, illumines the prophecies: from the heights to which the prophets take us that they may show us the sublime works of Providence, we cannot help seeing three truths plainly. First, earthly happiness, of a people or even of mankind as a whole, can henceforth be but secondary. Further, earthly happiness cannot come to man except in a conditional, precarious, and incomplete way, for in this world the law of love has not reached final glory but is still crucified. Lastly, in the mind of God, and even in the mind of the prophets, such happiness is meant to evoke and signify, if not solely at least eminently, the spiritual peace God desires to lodge at the heart of creation that, on the last day, He may remake all things in a harmony as yet unimaginable.

All this becomes clearer yet in those prophecies which have shed any national or material ornament, as, for instance, when Yahweh—in the book of Malachi, which was written in 445 B.C., shortly after Nehemiah returned from exile to begin his work of reform—called for a sacrifice other than that of pitiful and worthless beasts: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation. For my name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord God of hosts" (Mal 1:11). If anything, then, is fundamental in the prophetic message, it is this vision, without peer in the ancient world, of an all-embracing faith which will gather the entire universe around the God of Israel.

Though it is the prophets who are the great spokesmen of this hope, its light shines in the Torah too. There is, in the third chapter of Genesis, that first ray of hope for fallen man, which means hope for all men. In the twelfth chapter, at the threshold of Israel's history, there is the promise of blessing through Abraham for all the families of earth. Again, near the end of Genesis, we read the farewell of the dying Jacob to his sons, and in it what will befall them
and their children's children "in the days to come," that is, in the messianic days. This is the destiny of the sons of Judah:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the staff from between his feet,  
Until he comes to whom it belongs.  
To him shall be the obedience of nations.  

(49:10)  

It is the Messiah whose coming is here foretold.

PEOPLE OF THE MESSIAH

Servants of justice that they were, the prophets were of course concerned with the happenings, the right and wrong, around them. But some of their sayings—and these are the most mysterious—give us a glimpse of the King-Messiah, as of lightning rending the web of contemporary events. Of His birth, Isaiah foretold more than seven centuries in advance:

Behold the virgin shall conceive  
and bear a son  
and shall call his name Emmanuel.  

(7:14)

17. Martin Buber, in his translation of the Bible, renders the third part of this verse as bis erseheint Demz-zukommt, making "he-to-whom-belong [sceptre and staff]" a single noun, as if it were a proper name. See his Die Schrift, I, Das Buch im Anfange (Berlin: Lambert Schneider, n.d.), p. 196.

18. Undeniably, the Hebrew word almah, which is rendered here as "virgin," means, in its precise sense, "young woman" or "single woman of marriageable age," the technical term for "virgin" being betulah. But does it not seem likely that the Jewish sense of chastity often made one tantamount to the other, in very much the same way that the English "maidens" is an equivalent for "virgin," or that the German Jungfrau (i.e. "young woman") has come to mean—and this most rigorously—"virgin"? In any case, when, about 250 years before Christ, the Hebrew Bible was put into Greek for the sake of the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, its Jewish translators rendered almah by parthenos, i.e. "virgin." And Matthew, writing for his Jewish brethren, become Christian or not, quotes—without the least fear of being misunderstood—the Isaianic prophecy and claims its realization. None of this implies, of course, that the prophet knew the fullest import of what he foresaw; on the contrary, here as elsewhere, the prophecy does not make obvious what is to come, rather does the fulfillment explain the prophecy.

Rabbinical tradition interprets Isaiah's prophecy quite differently, and, to all seeming, the merest thought of a virgin birth is foreign to it. One wonders, however, whether the thought is really so foreign or whether it was suppressed. For David Daube asks whether the words in the Passover Haggadah, "and God knew" (following, as they do, on "He saw our affliction," which the rabbis interpret as the Israelites' abstention in Egypt from marital union) do not imply the
Im-anu-El, "God-with-us," will be His name, for He is the earnest of God's watching over His own. Lordship will be upon His shoulder and He will govern with authority. He will rule with wisdom and might, with kindness and solicitude; therefore Wonder-Counsellor, mighty God, Father forever, Prince of peace, are among His exalted titles (9:6). And the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon Him (11:2-4).

At about the same time that Isaiah spoke, Micah foresaw that the Ruler of Israel, the Prince of the messianic kingdom, would spring not from royal Jerusalem but from Bethlehem, a town small and lowly. His going forth was from the days of old, the prophet said (5:2), looking back at the beginnings of David's house, and beyond. "From the days of old" suggests that His were God's mighty deeds in the days of the patriarchs and of Moses, and no less that His origin was in the bosom of eternity. "He shall stand and feed [His flock] in the strength of the Lord," and they shall dwell secure, for He shall be peace (5:4).

The most vivid picture of the Messiah is in those extraordinary passages of the book of Isaiah which sing of Ebed Yahweh, the Servant of the Lord.

Be bold, my servant whom I will uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights... (42:1)

It were too little that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved of Israel.

supernatural birth of Moses, that is, his conception without a human father (op. cit., pp. 5-9). Jean Briitter-Narbonne quotes a significant text from the Midrash Tehillim of Rabbi Moses ha-Darshan. There Rabbi Yudan interprets the words, "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven" (Ps 84:12), in the following way: "It is our salvation that shall spring from the earth through the immediate work of God. And the two, truth and justice, shall be joined together. But why is it said that truth shall spring; why not that it shall be born? Because its manner of birth shall not be like that of the creatures of the world; rather shall it differ from theirs in every respect. This is the meaning of the verse which follows: 'Yea, the Lord will give what is good, and our land shall yield its fruit' (Ps 84:13). Truly, no one will be able to name his [the Messiah's] father, and much less will anyone know him. But this will be a mystery for the people until he himself comes to reveal it" (Les Prophéties messianiques de l'Ancien Testament dans la littérature juive, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933, p. 31).
I will make you the light of the nations,  
that my salvation be to the end of the earth.  

(49:6)

Behold, my servant shall succeed, 
he shall arise and be exalted. . . .  
He was despised and aloof from men,  
a man of pains and familiar with suffering. . . .  
But it was our sufferings that he bore. . . .  
Upon him was the chastisement which made us whole,  
and by his stripes we were healed.  

(52:13; 53:2-5)

In the first verses, “servant” seems to refer to the people of Israel, yet even here there shines through the figure of Him who is the epitome of all that was given to it; Him toward whose coming these gifts had been prepared; Him who is at once Israel’s summit and sun. But when the servant’s aroning Passion and death are spoken of, the Messiah stands in full sight, He who “takes away the sins of many and makes intercession for the rebellious” (Is 53:12).

Zechariah (around 520 B.C.) also preached the Messiah’s might in weakness: His death as a well of grace for His people.

And I will pour out upon the house of David  
and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem  
the spirit of grace and of prayers;  
and they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.  
And they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son;  
and they shall grieve over him,  
as the manner is to grieve for the death of the firstborn. . . .  
In that day there shall be a fountain open  
to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
for the washing of the sinner.  

(12:10; 13:1)

Finally, no longer His hidden might but His majesty is told in the book of Daniel. To the Son of Man will be given “power and glory and a kingdom; and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve him” (7:14).

Like the prophets, the psalms stirred the hope for the Messiah, some referring to Him in a direct or literal, others in an indirect or
typical, way. In Psalm 109, David—which Israel's tradition always claimed as its author—portrayed the Messiah as king, priest, warrior.

\[
\text{Yahweh said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand}\n\text{till I make your enemies your footstool". . . .}
\]

\[
The \text{Lord has sworn, and He will not repent:}
\text{"You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."}
\]

(109:1, 4) 19

The psalmist goes on to tell that, on the day of wrath, the Messiah will crush kings in the might of Yahweh and will judge the nations, heaping up corpses. Here the messianic conquest is pictured with all the cruel fury of battle. Yet is this really anything more than hyperbole for the Messiah's triumph, which will indeed be achieved in blood—not others' but His own? In any case, Israel's vision of Him was purified till the death-dealing Warrior became the suffering and dying Servant.

Psalm 2 also tells that the Messiah will rule with an iron rod and warns kings and nations to serve with fear—the nations that rage and the kings who rise up against Yahweh and His Anointed. Here too the triumphant array but clothes a spiritual center. Seeing Nathan's prophecy about the house of David (2 Kg 7:4–16) as already fulfilled and David's everlasting kingdom as already established, the psalmist made the Messiah say:

\[
\text{The Lord said to me: "You are my son;}
\text{this day I have begotten you."}
\]

(2:7)

In all likelihood, the Messiah's sonship meant to the psalmist no more—though this is not little—than His unique dignity as Yahweh's representative, ruling by His authority and standing under His singular watch, for a prophet need not be aware of the fullest content of the revelation he brings.

Great was to be the dignity of the Messiah and great the fruits of His coming. This is how Psalm 71 sees them:

19. Father Bruce Vawter, C.M., has suggested that the Hebrew of this verse would be better rendered by: "You are a priest forever, like Melchizedek" (see his review of Volume III of the Confraternity version of the Bible in Theological Studies, XVII, 2, June 1956, p. 240). [Editor.]
Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more. . . .
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

(71:7, 13)

There is still another psalm which sings the Messiah, but this time not only His glory, His degradation too. It opens: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," but rises from lament to praise:

I am a worm, not a man;
the scorn of men, despised by the people.
All who see me scor at me.

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:
"You who fear the Lord, praise Him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to Him;
revere Him, all you descendants of Israel!"

All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the Lord;
All the families of the nations
shall bow down before Him.

(21:7–8, 23–24, 28)

Even if one were to assume, with some commentators, that this psalm does not speak literally of the Messiah, that it represents only the suffering of the just man who, apparently abandoned by God, does not totter in his hope, surely his trial is the draft and type of the greater Passion to come. 20

20. One must insist, writes Père Lagrange, "on the beauty of the soul which reveals itself in this prayer. The psalmist neither speaks of his sins nor invokes, as do so many others, his innocence, which nonetheless shines through. No anger against his tormentors, no curse, no bitterness, no philosophical preoccupation with the problem of pain: only recourse to God and abandonment. Though no other psalm expresses these thoughts with the same beauty, a great many of them never tire of telling the sufferings of the just. At the root of them all is the idea that the true servant of God has no refuge but in Him. Persecuted, vilified, ill used, tortured, he hopes and longs for his own salvation and the salvation of Zion. What, then, must the Servant par excellence be like? It is at least in this sense that all these psalms are turned toward the future. And as Israel was more and more wont to attribute these psalms to David, the sufferings of the great king brought close the thought of the sufferings of the Messiah, David’s exalted image" ("Notes sur le messianisme dans les psaumes," Revue Biblique, XXII, 1, 1905, pp. 52–53).
JESUS THE FULFILLMENT

The few glimpses of the Messiah and His kingdom that I have given from the Old Testament are enough to show a little of the heights toward which Yahweh, patiently and step by step, led His people. The lights He gave His prophets seem to have risen for them one after the other from the dark depth of the future. Hence one must not think of them as having set our intentionally to hide, under the ambiguity of metaphor, a light they themselves deemed too strong for their contemporaries. On the contrary, the prophets strove to free the divine thought from the obscurities, the veils, the images, in which, for them as well as for the people, it remained enveloped. Fully infallible as the prophetic revelation was, still it was one of fragments and parts, trying to stammer a word which was not yet given it to pronounce. The salvation to come was marvelously to transcend the Law and the Prophets, great as they were; hence they could know it only in its preparatory and virtual state, and therefore only imperfectly. "Because the mind of the prophet is a deficient instrument," writes St. Thomas, "even the true prophets do not know all that is intended by the Holy Spirit in their visions, their words, and even their prophetic deeds." 22

Saying that the contents of the prophecies surpassed the prophets' knowledge of them is the same as saying that the realization of the prophecies was itself a revelation, indeed the greatest of all. Jesus alone could explain the past and give Israel's history its full significance; He alone could put at one what had seemed disparate. He did so when He brought together in His own person the scattered traits of the promised Messiah, and when He announced that the messianic kingdom of glory and power and majesty would begin as a kingdom crucified.

There are various ways in which the Old Testament designates the bearer of the salvation to come. At times it tells that God Himself will come to save His people. On the other hand, it expects a king, son of David, who will mount the throne of his fathers and bring to his own a bliss unheard of. Then there is the Suffering Servant, who

21. Cf. Heb 1:1, which tells of God's speaking "at sundry times and in divers manners." The meaning of the Greek is more clearly that He spoke fragmentarily, in many portions, and by many varied means of communication.
will turn the nations to the faith of Israel and whose wounds will be the healing of our own. Again, a supernatural being will come from heaven to establish the reign of the saints. Four lines pointing toward a future light. Will they run forever parallel, or do they meet? No one could answer till He came who was and is the Answer.

Jesus is God’s personal coming in a unique manifestation of goodness, as He is the fulfillment of the promises to David. He is Daniel’s supernatural being, but truly the Son of Man. He must reign as the descendant of David and as the Son of Man, but only after having preached, suffered, and died as the Servant of Yahweh. He is come that God’s kingship be recognized on earth, that God be better served and better loved; but it is through Him that the reign of God over the elect is established above, for it is by His death and by His grace that the elect are admitted to God’s presence. Thus all the Old Testament prophecies are reality and harmony, and He who is the end of the promises also opens the life to come. 23

Without this reconciliation in Jesus of these scattersed messianic traits, the Old Testament would have remained sealed to us, as it still is—the Christian believes—to the Jews. With Jesus, however, the Old Testament opens its shell and gives up its meat, so that, with Tertullian, we may call Him Illuminator antiquitatum, the One who illumines the things of old. 24 He drew forth their light, because He was their Light.

THE TEMPTATION OF JUDAISM

This is the mystery of Jesus: Servant and King, Man of pain and Lord of glory, He not only fulfilled the prophecies of old but so illuminated them that they yielded their last secrets. Yet not all in Israel have accepted this mystery; not all have been able to believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. What other key, then, do they offer to the prophecies?

In the description Joseph Klausner, for instance, gives of the Jewish messianic idea, the Messiah pales before the people of Israel. However beautiful his role, it seems to be secondary, even accidental, so much so that, according to Klausner, it is quite possible for a Jew

to conceive redemption without a personal Messiah and still be loyal to his people and his religion. Without the Messiah, Judaism is defective, no doubt, but it survives, for, so Klausner implies, it is really Israel as a people which occupies the forefront of history. "The Jews," he writes, "can and must march at the head of humanity on the road of personal and social progress, on the road to ethical perfection," and so, by repentance and good works, hasten redemption. When the Messiah comes, he will be a just man, indeed the ideal man, filled with the gifts of the Spirit, strong in body, vested in might and valor. For all his greatness, however, Klausner insists, the Messiah will be but flesh and blood, no more than a mortal man. What he will bring is economic and spiritual redemption, eternal peace, material prosperity, and ethical perfection. A triumphant king, he will thus establish the "kingdom of the Almighty," but this kingdom, Klausner stresses time and again, is definitely "of this world," is earthly bliss. Embodying the Jewish longing to shake off the yoke of the Dispersion, he will gather his own people from the four corners of the earth and bring them back to the land of their fathers. And he will govern not only Israel but, in a certain sense, all the nations, who will have been converted to the Jewish belief in the one God, for the restoration of Israel will draw after it the restoration of the whole world. The days of the Messiah, then, will see the end of idolatry and of all the evils it brings about. There will no longer be poverty or pain or war; peace will reign among men and nations. Even nature will be redeemed. Yet, in the picture Klausner paints, the Messiah's first work will be to deliver Israel from political oppression, and only after the ingathering of the exiles, only after national freedom is restored to the Jewish people, will all the nations be leagued in a single band to fulfill God's purpose.

Because of its emphasis on earthly bliss, political freedom, and economic abundance, Judaism's messianic concept has been called materialistic, but this is hardly just, for it also stresses perfection, righteousness, and brotherhood. Yet a Christian cannot help seeing in the dream of a mere kingdom-of-this-world an impoverishment of the prophetic message. It does not do justice to the great texts of Isaiah.

or of the other prophets. What is even more serious, it forces us to assume that God’s most immediate concern regarding His kingdom on earth is the political deliverance of the Jewish people and their resettling in the Holy Land; that divine intervention in history has for its final object the temporal and cultural progress of mankind through the intermediacy of an Israel confident in its monotheism and in its good works; 26 and that the supreme end toward which all of God’s providential roads converge is a happy millennium on a fertile earth with a political Messiah as leader.

How can an ideal so largely immersed in the things of this world be reconciled with the wondrous outpourings of sanctity and purity passionately predicted by the prophets, who thus anticipated the whole evangelical spirituality of the kingdom that is not of this world? 27 How can such an ideal accord with the astounding adjurations, the “mad” condescensions, the staggering appeals of love, which Yahweh, from the depth of the heavens, addressed through Hosea to his unfaithful and yet ever desired spouse? 28 How can it be in keeping with those mysterious, unfathomed depths of God which Abraham adored when, on Mount Moriah, he could only hope against hope; which Job professed when he was ordered to gird his loins and answer the Almighty; and which were the anguish and the hope of the abandoned Jeremiah? 29 To substitute a kingdom of this world for the kingdom which, though in, is not of, this world is to misunderstand the most hidden, the most divine, the most quickening inspiration of the Old Testament.

It is quite true, however, that the breadth and length of this inspiration could not be grasped till the gospel. For the prophetic message was a living reality, growing with time like a stem growing toward its bloom; and while it grew, no one was able fully to divine what it would be like. Because of this openness toward future revelation, there is a certain indeterminateness about the Old Testament. Hence there was the temptation to read its promises too literally, which

26. Am I wrong in detecting such confidence throughout Klausner’s book? At its close, for instance, measured though he means his words to be, he writes: “We can say, without being suspected of undue bias toward Judaism, that the Jewish Messianic faith is the seed of progress, which has been planted by Judaism throughout the whole world” (ibid., p. 531).
27. Is 32:15-17; 44:3-5; 45:8; Ez 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Jl 2:28-29.
meant to break the élan which was carrying them toward their fulfillment and to cloud their most authentic significance—a temptation into which, alas, Judaism fell. On the other hand, we can show today that true fidelity to the ancient promises is that which, by an advance—a going-beyond, no doubt, but without the least violence—leads toward the acceptance of the New Testament.

It was only a remnant in Israel that took this decisive step, while the greater part found the New Testament a stumbling block. Even before the coming of Jesus, there was growing among Jews a movement of defense against the contempt and oppression of the Gentiles, a falling back on themselves, which, little by little, stiffened them and made them forget that divine revelation was meant for all and that its wealth was yet uncounted. Even before the coming of Jesus, there was a tendency here and there in Israel to lose sight of the gratuitousness of its election, to overlook that it was due not to its own merits but to God's grace, and to weaken the supernatural character of revelation. There was a firm resolve to form a nation most faithful to its religion, but to a religion shaped for one people alone; an ever-growing zeal for the Law and its punctilious observance which sought to multiply occasions for its diligent service. Further, as a reaction to the Gentile mockery and the foreign rule Jews had to suffer, the conviction took deeper and deeper root that the Messiah would be their man, their captain, who would subdue the nations, making the nations bow before him and also before them.30

To sum up, then: the great hour of grace, the coming in the flesh of God the Redeemer, was prepared by the yearning of the patriarchs, of the prophets, of the many saints of Israel, of all those in whom its true spirit lived. But I sorrow to say that the failure too, the failure to recognize Jesus as the One He is, was prepared from afar, by the misunderstandings and resistances of those who were hard of heart.

THE ISRAEL OF THE SPIRIT

The Messiah has come; the last, the messianic and eschatological, times have begun. Since Jesus' first coming, the messianic kingdom has been established in the world; but, bearing the likeness of its King, it is a kingdom that, while on pilgrimage through history, must

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remain crucified. Only at His second coming will His touch of glory unlock the whole fund of love patiently laid up in the course of the centuries; suddenly and awesomely it will burst open in order to pour forth on the universe. But this eternal gladness is not without birth pangs in time.

THE FOUNDING OF THE KINGDOM

With divine sureness, the New Testament claims to be the realization of two thousand years of patriarchal and prophetic waiting. The three canticles of thanksgiving, for instance, which in St. Luke’s Gospel surround the birth of the Saviour, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Nunc dimittis, tremble with the stupendous certitude that the unbroken line of generations beginning with Abraham and passing through David, always watched over by a heavenly design, have come at last to Him in whom all the seed of the patriarch is summed up (see Gal 3:16).31

From the very start of His ministry, Jesus Himself took pains to show Himself the Fulfiler of the things of old. In the synagogue of Nazareth, He read from Isaiah these words:

\[
\text{The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me,}
\]
\[
\text{because Yahweh has anointed me;}
\]
\[
\text{He has sent me to bear good tidings to the afflicted,}
\]
\[
\text{to encourage the broken-hearted. . . .}
\]

\[61:1\]

Closing the scroll, He declared: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21). Later, for example, He identified Himself as David’s Lord, the Lord of Psalm 109 (Mt 22:41–46); and again, without the least hesitation, said that Abraham had seen His day and rejoiced (Jn 8:56).

Peter too, interpreting to the multitude of Jerusalem the pentecostal marvel they had seen, proclaimed that in it had come true Joel’s prophecy that in the last days the Spirit of Yahweh would be poured forth on all flesh (Ac 2:16–21; Jl 2:28–32). In another dis-

31. If one has the good fortune to attend matins at the monastery of La Grande Chartreuse on, for example, the feast of St. Anne, one can hear the monks chant, from an old illuminated evangelary, the genealogy of the Saviour. As their singing rises out of their silence, one not only knows, one feels, how much the Church continues to be fed through her everlasting roots in the Old Testament.
course to his brethren, the "men of Israel," this time in Solomon's 
Porch of the Temple, Peter announced that with the coming of Jesus, 
the Just and Holy One, mankind had entered the days predicted by 
the prophets, days that would be crowned, at His coming again, by a 
restoration of all things, a renewal of creation (Ac 3:12–26). So He 
is seen throughout the New Testament: so the disciples understood 
Him on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:27), so Stephen portrayed Him 
to the Sanhedrin (Ac 7), so Philip the deacon explained Him to the 
courtier of the Ethiopian queen (Ac 8:30–35)—always is He the 
end and goal of Israel's hope. O Christum in novis veterem! Tertul-
lian exclaimed, "O Christ, old are you in your newness!" 32

To Paul no less was He the focus toward which the Scriptures con-
erged and at the same time the fountainhead from which sprang all 
the new splendors of the messianic age, for with His birth there be-
gan "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4). 33

THE FIRST HEARTBEATS OF THE CHURCH

In taking flesh of a virgin of Israel that He might gather the world 
into His kingdom, the Messiah effected a double mystery, in the one 
instant crowning the Ancient Dispensation and unthroning it. When 
He was born, the chain of fleshly descendance that had begun with 
Abraham was perfected; the prophetic stem of Jesse was all at once 
brought to bloom. But the same virginal birth broke that chain: what 
mattered henceforth was sonship of Abraham, not according to flesh 
and blood but according to the wonder of a hidden, spiritual birth, 
a birth that could therefore be offered to all nations. 34 Thus St. Paul 
proclaimed that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek: all 
are one (Gal 3:28).

True as it is that the message of the Annunciation broke that long 
and providential chain of generations, that sacred series of links which 
had led from father to son, it is no less true that the Saviour is of the 
offspring of Abraham. His mother was of the line of the patriarchs 
and of David the king. His apostles and first disciples were Jews. He

33. For Christ the focus see Ac 13:16–41 and 17:2–3; for Christ the foun-
tainhead see Gal 3:8, 14; Col 1:26, and others.
34. The two births, one of the flesh, the other of the spirit, are, according to 
the Apostle, announced and prefigured by the two sons of Abraham: Ishmael, child 
of the loins, and Isaac, child of the promise (Gal 4:21–31; Gen 16 and 17).
Himself declared that He was sent "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). Consequently, it was from the Israel of the flesh that the Israel of the spirit was first chosen, from the children of Abraham's loins that the first children of the promise were gathered. The light of the prophets had readied them for the redemption; of each of them the poet could have said: "Whose watch is for the Rising Sun, for him nothing is unexpected. For it is precisely toward the unexpected that all his waiting is bent." 35

Never again, I think, will the Church on earth be so fervent, so loving, so pure, as when she was Jewish; never again in the course of the ages will she find sanctity like that of Mary or even like that of the apostles. One of the reasons for this, her initial excellence, was the task entrusted to her as she came forth from the hands of the Messiah. The great things she did under His immediate influence were perfect, so that they could serve as models to the faithful of every century till the end of the world. Peter's professions of faith at Capernaum and Caesarea Philippi, the inspired insights of the disciple whom Jesus loved, Mary Magdalene's cry on Easter morn, the martyrdom of Stephen, the conversion of Saul: they all would lend their meaning, ardor, and impetus to the course of future Christians. Thus the first throbings of the heart of the Church determined the whole rhythm of the Christian life to come. Commenting on the verse, "[Zion's] stones are dear to your servants, and her dust moves them to pity" (Ps 101:15), St. Augustine said of the little Church of Jerusalem:

From this very dust there came a wall of thousands on thousands who believed, who laid the price of their goods at the apostles' feet. From this dust, then, there sprang forth a human nature perfect and beautiful. Who among the Gentiles can be likened to them? At how few can we marvel for doing as they did, and did in thousands? 36

But what does it mean that, at the time when her core was being so marvelously formed, the Church was made up entirely of members sprung from the Israel of the flesh? Does it mean that they were exceptional Christians by very reason of their Jewish birth; that in the Church—by its nature above ethnic divisions—racial privileges could

be claimed for Jews; that Paul's bitter enemies were right to think that a Christian of Jewish blood was twice a Christian? Certainly not, for, as the Apostle says, "there is a remnant left, selected out of grace" (Rom 11:5). Henceforth it is grace that counts. Jewish Christians who boasted of their ancestry spoke "foolishly" (2 Cor 11:21). Indeed, if they thought of themselves as some kind of superior Christians, they were in peril of falling away from grace itself, so that what, under the Old Dispensation, had been a legitimate title of glory could, under the New, become for them a cause of judgment.

If the miracle of the infant Church does not in the least justify racial pride, what does it tell us? Simply this: we, Christians of Gentile stock, latecomers to the Church, owe to the Jewish people, from whom God chose the Christ, His blessed mother, and His first and fervent followers, an admiration tinged with envy; we owe them admiration, which is radically incompatible with contempt, aversion, hatred, in short, with anti-Semitism. Then, to this admiration we must join an everlasting gratitude toward those first Jews who by grace entered the new faith and were given the mission of carrying with them to the Church the sacred patrimony of the Jewish people, notably its most cherished treasure, the Law and the Prophets.

Having been the bearer of this treasure, Israel's remnant is also pledge and token of the future reintegration of the whole people. Thus it is, within the bosom of the Church, the object of a wondrous choice, which has no equal nor will have. But its privilege is one in whose blessings we all share. With what marvel and thanksgiving they fill us as they come to us on the waves of time! Here then is the royal road, the bridge, by which the Old Covenant passes into the New; here, in Israel's remnant, is the visible continuity between the walled Jerusalem and the Jerusalem whose walls are the ends of the earth—the city henceforth peopled by Jews and Gentiles, by faithful who continually come to her from Jacob's stock and by faithful who come to her from far-off nations, that the two may be one in the Christ, their Peace (Eph 2:14–18).

THE ISRAEL OF EXILE

At the moment when the smaller but healthier part of Israel, its remnant, became the Church, identifying its religious destinies with
those of the kingdom of God (now, by right and essence, freed of all ethnic and cultural enclosures), the greater part remained aloof. In order to keep their dreams of immediate deliverance, political sovereignty, and earthly happiness, most of the people, under the direction of their official leaders, chose—no, to be correct one should say, acquiesced when those leaders chose—against their true Messiah, against a Messiah too pure and spiritual, too poor and humiliated, too full of pain, too crucified.\(^{37}\)

To say Yes to God is always, for each one of us, to consent to a Love greater than we can imagine, and to say No is to offend a Love infinite and truly incomprehensible. So it had to be with the people of Israel. Since it had been prepared by the patient and pressing revelation of the prophets to receive its Saviour, its Yes or No had necessarily to express a unique mystery and had to bring about incalculable historic consequences. While the Yes of the remnant gave birth to the Church, the No of the leaders and of all those who followed them gave birth to the Israel of exile. But in that failure they were, as Israel always is, a mirror of the sins of all men.

**ISRAEL'S FAILURE**

People of God famished for the kingdom, and who would not have it—Israel is in the world and is not of the world; but it is attached to the world, subject to the world, in bondage to the world. One day Israel stumbled and was caught in a trap; it stumbled against God—and in what an encounter, never to be repeated! Israel did not know what it was doing; but its leaders knew that they were making their choice against God. In one of those acts of free will which involve the destiny of a whole community, the priests of Israel, the bad watchmen in the vineyard, the slayers of prophets, with excellent reasons of political prudence, chose the world, and to that choice their whole people are henceforth bound—until

\(^{37}\) Vladimir Soloviov well understood that it was the Cross that was the stumbling block for the Jews. But the drama of Golgotha was not, as he was inclined to think, the result of a conflict between two politico-religious messianic concepts, one universal, the other narrowly national; rather was it the result of a clash between Jesus' messianic message of a supra-political kingdom and the multitude's messianic dream of a political kingdom. In his short study on Judaism and Christianity, Soloviov wrote: "The Cross of Christ, which is the gate to the kingdom of God, demanded of the Jewish people a double abandonment of self: first the renunciation of its national egoism, then the renunciation of its striving for earthly happiness" (*Judentum und Christentum*, Dresden, 1911, p. 45). It might be more exact to say: the striving after an uncrucified earthly happiness.
it changes of its own accord. A crime of clerical misfeasance, unequalled prototype of all similar crimes.\(^{38}\)

How is it possible to say that here was a crime which involved, or, more exactly, burdened, the whole body of Israel? Was the fault not, above all, that of Israel's heads—in the words of Matthew, "the chief priests and the elders of the people" (27:1), or of Mark, "the chief priests with the elders, the scribes and the whole Sanhedrin" (15:1)? And is it not true that many in the crowd gathered before the governor's palace, who had a terrifying part in the crime, did not know exactly what they were doing?\(^{29}\) Surely when they shouted: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mt 27:25), they were convinced that they had nothing to fear, that they were only demanding the death of one who, by calling himself the Son of God, had blasphemed, or of one who had not done the people's will, a will they thought was God's.

Still, the spiritual consequences of this dreadful error were bound to continue through the centuries. It was an error that would hurl Israel into religious roads bent from the very start, obscuring for it the pure and authentic significance of the promises of which it had been the bearer. The ways it was thenceforth to walk would gravely hinder the recognition of the Messiah, whose grace, we know, knocks at the heart of every one of Abraham's children. It knocks at their

38. Jacques Maritain, "The Mystery of Israel" in Ransoming the Time, trans. by H. L. Binse (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 152-153. References to Maritain's essay are always to the Scribner edition, though at times the translation used may differ from it slightly. If I quote Maritain so often and so extensively, it is because we owe him so much. Hence I should like to thank him here, in my own name and in the name of all Catholics; for, in the penetration of Israel's mystery, as in many other domains, he has shown us the way.

39. "Brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers" (Ac 3:17), said St. Peter in his second discourse after Pentecost, and St. Paul wrote of himself that he too had acted in ignorance (1 Tim 1:13). To this apostolic testimony may be added the penetrating words of St. Augustine: "My brethren . . . we beg you to be on your guard: you who are in the Church, do not insult those who are not; rather pray that they may be in it. 'For God is able to graft them back' (Rom 11:23). It is of the Jews that the Apostle said this, and so it happened to them. The Lord rose and many believed. They did not know Him when they crucified Him. But later they believed in Him, and that great offense was forgiven them. The blood of the Lord, which they had shed, was forgiven to the homicides. I do not say deicides, 'for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory' (1 Cor 2:8). The slaying of an innocent was forgiven them, and the blood they had shed while out of their minds they later drank by grace. Say then to God: 'How tremendous are your deeds!' (Ps 65:3)" (Enarratio in Psalm. 65, 5; PL 36:790-791).
hearts, for even outside the Church’s frontiers, grace never ceases to visit, to run before, and to enlighten all men, trying to turn them to their ultimate end and toward their true Saviour; consequently, without their always being aware of it, also toward the Church which is His Mystical Body.

To understand how the stumbling of Good Friday could burden the whole community of Israel, one must keep in mind two truths, apparently contradictory. The one, emphatically declared by Ezekiel, that there is no injustice in the Lord, who judges everyone according to his works; that only the soul that sins shall die. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son" (18:20). The other, proclaimed in Deuteronomy: that there is the mysterious reality of burdens borne by a whole community. "I, Yahweh, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishments for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation, but bestowing mercy, down to the thousandth generation, on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments" (5:9–10). These two revelations, one about the personal, the other about the social, character of divine sanctions, are not irreconcilable. The decision of Israel’s leaders did indeed bequeath to future generations enormous obstacles to the recognition of the Messiah. But for the greatest number of souls, these obstacles may well amount to invincible ignorance.

That the Messiah was denied by the leaders of His own people and delivered to the Gentiles to be crucified produced, thus, grievous results for all of Israel. But never must we forget—God forbid it!—that when He was so denied and delivered, the sin was far from resting in equal measure on all Jews. For a great number, the personal fault was nil, nonexistent. Indeed, it would be the height of injustice to say that all the Jews of Jesus’ day were guilty of His death. As for the guilty, they were by no means all alike. There were the men of political prudence, who feared that if Jesus were permitted to continue His work, all would believe in Him, and the Romans would come and destroy Temple and nation (Jn 11:47–52). There was the Idumean Herod Antipas, outwardly Jew, inwardly skeptic, who mocked Jesus (Lk 23:11). There was the fawning Judas, who was used but despised and for whom it would have been better had he not been born (Mt 27:4; 26:24).
There were also those who, in a kind of madness, preferred Barabbas to Jesus (Mt 27:20-21; Mk 15:11). But when the pentecostal days came and thousands were baptized (Ac 2:1-41), how many among them must there have been who had cried: "Crucify Him!" and were thus saved by a Lord whom they had sent to His Golgotha. Of how many billions of us were they not the forerunners.

JEWISH UNBELIEF

What kind of fault was it that threw Israel into catastrophe? Was it not a fault against love? One has but to remember the parable of the vinedressers into whose charge a vineyard had been given. When its owner sent servants to receive its fruit, they were mistreated, beaten, or even killed. Undismayed, he sent his beloved son, hoping that he at least would be welcomed, only to see the vinedressers slay him and cast him out of the vineyard (Lk 20:9-16).

We cannot understand the passion of this parable unless we realize that Yahweh—even though men will never know why—is smitten with love for the people He has chosen. He has called it His child, His son, His spouse. He sent prophets that they might show Israel the marvelous dignity of its vocation and ever lead it in the way of its true happiness. However, many refused to hear them; others, irked when the truth was hard to take, called them false prophets and covered them with derision; again others, when the prophetic voices became too strong, tried to silence them with stones. "But the owner of the vineyard said: 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps when they see him, they will respect him.'"

To reason thus, one must love to the point of folly. Indeed, here divine Love seems able to contain its tenderness no longer. The hour had come when what for ages had been hidden would be made manifest: that God so loved all men as to give His only Son that His life might ransom theirs. Many in Israel were now blessed to see what prophets and saints of the days of waiting had longed to see and had not seen, to hear what they had longed to hear and had not heard (Mt 13:17). To these advances of the eternal Lover there was demanded in return a love from which would spring a new gratitude, a tenderness as yet unknown on earth. Instead the "vinedressers" pushed aside the invitation that was so solemn and urgent that, time and again, vast crowds were agitated by it; in order to stifle it, they re-
solved on the murder of Him who claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. What was this resolve if not a supreme offense against the everlasting Love? And if they could have suspected that He who claimed to be the Messiah was truly God, would it not then have been a deicide? But deicide never faces itself: one has to turn one’s eyes away, one has to put a veil over God to dare to strike Him. Thus the “vinedressers” could not have delivered Jesus to His death on the cross unless they were blind to His divinity.

So it happened that disbelief in Jesus became the public setting which made possible the woeful moves against Him and the sad catastrophe of Israel’s love. In the name of the ancient promises many in Israel rose against their realization and for the love of the stem rejected the flower. Misled by those who should have led God’s chosen people to the Messiah, they turned aside, at the supreme moment in their and the world’s history, from the full messianic truth. Though in a way Israel continues to know and to profess the messianic truth in so far as it is contained within the shadows of the Old Law, still, in clinging to them, it preferred the promises to the things promised, the preparation to the fulfillment, the figure to the reality. This is its error. Judaism is not a denial pure and simple of the truth of Christ, wrote the Carmelite theologians of Salamanca; it believes in the truth as promised but rejects it as present and manifest.

When the Fathers and scholastic theologians called Israel’s failure perfidia, disbelief or unbelief, they were seeking to grasp it not under the aspect which led to Golgotha, that is, the aspect which was most passionate and wicked but at the same time most passing and applicable only to a small number. Rather did they grasp it under the aspect which is most nearly universal and most easily definable, that is, the one which applies to the majority of Jews in apostolic days, which has been communicated from generation to generation, and which has thus lasted the longest.

40. As if to show this: When Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, the guards kept striking Him and mocking: “Prophesy, who is it that struck you?” But they could not have done it had they not first covered His face. “And they blindfolded Him,” says St. Luke (22:64).


42. There is another reason why “unbelief” and not “deicide” is the appropriate term to characterize the erring of the Jewish people. It is simply that deicide is at the bottom of the mortal sins of each of us. We call Jesus “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), that is, of the entire world and
Hence Jewish disbelief (the turning from the Christian truth already known and professed, though only under the prefigurings of the Old Law) stands between pagan unbelief (the turning from the Christian truth in so far as it can be known in the glimmers and implications of the natural law) and heretical unbelief (the turning from that truth known and professed in its full, definitive manifestation). In distinguishing these three forms of unbelief, the medieval theologians rank them in two ways. Measured by the gravity of the fault, the act of unbelief which gives rise to heresy is more grievous than that which gave rise to Jewish disbelief; and this is more grievous than that which is at the origin of the various paganisms. If one looks at the truths they preserve, the order is reversed: pagan unbelief, which falls as low as polytheism or pantheism, is incomparably more disastrous than Jewish disbelief, which retains the pure belief in a God, one, transcendent, Maker and Judge of the universe; and there is a vast gap between it and those forms of heresy or schism which keep intact belief in the divinity of Christ.  

This twofold comparison of the medieval theologians suggests, and even supposes, a very careful distinction, of which one ought to make constant use, today perhaps even more than in the past: the distinct

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44. Some modern heresies or the Manicheism of old are so utterly removed from anything Christian that they are, of course, far worse than Jewish disbelief. Cf. St. Thomas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 10, a. 6.
tion between the sin of unbelief which is at the beginning of paganism, Judaism, or the various heresies, and the legacy of unbelief inherited by the followers of these religions. Such a spiritual legacy must needs join truths and errors, and hence it happens that its inheritor will, depending on whether he is docile or resistant to the interior light of grace, give his inner attention chiefly to the truths or to the errors. Thus his personal life will either follow the current of the original deviation or move in the opposite direction, trying to ascend from the truths still possessed to their fullness. In this way, such a legacy of usages and beliefs (even when pagan, much more when Jewish, still more when heretical but Christian) can, despite its spirit of dissent and separation, be a vehicle of authentic religious values. It can, therefore, though not always to the same measure, sustain upright souls—souls open to the secret influences of grace—on their march toward that fullness which is in and from Christ.

A CHURCH FALLEN

This secret march is not without struggle. Judaism stiffened itself, as a Christian sees it, against the divine clan which carried the Old Testament toward the New like the dawn toward the day. With all its power, all its passion, it resisted the gospel and, in a strange fear of the authentic flowering of the tree of the Old Covenant, has substituted flowers that are not the true flowers. Here then is a Church which had been divine, which, for all its sinners, had the true sanctity of its vocation. Seized with vertigo when it heard that the revelations toward which it had been journeying for ages were imminent, it renounced its future, at last present, in order to fall back on its past. With the inverted ardor of its first strength, it thenceforth preferred to the “Jerusalem on high”—which is really Israel itself unfolded and enhanced—a “Jerusalem of here and now,” a city of earthly, unreal deliverances. This is what I call, with Jacques Maritain, a “fallen

45. This distinction makes clear, I hope, if such clarification is needed, that when I speak of “Jewish unbelief,” it is not as invective but as an objective statement of facts. Were a Jew himself to describe his own stand toward Jesus as the Christ, he would call it by the same name. A Catholic cannot help but see in Judaism a misunderstanding of God’s designs, an error, a deviation from the full truth; but he may not accuse Jews today of infidelity, of the sin of unbelief. For the sin of unbelief exists only where there is conscious, deliberate, and pertinacious resistance to the known truth.
Church,” by no means an “anti”-Church but one fallen from a high place.46

Fallen and repudiated as a Church because of its unbelief, and yet, at the same time, loved and ever awaited as a people—for God has never ceased to love it—Israel “is the communion of earthly hope.” 47

Israel passionately hopes for, awaits, wants the advent of God in the world, the kingdom of God here below. It wants, with an eternal will, a supernatural and unreasonable will, justice in time, in nature, and in the community. Greek wisdom has no meaning for Israel; neither has measure nor felicity of form. The beauty Israel seeks is ineffable, and Israel wants it in this life of the flesh today.

A faith which would do violence to the whole order of things that a man may receive today, tangibly, the substance for which he hopes and the accomplishment of the desire which God has planted in him, and hence would have him regain everything—such is the faith of Israel. It is such a faith Israel is burning to have, and at the same time doubts it has (for if Israel had it, it would have all justice and plenitude). . . . Only on the day it possessed the world would Israel be assured that it had, and had had, faith. Till then, anxiety and doubt will remain at the heart of the Jewish faith.

Jewish charity is also a virtue fallen from a high place. I do not mean a false love; far from it! Divine charity can be present in it, as it may be absent from it. Nor is it Lutheran pity, nor Slavic pity. It is an active and, on occasion, a relentless love of the creature as such; it grapples the creature, torments it, never lets it go, so as to oblige it to become aware of its evil and deliver itself from its evil.

Of earthly hope the Jews have an excess; and of this virtue many Christians have not enough. The basic weakness in the Israel of exile is its failure to understand the Cross, its refusal of the Cross, and therefore its refusal of the transfiguration. The aversion to the Cross is essential to Judaism, in so far as this word denotes the spiritual pattern which shaped Israel’s severance from its Messiah. Yet with all Jews in whom grace dwells, as with all souls of good faith and good will, the work of the Cross is present, though veiled and unrecognized, and is involuntarily experienced. Despite himself, and in an obscuring mist, the pious Jew, the Jew of the spirit, carries the gentle Cross, and thus betrays Judaism without realizing what he does. The moment he begins to be aware of this

47. Ibid., p. 154.
mystery of forgiveness and of this putting off of self, he finds himself on the road to Christianity. 48

In the very bosom, then, of the Israel of the flesh, all who are interiorly attentive to the invitations of grace are, in obscurity and silence, led toward the Israel of the spirit, indeed are already of it: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Gal 5:18). And without doubt, there are many who thus belong, in an incipient and salutary way, to the Church universal. One has only to think of the Hasidim of eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their joyous service of God. Groping their way, as it were, they rediscovered something of the coredeempive qualities of Christian love; they sensed that the just man, wrestling to bring sinners back to God by his prayer, at times feels the weight of their temptations pass onto him; they understood too that the just man must go to the utter limit for the sake of those who have recourse to him. As he lay dying, Abraham Joshua Heschel, the rabbi of Apt, said:

Master of the universe, you know that I have no merit at all nor any good by reason of which, after my death, you could have me enter into paradise, among the just. You will have to put me, therefore, into hell among the wicked. Now you know, Master of the universe, that I have hated with a relentless hate all those who offend against your will. How then shall I be able to dwell with them? Thus I entreat you to have all the wicked who are sons of Israel leave hell, for then you will be able to send me there. 49

What stirs beneath words like these if not those saintly Jewish bargainings dear to Abraham and St. Paul, those bargainings so Christian in meaning?

THE AMBIVALENCE OF EXILE

There is an ambivalence about Jewish unbelief and about the whole destiny of the people of exile. Israel's stumbling, the Apostle tells us, has brought riches to the world (Rom 11:12); Israel's deafness to the gospel made it heard all over the earth; and in closing itself to the Messiah, Israel quickened the conversion of the nations. Though re-

48. Ibid., pp. 154-155.
jected as a Church, it is not rejected as a people; rather does it remain always in a certain way un peuple consacré à Dieu, un peuple dû à Dieu, a people set aside for and belonging to God. 50 And as it is dispersed among the nations, it is yet guarded in their midst.

What are the deepest reasons for Israel's dispersion? The first, just spoken of, is Israel's role as the ransom of the nations. Itself unbelieving and unmoved, it hastens, Paul tells us, the salvation of the world by driving away from itself toward the vastness of the Gentiles the divine mercy which—today as then—asks and asks to make its dwelling in Jacob and in Israel its inheritance (Ecclus 24:13). For did not the Lord Himself, when first sending out the Twelve, tell them not to go in the direction of the Gentiles but "rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6)? But Israel's incredulity is required 51 that it may provoke what we might call the first stage of the world's conversion.

This is not all. For Israel must one day come back to its Messiah, so that the nations, enlivened and enriched by its return, may at that moment enter the second stage of their conversion. As long as Israel fears and flees its reintegration into the everlasting Church, that wondrous moment is put off. Here, then, is the second point made by St. Paul. Israel holds back the supreme outpouring of grace on the world and thus the course of redemptive history—which, however, in being held back is exalted. In the words of Léon Bloy: "The history of the Jews obstructs the history of mankind as a dam obstructs a river, in order to raise its level." 52

To raise history's level—this is to say that Israel's unbelief is accompanied by luminous corollaries. The unbelief of Abraham's children stirs up the Church to desire them, and to pray. Never forgetful of what she owes them, that she received from them the Saviour, the Virgin, the apostles, the Law and the Prophets and the marvelous psalms she never tires of singing, she asks again and again that the veil be lifted from their hearts. For this she knows, though, alas! her children have not always understood: in permitting that the Jews do

51. I say "required" the way the Apostle dares to say, in a sense related and yet very different, that there "must be" divisions (1 Cor 11:18, 19), a word which scandalizes those who have never reflected on the empire of evil nor on the mystery of a God who makes it serve Him.
52. Bloy, Le Salut par les Juifs, p. 44.
not see what she sees, God wants to provoke in her not impatience but love's intercessions.⁵³ Again, Israel's unbelief urges the divine mercies toward the nations, yet not only to the nations, also—the wonder of it!—toward Israel itself. For if "God has shut up all in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:32), His mercy is on the Jews too. But how? In holding back the supreme outpouring of redemption which the Apostle calls "life from the dead" (Rom 11:15), in keeping, as it were, Jesus nailed to the cross, Israel's incredulity obliges the Holy Spirit to tokens of infinite patience toward this people and draws down on many among them, often through Mary's singular intercessions, strange and marvelous descents of the divine pity. And God's pity seeks among them constant individual conversions which, without interruption, represent "His people" in "His Church" so as to announce, prefigure, and prepare its return en masse.

If it is true that the Israel of exile blocks the course of history by delaying the full conversion of the Gentiles and the "resurrection" of the world, at present the roles are reversed. It is the nations, sluggish toward their own conversion, who stand in Israel's way. By the mediocrity and all too frequent hypocrisy of their Christian lives, they scandalize the Jews. Far from provoking in them that holy jealousy of which the Apostle speaks, lukewarm Christians seem rather to make every effort to hinder their return to the kingdom. In our day it is the mediocre Christians who shamefully block the march of history

⁵³ Fundamentally, the drama of Israel in exile is religious and theological. That it is well above the cultural and political planes cannot, of course, hinder God from using men as His instruments in order to accomplish His designs. Always ephemeral and limited, His instruments are sometimes conscious of serving Him, as Paul was in Corinth, when he left the synagogue to go to the Gentiles (Ac 18:6), but more often unconscious, as was Titus when he destroyed Jerusalem and took its inhabitants into captivity. Yet it would be a monstrous thing, indeed a spiritual catastrophe, if a Christian dared to drag the eternal designs down to the level of men's ephemeral schemes. When men try to replace God's discernment with their own in order to hasten the divine plan, it is usurpation of the worst kind. It is usurpation of the worst kind when men are pretentious enough to make themselves executors of God's justice, imagining that they are thereby authorized to violate God's most sacred laws. So they "justify" the horrible pogroms by invoking the multitude's imprecation that Jesus' blood might fall on them and on their children, or by invoking His warnings to the daughters of Jerusalem (Mt 27:25; Lk 23:28–31). Surely the offense of those who delivered Jesus to the cross is great; surely Israel's estrangement is sad—but to try to avenge the one or to punish the other is the grossest travesty, the very contradiction, of the spirit of Christ.
and "keep Christ nailed to the cross." How high is Israel’s dignity and how great its importance in the divine plan if nothing less will suffice to have it turn to Jesus as the Messiah than the first conversion of the nations! Is this not what the Apostle wished to tell the Christians of Rome when he wrote: "For I say to you Gentiles: As long, indeed, as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I will honor my ministry, in the hope that I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh, and may save some of them" (Rom 11:13-14)?

ISRAEL’S RESTLESS SOUL

"Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God is in their behalf unto their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; for, ignorant of the justice of God and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to the justice of God," writes the Apostle. A little later he tells that what Israel is seeking, it has not obtained (Rom 10:1-3; 11:7). St. Paul makes a point of using the present tense, "is seeking," for Israel seeks still, seeks always, never rests from striving to be just in God’s sight. And yet, as a body, it has not obtained what it seeks.

Rejected as a Church (but never as a people; as a people it is ever loved and protected, for "the gifts and the call of God are without repentance," Rom 11:29), the Israel of exile is devoured by a zeal which is no other than that of a spouse who has been put away—though we cannot expect Israel to agree with us on this. Nonetheless I venture to say that it is this zeal, this jealousy, that unites the whole people. Invisibly, this fiery temperament is communicated from generation to generation, from member to member, and not only to those who venerate the prophets and cling to the worship of Yahweh but also to those who no longer know their Scriptures and have lost the sense of Israel’s dignity. Here in this great passion lies the last secret of Israel’s unrest but also of its indissoluble unity.

54. It is well to remember here Berdyaev’s castigation of the "Christian world," with its wars, its national hatreds, its racial discrimination, its oppression of the working classes. Christians who are "unconverted," whose faith is "formal" rather than real, who lack the love that is Christ’s and so are Christians only externally, "thrust themselves," he wrote, "in between Christ and the Jews, concealing the true image of the Saviour from them" ("Christianity and Anti-Semitism," Blackfriars, XXIX, 343, Oct. 1948, pp. 463-464).

55. Erik Peterson, in his Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden (Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1933), makes this interesting observation: "The idea of Israel’s becoming jealous is a specifically Jewish concept. In relation to God, Israel knows
Though its origin is in the realm of the spirit, this unrest shows through in Israel’s attitude toward the world. I have quoted Jacques Maritain before as saying that “Israel is in the world and is not of the world; but it is attached to the world, subject to the world, in bondage to the world. . . .” He goes on:

The penalty is the working out of the fault; our punishment is our choice. It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God, for those hands give to each man what his will has settled on. The Jews (I do not mean Jews individually, but the spiritual body of Israel at the moment when it struck against the rock), the Jews at a crucial moment chose the world; they have loved it; their penalty is to be held captive by their choice. Prisoners and victims in this world which they love, but of which they are not, will never be, cannot be.56

But what role does their unrest accord them in this world?

Israel is assigned, in the order of temporal history and its finalities, the work of the earthly leavening of the world. Israel is here—Israel, which is not of the world—at the deepest core of the world, to irritate it, to exasperate it, to move it. Like some foreign substance, like a living yeast mixed into the main body, it gives the world no quiet; it prevents the world from sleeping; it teaches the world to be dissatisfied and restless so long as it has not God; it stimulates the movement of history.57

Fleeing as it does from a kingdom of the Cross, the Israel of exile is bound to seek after things of this world; and yet all its search covers a deep and persistent sadness which can be felt even in the manifestations of its joy. While speaking of this sadness, I cannot overlook, however, that Israel’s having been so long imbued with it has prepared, in those of its children who become truly Christian, an extraordinary sensibility. This sensibility is ever prompting them to suffer as their own the sorrow of their brethren the world over, be they Jewish or not, be they Christian or not; moreover, it predisposes itself a woman, or, more exactly, His lawful spouse. But when God puts before Israel another woman, Israel becomes jealous. Now God has put the virgin Church before Israel His wife” (p. 57). Again: “Zeal for God is one of the most characteristic features of Jewish piety. Even the Jew who has lost his faith remains a man of zeal. In our day he is perhaps a socialist zealous for justice or a pacifist zealous for a peace which is not of God but of men” (p. 41). Hence the ways of the Israel of today seem best explained by a great messianic élan—its axis, however, gone—, by a mysterious nostalgia.

57. Ibid., p. 156.
them to an intuitive grasp of all the holy and secret anguish of the Church.\footnote{58}

Israel is restless. As Péguy sees it, Jewish unrest and Christian unrest are both opposed to that evil calm which is nothing but \textit{patientia non patiendi}, patience not to suffer. For much that calls itself patience, he wrote, is only an anesthetic invention; a defense against pain, trial, salvation, against God; only a gloomy abdication of the very condition of man.\footnote{59} But Jewish unrest and Christian unrest are each \textit{patientia patiendi}; patience to suffer. Each having its grandeur, they are yet very different. Jewish unrest is the restlessness of the nomad ready and resigned to abandon his place—an urge to move onward; Christian unrest is the restlessness of the sedentary man—a drive to go deeper.\footnote{60}

To carry the analysis further. Jewish unrest is one of movement. It is the restlessness of a people stirred by its deep-seated desire for happiness within time.\footnote{61} Not clinging to the soil nor to the present mo-

\footnote{58} Of my own experience, I can testify that those who come to the Church from Judaism, far from losing their love for their kinsmen on discovering the mystery of the Church, realize as never before the incomparable grandeur of their people's messianic vocation. Their desire for justice keeps alive among us the kind of impatience and violence which was in the prophets. Their dissatisfaction with our provisional arrangements here below; their ardor in hoping and calling for the coming of an order without fault; their, as it were, immediate need for the absolute, are a wonderful lesson, awakening in us the sense of eschatological waiting which always burns in the heart of the Church and of her saints.

\footnote{59} \textit{Note conjointe sur M. Descartes, in Morceaux choisis prose} (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), pp. 94-95.

\footnote{60} Péguy's thoughts on Jewish unrest are more fully given in his \textit{Notre jeunesse} (Paris: Gallimard, 1933), pp. 73, 108-110. Most of this can be found in the bilingual edition of excerpts called \textit{Basic Verities}, trans. by Anne and Julian Green (New York: Pantheon, 1943), pp. 138-141.

\footnote{61} Jacques Maritain has shown succinctly the ambivalence of this desire, and I should like him to be heard again: "The will to attain the absolute in the world can assume all forms. It can,—when it confines itself to what is human and contingent, or when it turns to atheism, at least in practice—create that overgrowth of activity in the handling of the goods of the earth and in money making, which finds in capitalist civilization an appropriate ambience; or it can create that revolutionary impatience and that ceaseless agitation which Bernard Lazare and many other Jews liked to point out. When it becomes feverish from wounded sensibility or resentment, it may create a violent pessimism which makes out of bitterness and anger a singularly powerful instrument of discovery, a detector (itself out of gauge) of the self-deceit involved in the pleasure of enjoying a noble soul, of enjoying an orderly existence and a clear conscience. Finally, it can produce, when of the flesh but affecting spiritual things, a pharisaic trend of mind, and the blinding refinements of the harsh cult of the letter, a legal purism.

"But when it is of the spirit, this will toward the absolute brings to flower seeds of true purity, the purity of soul and of morals preserved in the tradition
ment, it turns with a great and insatiable thirst toward the future. Its gaze is toward the messianic bliss which, it has no doubt, its God has prepared for it at the end of history and which will be a re-entry into the first garden of delight. Because of this disregard for the immediate instant and the concrete place, Jewish unrest may be called a non-incarnational unrest. Having ignored the meaning which the mystery of the Incarnation gives to the succession of moment and of place, the Israel of exile has not yet understood that the fleeting instant must be redeemed by turning it toward eternity.

On the other hand, Christian unrest is one of rootedness. It is the restlessness of a people which knows that its temporal condition, however much it may be and ought to be bettered, will never be a paradise; that pure bliss does not dwell within time; that the Son of God descended into history to be crucified in it, and rose in glory not to prolong forever His passing sojourn in time but to await us in a transhistoric abode; that heaven has already come down on earth, not to take away its thorns but to draw forth roses; that eternity has visited time, to fill it not with happiness but with sanctity, not with glory but with love; that there is, right now, a divine task to be done.

Since the Word became flesh at a given time and in a given place, every point in time and space is overshadowed by this mystery; and it is in the here that the Christian must set to work and into the now that he must plunge to make it bring forth fruits of love. Make the most of time, ransom it, counsels the Apostle (Eph 5:16). One can no more leave the world tranquil than the plant can leave tranquil the soil into which it thrusts its roots. Christian unrest, then, is an incarnational unrest. It knows well that time is on the march, the time of grace and also the time of nature and of culture, and that time is to ripen as a harvest for heaven. It knows no less that the harvest will be according to the seeding, the future glory according to the present of so many Jewish families. It produces asceticism and piety, love for the word of God and for its sensitive interpretation, uprightness of heart and subtle innocence, and that burning spirituality which is exemplified especially by the hasidic mystics and which shows us the true visage of Israel 'when Israel loves God.' Above all, this will find expression in the zeal for justice and in the love of truth which is the most exalted indication of this people's election. 'Behold in truth an Israelite, in whom there is no guile,' the Saviour Himself gave witness to the true Israel. . . .

"The love of truth even unto death, the will for truth, pure, absolute, unattainable since truth is that very One whose Name is ineffable,—this is what the best of the Jews owe to Israel and to the Holy Spirit and this is what makes exultant their song in the fiery furnace" (op. cit., pp. 159-160).
love. But the fire which consumes it is that it never quite succeeds in mastering the instant in order to turn it toward eternity. At its very depth, Christian unrest is the unrest of a Church inexpressible that Love is not loved; of the Bride complaining in the name of her Bridegroom that the Father, who had promised to give Him all the nations as an inheritance, has not yet kept His word.

THE INSOLUBLE QUESTION

An intimate part of the redemptive scheme of God, inseparably linked with the salvation of the world, and hence transcending the temporal order, the Jewish problem defies any temporal solution. No political effort, however wise, however just, can ever fully come to grips with a mystery. Still, attempts have been made to end, politically, the tensions and conflicts Israel's existence creates.

There is the "sacral" solution, which—I need not repeat—was, even at its best, no solution. Based on the sacral concept of society, which counted only Christians as citizens and therefore could not incorporate Jews into political life, but based also on a voluntary withdrawal of Jews from the Christian world around them, the medieval status of the Jews was not in itself an injustice. Yet the narrowness and evil passions of many Christians, so unworthy of their high vocation, so far removed from the magnanimity and charity of the saints, at times turned that status into something terrible. Given the constitution of medieval Christendom, it was inevitable that the Jews could be granted only the rights and privileges of strangers; but what was iniquitous was that evil politics so often imposed on them the dilemma of conversion or banishment, or that at the time of the Crusades they were condemned to perpetual servitude. In any case, we must say with Jacques Maritain: "This medieval solution has gone, never to return, as has the type of civilization from which it sprang."

After the trials of the Middle Ages, the French Revolution, with its Declaration of the Rights of Man, seemed to many Jews to be the very age of the deliverance announced by the prophets. Their hard-

62. With its respect for spiritual values, such as the significance of baptism, the medieval attempt must never be confused with the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Not to speak of its bestiality, the Nazi attitude sprang from the utter materialism of racist theories, and if there was one superstition absolutely foreign to the Middle Ages, it was that of race.
ships would come to an end, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) thought with others, if only the Jews ceased to be a separate entity in any respect other than religion. Having relinquished all jurisdiction of their own in civil or criminal affairs, having renounced past usages such as polygamy, having submitted to military service, in brief, having adopted in many ways the customs of the lands in which they were born, they became citizens of those lands. They ceased to be Jews in the traditional sense of the word and became Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans, “of the Mosaic confession.” Thus to reduce the whole of Judaism to “the Mosaic confession” was the thesis and the desire of “assimilation,” which suppressed all difficulties, to be sure, but only at the price of a double suicide. No longer was there to be a Jewish people. No longer a Jewish religion, supernaturally revealed to patriarchs and prophets by the living God; for it, the partisans of religious emancipation substituted, under the name of “Mosaic confession,” a pale philosophical deism.64

But Israel refused to die; an irresistible force, surging from the depths of its being, aroused it against this double threat. Its will not to die as people led it to work for the recovery of full national life in the land of its fathers. There is nothing in political Zionism to gainsay the prophecies of the New Testament. But will it ever be able to bring “peace upon Israel” (Ps 124:5) and make secure the lives of Jews the world over? Having set out to solve the Jewish problem, does it not rather pose it in all its acuteness? In any case, no matter

64. Using a somewhat different terminology, Maritain writes: “The Jew is lost if he settles down, and by settling down I mean a spiritual phenomenon, like the loss of a stimulating disquiet and the failure of a vocation. Assimilation involves an altogether different problem, in the social and political, not spiritual, order. An ‘assimilated’ Jew may be one who is not ‘settled.’ Assimilation is not the solution of Israel’s problem, any more than is Yiddishism or Zionism; but assimilation, like autonomy and Zionism, is a partial accommodation, a compromise solution, good and desirable to the extent that it is possible. Assimilation took place in the past on a large scale in the Hellenistic and Hispano-Arabic periods. Yet it carries with it a risk—as does also Zionism (as a state)—the risk of the Jews becoming settled, becoming like others (I mean spiritually). It is the risk of losing the vocation of the house of Israel. Their God then strikes them down by the vilest of instruments. Never had there been Jews more assimilated than the German Jews. They were all the more attached to German culture for its having in part been their achievement. They had become totally Germans, which did not make them either more discreet or more humble. They were not only assimilated, but settled down, conciliatory and well reconciled with the Prince of this world. Jews who become like others become worse than others. (When a Jew receives Christian grace, he is less than ever like others: he has found his Messiah.)” (Ibid., pp. 164–165.)
what one thinks of Zionism, even if one believes it "to have a historic importance of the first order," even if one believes that the state of Israel may one day be "the animating center for all dispersed Jewry," one must add at once that it "does not yet represent deliverance from exile." It is at most "a prelude to such deliverance." 65

In spite of its founders' wishes, political Zionism is but an epiphenomenon. Though its partisans hardly ever know it, it is ruled and carried where it would not go by the mysterious, irrepressible Jewish élan toward messianic deliverance. Israel is certain that the dispersion cannot last; that a wondrous return, some unimaginable reintegration, awaits it.

Fear not for I am with you,
from the east will I bring your seed,
and from the west will I gather you;
I will say to the north: Give up!
and to the south: Keep not back;
Bring my sons from afar,
and my daughters from the end of the earth;
All who are called by my name,
and whom I created for my glory.

(Is 43:5–7)

Israel knows that these words, once spoken to the exiles in Babylon, are spoken also to the exiles of today; and it does not deceive itself. The divine promises are true, and they will surpass all its expectations. Hence Israel is right in sighing after the end of the dispersion—this is the truth of Zionism. But Israel is wrong—and this is the error of Zionism—in overlooking entirely the deepest, hidden causes of its dispersion. 66 As soon as a city of peace appears possible for it, the

65. Ibid., p. 173.
66. The error of those who offer Zionism not as an accommodation but as the ultimate solution is the same as Israel's first error: tarrying within the limits of the Old Testament instead of passing to the New. But we must not forget that no matter how mistaken Jews as a body may be, each and every Jew is, in the secrecy of his soul, visited by the grace of Christ and urged toward the Jerusalem which is above (cf. Gal 4:26). One has to think only of Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch, whose early life was one of dreadful poverty. One day, saddened by the tears of his wife and children, he bewailed his misery. At once a voice from heaven declared that his complaints had lost him his place in the world to come. First he was seized by grief; then on second thought, he was overjoyed. "From now on," Rabbi Baer exclaimed, "I shall be able to serve God with a purer heart, without hope of recompense." But then the heavenly voice was heard again: "Your part
great waters of messianic hope rush into this little opening, rush into a bed far too narrow for so mighty a torrent. Thus, by an inner dialectic, political Zionism awakens "messianic Zionism," only to disappoint it. But perhaps even these disappointments may serve Israel's redemption, may show it by its pain that it is made not just for figures but for reality, and may lift its eyes toward the Jerusalem of the spirit that awaits it.

To say that the Jewish problem cannot be fully solved on the temporal plane is not to say that our only response to it must be idle waiting. Quite the contrary. In those moments of history when the Jewish question thrusts itself once more like a thorn into the flesh of mankind become materialistic, when the black and suffocating waves of anti-Semitic propaganda break on the minds of many, Christian love must leap to proclaim right and wrong; and it must speak clearly, powerfully, surely, with a voice that seems to come from another world. It will not stop to weigh, in newspapers, the merits and demerits of the Jews, nor to discuss before a wavering crowd, already biased by covetousness and more than half won by gross slogans, how the Jews may differ from other men, be it religiously, historically, or politically. No, its first impulse is to cry out their likeness to other men. Never may Christians look on the Jews as an impersonal end in the world to come is restored to you, but be on guard not to complain again when you are filled with compassion for your children. For your compassion is no keener than God's." (Horodetzki, op. cit., I, 78; as cited by Menasce, op. cit., pp. 120-121. For a somewhat different version of the same story, see Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters, trans. by O. Marx, New York: Schocken, 1947, pp. 98-99.)

67. Let us not forget the cry of Cardinal Saliège who, on Sunday, August 30, 1942, had a letter read in all the churches of his archdiocese of Toulouse: "Jews are men, Jews are women. It is not true that everything is permitted against them, against these men, against these women, against these fathers and mothers of families. They are part of the human race. They are our brethren like all the rest. A Christian cannot forget this." And let us not forget the voice of the since silenced Archbishop Stepincac who, on the feast of Christ the King, October 25, 1942, a few days after a decree forced the Jews of Croatia to wear a yellow star, preached in his cathedral that the Church has always condemned, and condemns today, all violence and injustice committed in the name of racial and nationalist theories; that she has never countenanced, and does not countenance today, the extermination of Jews and gypsies on the pretext that they constitute inferior races, for, he said: "All members of the human race, without exception, are the creation of God. Memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulvorem revertor; 'Remember, man, that you are dust and unto dust you shall return.' The members of this race or that may have a higher or a lower culture, may be black or white; they may be parted by oceans, may live at the North Pole or at the South Pole. The essential thing is that the Jews who are the object of hatred and the proud
tity, a group one can regard without love or simply pass by. They are persons, creatures made to the image of God and purchased by the blood of Christ. The bond which binds together these persons—these men and women, young and old—into one single community is not first and above all of the temporal order; it is of the theological order, for Israel is a mystery.

The second impulse, then, of Christian love must be to go to the very roots of this mystery. For once the exceptional destinies of the people of God are understood in the light of biblical revelation and particularly of the great Pauline teachings, and are so taught, it will be hard for men to rage against these destinies in stupid and sacrilegious fury. No matter what the faults of the Jews are (and I do not think them any less than those of Christians), true Christian love is impelled to give witness before the world that there is, at the heart of these destinies, a supernatural mystery, as exasperating to the world's materialism as the mystery of the Church. It is impelled to cry out to the world that anti-Semitism and anti-Christianism are two forms of one and the same hatred, the hatred of the supernatural. It is impelled to cry out to the world that to spit on Israel is to spit on the divine decree which made the Word become flesh in Israel, a decree of which that people was for so long the bearer and to which it still owes its existence, being preserved toward the day when it will acclaim the Word that dwelt in its midst. 68

The third mission of Christian love is to turn to the political plane. If, according to the Catholic position, "there is, till the fulfillment of the prophecies, no solution in the pure and simple meaning of the word, no truly decisive solution" for the Jewish problem, 69 it nevertheless demands of us that we "take part at the temporal level in the constant work of the concrete intelligence which neither definitively resolves nor overcomes antinomies, but at each moment in time dis-

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68. On the eve of Christmas 1941, when Nazi persecution was weighing so heavily on the Jews of France, Paul Claudel said in a letter to the Chief Rabbi of France: "The Catholic cannot forget that Israel is always the elder son of the promise, as it is today the elder son of sorrow." See John M. Oesterreicher, Racisme, Antisémitisme, Anticrétianisme (New York: Editions de la Maison Française, 1943), p. 243.

covers whatever is needed to make them bearable and more supple." 70 Hence I must say a word on the emancipation of the Jews and their political equality, brought about by the French Revolution. Even though this emancipation was the result of a "rationalist and bourgeois-optimist way of thinking, forgetful at once of the mystery of Israel and of supra-individual realities," and even though its hopes to end the Jewish problem forever have proved vain, it was in itself just and necessary, and corresponded to an aspiration truly Christian. Civilized peoples, to the extent that they wish to remain so, must consider Jewish emancipation definitive. 71

There is at all times the solution of love, supreme and above politics. It is twofold. On the Christian side: to call attention, again and again, to the enduring demands of the evangelical law, the natural law, and the law of nations; to point to the extraordinary destiny of the people of God in its exile and dispersion; and to remind men that nothing reveals better the level of their conscience than their relationship to the Jews, that Jews are the touchstone of their Christian lives. On the Jewish side: always to purify the spirit of earthly hope by the spirit of sanctity, by that charity so dear to the Hasidim, that love which, centuries before, inspired talmudic sayings like these:

One must pay the same respect to an aged non-Jew as to an aged Jew, and offer him a supporting hand. . . . To visit the sick who are not Jews is to walk in the ways of peace. . . . To bury the dead who are not Jews and to comfort those who mourn them is to walk in the ways of peace.

He who is merciful to others, mercy is shown to him by Heaven.

Any distress shared by Israel and the nations of the world is a real distress, but any distress confined to Israel is not such a distress. 72

THE ISRAEL OF THE REINTEGRATION

HEAVEN and earth await Israel's ingathering. By faith we know that the day will come, but what it will be like is not given us to know.

70. Ibid., p. 150.
71. Ibid., p. 170.
with the same sureness. Hence I shall have to add some conjectures to the certainties of revelation.

PROPHECIES OF THE INGATHERING

That a dispersion prepares a return, and the cruelest dispersion the most beautiful return, is the rhythm by which divine Providence governs Israel. So psalmist and prophets:

\[
\begin{align*}
Yahweh rebuilts Jerusalem; \\
the dispersed of Israel He gathers. \\
He heals the brokenhearted \\
and binds up their wounds.
\end{align*}
\]

(Ps 146:2–3)

\[
\begin{align*}
Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations, \\
and proclaim it in the islands afar: \\
He who scattered Israel now gathers them \\
and guards them as a shepherd his flock.
\end{align*}
\]

(Jer 31:10)

If Israel's captivity in Babylon (brought about by its resistance to the prophets) foreshadowed its even crueler exile among the nations (brought about by its refusal of the Messiah), and if the Jerusalem laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar foreshadowed the Jerusalem laid waste even more terribly by Titus—then the return to the Jerusalem of stone must foreshadow an even more astonishing return to a Jerusalem purer and brighter, spiritual and eternal.

The Saviour Himself gives us a glimpse of this marvelous return at the very moment He announces the imminent ruin of the Holy City:

\[
\begin{align*}
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who killest the prophets, \\
and stonest those who are sent to thee! \\
How often would I have gathered thy children together, \\
as a hen gathers her young under her wings, \\
but thou wouldst not! \\
Behold, your house is left to you. \\
And I say to you, \\
you shall not see me \\
until the time comes when you shall say: \\
Blessed in the name of Yahweh be He who comes!
\end{align*}
\]

(Lk 13:34–35) 

73. See note 3.
No sooner, then, does He reproach Jerusalem for having rejected His love than He announces the triumph of God's mercy over its unwillingness. First God will leave the house of Israel to the painful destinies prepared for it by the slayers of prophets: Jerusalem will be desolate. But afterwards an age will come when Israel will at last open its heart to its Messiah and will bless Him in a shout of loving welcome.

It must have been on Christ's promise to Jerusalem that Paul, illumined by the Holy Spirit, based his prophecy of Israel's return to its Messiah.⁷⁴ Having alerted Christians of Gentile stock against conceit and false security; having warned them, the wild branches grafted onto the olive tree, against arrogance toward the Jews, the natural branches broken off; having reminded them that only in fear and trembling can they walk the ways of love, he spells out his hope for his kinsmen:

They also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them back. For if thou hast been cut off from the wild olive tree which is natural to thee, and, contrary to nature, have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

(Rom 11:23-24)

Do these words imply anything more than that a change of heart is always possible for the Israel of exile? That if it does not persevere in its disbelief, if it turns to the Messiah, God has, of course, the power to graft it back? But will it ever turn? Can we know that it will? And is this knowledge at all important for Christians of Gentile stock?⁷⁵ To all these questions, the Apostle answers forcefully. Just a few lines earlier he asks whether his people in its unbelief had so stumbled as to fall forever, and bursts forth: "By no means!" (Rom 11:11). And now, in one of the most beautiful cries of wonder ever sprung from his heart, he says to his Gentile readers:

I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that a partial blindness only has be-


⁷⁵ St. Thomas's reply to this is: Ignorantia buijus mysterii est nobis damnosa: not to know the mystery of Israel's return—"mystery" here means God's revealed and manifest design—is a blight to our spiritual lives, a deadly danger to our souls (Comm. in Rom. 11:25).
fallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles should enter, and thus all Israel should be saved, as it is written:

There will come out of Zion the deliverer
and he will turn away impiety from Jacob;
And this is my covenant with them,
when I shall take away their sins.

(Rom 11:25–27)

Here, quoting from memory according to the Septuagint (Is 59:20–21; 27:9), Paul combines two prophetic passages on the messianic times, but applies them in a new way. He had often proclaimed that the great deliverance, that outpouring of the law of love which the Gospel calls the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:19), will not be for Abraham’s children according to the flesh but for his children according to the promise, be they Jews or Gentiles (Rom 9:7–8). Now he proclaims that, at God’s chosen time, this great outpouring will be for Abraham’s children according to the flesh, who will then be also children of the promise. For a special providential design watches over exiled Israel, keeping it distinct in the midst of the nations and leading it on its journey through the centuries to the time of pardon and grace. On that day, decisive for the religious history of mankind, the spiritual fullness promised in the Old Testament will, by a triumph of divine mercy, at long last be opened to the people which was its first trustee.

Thus Israel is not forsaken, being always the people of divine predilection. Even when the majority of its children kept aloof from the gospel, it remained “most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts and the call of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:28–29). But as Israel refused to walk the way of the gospel, divine mercy, thus rejected, lavished itself on the Gentile nations—to make up, as it were, for the loss—and conquered, among others, the Roman readers of Paul’s letter, who but lately had been pagans. On seeing this conquest, the Jews will (such is Paul’s sure hope) be stirred to emulation, at which God’s mercy will, by surprising detours, provoke them to love.

For as you also at one time did not believe God, but now have obtained mercy by reason of their unbelief, so they too have not now believed by reason of the mercy shown you, that they too may obtain mercy.

(Rom 11:30–31)
Bringing, then, these revelations to a daring conclusion, Paul gives the deepest secret of the universal history over which, out of His inaccessible transcendence, God reigns: "For God has shut up all in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:32).

THE TIME OF THE INGATHERING

While the fact of Israel’s return to its Messiah is thus unquestionable for St. Paul and for us, its how and when are not so clear. But they will be clearer if we ponder the Apostle’s words: "A partial blindness only has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles should enter, and thus all Israel should be saved" (Rom 11:25–26). The “full number,” the plérōma, of the Gentiles means here all the nations, not all their members, for, as long as time lasts, the “mystery of iniquity” (2 Thess 2:7) will not cease to operate nor will crosses be lacking to the Church. But there will be a time, according to the Apostle, when all the peoples of mankind (each represented, that is, by a goodly proportion of believers) will range themselves under the law of Christ. It will be in those days that Israel, it too represented by a goodly share of its sons, will at last begin to acknowledge its Messiah. By so uniting with the nations in faith and worship, it will, as it were, set the seal to the manifestation of the Church’s catholicity.

Now, must one assume that Israel’s reintegration will mark the end of history, giving the signal for the Last Judgment and for the final restoration of the universe? Or may one assume that Israel’s return will take place within the very web of historic time, that indeed it is meant to influence the course of the centuries to come after it? 76

76. It is impossible to accept the chiliastic view of Soloviov, which places Israel’s turning to Christ at the end of historic time and at the threshold of a thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints. This is how he sees the last days: The Jews will first favor the Antichrist, who will feign to be one of them and who, under the pretext of establishing their rule over the earth, will install himself in Jerusalem as if he were the Messiah. But soon recognizing him to be a shameless impostor, as one man they will rise against him; and even their enemies will have to admit that the depth of the Jewish soul is not moved by the calculations and cravings of Mammon but by an inner fervor, by the hope and wrath of an age-old messianic faith. There will ensue a hopelessly uneven war, in the course of which the Jews will call on God and the Antichrist will be swallowed up by the earth. Then, as lightning tears the sky apart, Christ will descend to them, clad in royal purple, the marks of the nails in His outstretched hands. From that moment all discord will be gone; the dead will rise and will come from all sides to reign with Christ for a thousand years. See Vladimir Soloviov, “A Short Story of the Antichrist,” in War, Progress, and the End of History, trans. by A. Bakshy (London: University of London Press, 1915), pp. 224–226.
Both opinions are found within the Church, but the second seems to me to correspond better with the two pertinent texts of St. Paul. Impossible, he declares in the first, that Israel’s restoration should not be of inestimable benefit to the other peoples, since even its stumbling marvelously profited them: “If their offense is the riches of the world, and their decline the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their full number!” (Rom 11:12). In the second text, the Apostle is even more precise: “If the rejection of them is the reconciliation of the world, what will the reception of them be but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:15).

What is the meaning of these last words? So much is certain: as Israel’s aloofness from Christ was the signal for the world’s reconciliation, so Israel’s turning to Him will be the signal for the world’s consummation and the resurrection of all flesh. But will there be any time between Israel’s return and the Day of Judgment? Some think not. For them, Israel’s conversion will “unfasten Christ from the cross” and ring the world’s last hour. Others think that an indefinite time will elapse between the two events and that history, unceasingly laved by the blood of the redemption, will go on, perhaps for a great many centuries.

According to this second view, Israel’s entry will provoke within the Church such a resurgence of love as could be compared to a return of the dead to life. The world, writes Père Allo, will then participate more fully and more brilliantly than before in what St. John calls “the first resurrection” of a thousand years (Apoc 20:4–6),” that is, in the life of grace poured out by the Messiah.

If St. Paul’s prophecy is understood in this way, it is easier to reconcile the many different sayings of Scripture on the end of ages. After Israel’s turning to Christ, after the mighty spiritual resurrection, the great epiphany of the Church’s catholicity, it will beget, there will again be terrible persecutions, for the “mystery of iniquity” is always at work (2 Thess 2:7). Vast floods of hate will be loosed, false prophets will rise, and “because iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold” (Mt 24:9–12). Then will come the apostasy of apostasies, which will pave the way for the triumphant mani-

77. Cf. E.-B. Allo, O.P., L’Apocalypse de saint Jean (Paris: Gabalda, 1933), p. cxxxii. The “thousand years” symbolically denote the messianic times, the times that began with the Incarnation and will last till Christ’s second coming at the end of ages.
festation of the Antichrist. But at long last the Lord Jesus will appear in the brightness of His coming (2 Thess 2:3, 8).

DEATH FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE

If it is true that, far from putting an end to the unfolding of history, Israel’s ingathering will, on the contrary, usher in a future of vast perspectives, it takes on a quite different meaning and raises new problems.

All Israel shall find salvation, the Apostle predicts, and calls Isaiah as his witness that the Deliverer shall come from Zion to rid it of its disbelief, and that this shall be God’s covenant with it: to take away its sins. Here a salvation is promised, a deliverance is announced, a covenant is reserved to Israel. Salvation, deliverance, covenant: these great biblical and messianic words have always made Israel’s heart tremble—why do they now seem so ambiguous? Why is it that this salvation, this deliverance, this covenant, which for the Israel of the spirit gleams like the promise of an unsurpassed spring, a matchless life, an utter fidelity, held ready by the Lord for the Israel of the flesh—why is it that they appear to this same Israel of the flesh like a mockery, like an odious invitation to consent to downfall, indeed to commit the final treason?

This stumbling block will confront Israel once more, and at the very moment when Israel is about to surmount it. For the grain of wheat must die if it is not to remain alone, but if it dies, it yields much fruit. He who clings to his life will lose it, while he who sacrifices it will save it (Jn 12:24–25). Agonizing paradox: the first covenant must fully die that the second covenant may fully flower.

Like those waters which, along the margin of a river, flow against the current, so the Old Covenant, in a very mysterious way, continues to last and, to this day, to affect the Israel according to the flesh. Ever since the promulgation of the New Covenant, Israel has reversed the movement of life and has fixed its will on its past, thereby betraying that very past with its dynamism. It has invoked the letter of the law against the law’s meaning and movement, and is thus judged by the law’s letter, whose rigor, as in times past, has thrown it into exile. (I am speaking here, as always, of Israel as a body, for we must never lose sight of the fact that every one of its members is personally visited by the gentle grace of Christ—all grace is the grace of
Christ, aiding those who know Him and also those who do not know Him—and that he is judged in no other way than by his own response to the grace he receives.)

Only when it breaks the dominion of the things of old and throws itself without reservation into the living current of the New Law will Israel attain true salvation, true deliverance. This is the crux: its entry into the new life supposes a death. But—one must say it with a loud voice—it need by no means be the death of Israel as an ethnic group among other ethnic groups; as a people among other peoples; as a nation and country, or, rather, as a group of nations and of countries (of which one may well be the Holy Land) among other groups of nations and of countries. Such ethnic and political structures are perfectly reconcilable with a Christian temporal order. What is required, however, is that Israel die as a "national religion." For the religion of the one true God can no longer be bound to a nation: it was so bound, by His providence, but only for a time; now it is above nations. The people of the one true God can no longer be a particular people: it was that only for a time and provisionally; God's will is that now His people be gathered from all the peoples of the world.

Israel cannot renounce the idea of a nation-bound religion without an agony, without a purification of its memory and its hope so exacting, so painful, that it seems beyond the capacities of human nature. Is this not implied in the Apostle's announcement that the spiritual transformation of the elder people and its entry into the New Covenant will demand an extraordinary outpouring of divine grace over all the earth, an outpouring beyond expectation?

Israel's memory will have to be purified. It is rich with the places of its pilgrimage through the Land of Promise—the sites sanctified by the passage of patriarchs and prophets, by the nation's triumphs or misfortunes; the oak of Mamre and the well of Jacob; Mount Gilboa, where the stricken Saul sought death; the hill of Ramah, where Rachel weeps for her exiled children; the water gate, where Ezra, to the "Amen, amen" of the people, read the Book of the Law; Modin, where the Maccabean resistance began; the beautiful city of Jerusalem; and a thousand places more. Israel will have to learn, not to forget, but to go beyond, this long history, which is, without question, holy and divine, but whose spiritual meaning is somehow thrust into the heaviness of the temporal. Israel must come to value this history,
magnificent as it is, less for itself than for what it signifies; to think of it as no more than a stage of its youth, a youth that must give way to maturity. Israel will have to—and indeed will!—see the land of its earthly beginnings in the pure light of Jesus and in the perspective of that great spiritual kingdom which covers the earth.

Israel's hope will have to be purified. It may well be that, at the time of Israel's ingathering, the citadel of Zion will stand again and that the well of Gihon and the pool of Siloam will not be dry. But no matter what is in store for Jerusalem, the world's temporal history will not center around it. For it is in image that it is said: Jerusalem will be built of sapphires and rubies, its gates of crystal, and its borders of precious stones (Is 54:11-12). It is in image that it is said: The nations shall walk in Jerusalem's light and kings in the brightness of its shining, the wealth of the sea shall be turned unto it and the riches of the nations come unto it (Is 60:1-6). These figures have been fulfilled, as far as this aeon permits. The Church is the guardian of the nations' wisdom, the mother of men; sons have come to her from afar and daughters are at her side. She is the radiant Jerusalem of messianic times, even though she still travels through the night of her pilgrimage toward her final glory. Once the children of the patriarchs and prophets recognize this Jerusalem, they must not and will not look back nostalgically toward the splendors of old but will turn toward the eternal, the pure and ineffable, joys to come. They will exult that this aeon has seen the beginning of the kingdom; and they will stretch out for its final, complete, perfect, indeed superabundant fulfillment, which Christ will bring when He returns to make the earth and the heavens new.

But the pain that goes with the cleansing of memory and hope will not be all; Israel may have to undergo an even deeper suffering. If my interpretation of St. Paul's prophecy is right, that even after its ingathering the Jewish people will remain as a people, and if, as I

78. In saying this, I do not wish—God forbid!—to give support to the charge made by some that Zionism is a scheme for a Jewish conquest of the world. What I wish to say is that Israel's very special hopes for an earthly paradise must be cleansed—without forgetting for a moment that the terrestrial hopes of all men and all nations must be cleansed.

79. See, for instance, Dionysius, Eccles. Hierarch., 5 (PG 3:501), as cited by St. Thomas: "The state of the New Law is between the state of the Old Law, whose figures are fulfilled in the New, and the state of glory, in which all truth will be manifested perfectly and without veil" (Summa Theol. III, q. 65, a. 4 ad 1).
have said, a deep unrest to go further moves its soul—what will be the unrest of the reborn Israel! Turned toward the service of Christ’s kingdom, that unrest will surely be an insatiable desire to spread the kingdom to the ends of the earth, leaving to the fervent sons of Israel no rest of mind or body, no rest from prayer or work, so long as there remains anywhere a single soul closed to the saving Cross and the holy inebriety it brings; so long as there remains a single sheep forgotten, abandoned, or recalcitrant, to be led back to its Shepherd. After its recognition of Christ, Israel—such is the thought of St. Gregory the Great—will preach openly the faith which, in the days of its unbelief, it contradicted. And not content to announce the Redeemer lovingly, it will strive to imitate Him in His Passion; it will expose itself to opprobrium and torture for His sake till it is dyed in His blood.  

Is it mere conjecture to think that Israel’s saints of the future will be filled with the spirit that made Abraham negotiate with God for an amnesty for Sodom? Abraham’s “bargaining” heralded the inexpressible “bargaining” of the crucified Saviour, the ceaseless intercessions of His Mother, and no less the prayers of His true disciples. Is it mere conjecture to say that the purest saints of Israel reclaimed will have a special place among those messengers of the gospel whose anguish and martyrdom will support the unfolding of the Church’s catholicity—that great unfolding, after which the great apostasy will come, when the Church, diminished in numbers, will no longer be able to grow save in fire and in beauty? And is it mere conjecture to suppose that the Israel to come, a spouse so marvelously pardoned, will clothe its apostolate in humility, delicacy, and gentleness; that it will array itself in a purity and charm that will be one of the most beautiful jewels of the Church of those days? “Following the Redeemer in His Passion, Israel returned will seek the suffering of warfare, not reward, and to possess Him tranquilly it will gladly wait till eternity.”


80. This is taken from the beautiful commentary on 1 Kg 2:26 which figures among the works of St. Gregory the Great (PL 79:108), and whose authenticity is defended by the most distinguished scholars, such as M. de la Taille, S.J. (Recherches de Sciences Religieuses, 1916, p. 472), and B. Capelle, O.S.B. (Revue Bénédictine, 1929, p. 217).
the Christians of Rome and all Christians since: On the appointed
day, all Israel will be saved and will enter into the kingdom of grace.

It is written in Isaiah that a Redeemer will come for Zion. He did
appear in Zion to open the gates of messianic times. It was from Zion
too that He came, being, "according to the flesh, of the offspring of
David" (Rom 1:3). It was also for Zion first that He came, for "the
lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). But for long centuries,
Zion would not know Him.

Yet before the desired and terrible hour of His glorious parousia,
before the last judgment of all the world, the Deliverer will come
again in Zion. Not visibly, to be sure, as in the days of His earthly life,
but mystically, by the sovereign power and hidden light of His love.
He will take away Jacob's sins, bless the Israel of the flesh and at last
gather it into the messianic kingdom, granting it that, by its fervor, it
may ransom the tardiness of so many centuries. "This is my covenant
with them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom 11:27).

And if it is true that a covenant can only be mutual, the hour will
have come when Jesus' brethren according to the flesh—conquered by
no other force than love—will say and sing: "Blessed in the name of
Yahweh be He who comes!" (Mt 23:39).