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Edward H. Flannery

THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

IF WE agree with Josef Pieper that one who watches for the "signs of the times" must not lose sight of what is happening to the Jews,¹ we understand the interest of thoughtful Christians in the exceptional events that during the last decade have occurred in Palestine. The creation of the state of Israel in that ancient land on May 14, 1948, and its rapid economic and military growth since, have astonished even the most confident Zionist. In 1896, when Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, laid the groundwork of the movement, he predicted that it would take fifty years for him to be understood. And here, fifty years later, was the great triumph: a homeland for Jews in the land of promise, guaranteed by an international body. Not only Jews, but non-Jews as well, were to find cause for wonder at this "small miracle."²

Further, if we accept Erik Peterson's view that "the destiny of the Jews in the political world is ultimately not to be understood in the

1. Josef Pieper, *The End of Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1954), p. 127. It is unfortunate that Pieper mars his observation by the remark that "tradition . . . sought to discern an objective feature of the Antichrist's resemblance to Christ in the fact that he will be a Jew" (*ibid.*). There is no such Catholic tradition. True, a few Fathers held that view, but it is a view that is without scriptural foundation, and a few Fathers do not establish "tradition." This seems exactly the point of St. Thomas Aquinas whom Pieper mentions as one who "repeated this opinion." St. Thomas introduces it by *dicunt quidam*, "some say." Always gentle in his arguments, he could not have been clearer in disassociating himself from the thought "that the Antichrist will be a Jew."

2. See Yves M. Congar, O.P., "Sens de la restauration politique d'Israël au regard de la pensée Chrétienne," *Session d'Information sur divers aspects du Mystère d'Israël* (Paris: Notre Dame de Sion, 1955), p. 168. (Privately mimeographed.) An English version, somewhat shortened, of Father Congar's paper has appeared as "The State of Israel in Biblical Perspective" in *Blackfriars*, XXXVIII, 447 (1957), pp. 244-249. All the following references, however, will be to the French original.

political, but in the theological sphere,"³ our interest becomes more intense. And so does the problem. For if Israeli politics are complex, the Christian theology on a Jewish state is even more so. To begin with, are we at all justified in regarding an apparently purely political fact with the eyes of the theologian? Perhaps the question is best answered by reversing it: Is it possible to view Israel in any other way? Christians, Jews, and others have consistently endowed even the natural developments of Israel's history with religious meaning. There is, then, a true sense in which Israel is to be viewed religiously, and on this Jews and Christians agree, however much their interpretations may differ. But there is also a false sense in which human and political happenings are forced into theological categories.

It is not my intention to deal here with the political, social, and moral aspects of the state of Israel, though I am aware of their significance. Nor is it my intention to pronounce on Israel's political future. Some say she must be wiped out, driven into the sea; others, that she is here to stay. Since I am not an enemy, I cannot wish her ill; since I am not a seer, I cannot tell what tomorrow will bring for her. But as a Christian I may utter with the psalmist: "Peace on Israel" (124:5; 127:6); with him pray that peace may reign within the walls of Jerusalem, and safety within her buildings (121:7). But right here I face the religious question, for there may be Christians who will sincerely doubt my right to wish the state of Israel well. Is not the existence of this state, they will ask, a living contradiction of scriptural prophecies? There are others, however, Jews and Christians, who will no less sincerely declare: The state of Israel is the ingathering and restoration promised by the prophets, and therefore the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

These conflicting viewpoints I shall make the basis of my inquiry, and from their mutual negations I hope to formulate the outline of what might be considered a Catholic answer. Before I can do so, I should like to say a word on the theological method I shall have to follow. There are two theological ways, the positive or historical and the doctrinal or scholastic.⁴ Like doctrinal theology, positive theology must move from the present to the past in order to consult Scripture,

3. Erik Peterson, *Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden* (Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 1933), p. 71, n. 28.

4. For a discussion of this distinction, see Charles Journet, *Introduction à la Théologie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), pp. 73-76, 159-203.

tradition, and the magisterium of the Church. But its special province is to illumine past thought by present events; it results from a confrontation of the unchanging data of divine revelation with the changing data of history. As Monsignor Charles Journet has aptly said: "It clarifies the past by the present. . . . It descends rather than ascends the course of time, it proceeds from past to present."⁵ Unlike doctrinal theology, which is concerned with the internal order of revealed truths, historical theology follows these truths in the successive stages of their understanding, in their existential unfolding in history. Hence, it must constantly rejudge former assumptions by present realities; it must pay close attention to historical developments and exegetical advances. Though it always remains intimately joined with doctrinal theology, its necessary counterpart, and pursues its study according to the light of reason under the light of faith, as does all theology, it must be more empirically orientated both as to the subjects it treats and the manner in which it treats them. Israel is one of these subjects.

This excursus explains, I hope, why my approach to the problem of the state of Israel must be that of historical theology, and why the recent developments in Palestine will have a decisive influence on my interpretations. It also explains why the bibliography is restricted to what has been written by theologians since the creation of the state. Only they enjoy the vantage point which the present offers to all who wish to explore the enigma of Israel in Christian times. Unfortunately, this bibliography is scant: a few studies by a few experts.⁶ Happily, a unity of inspiration pervades them all.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

6. Five theological and scriptural studies, upon which I have largely depended in this inquiry, have been written on the state of Israel since its formation in 1948. Perhaps the most noteworthy is that of Father S. Muñoz Iglesias, entitled "Origen de la creencia vulgar en las pretendidas profecías sobre la no restauración política de Israel," *Estudios Bíblicos*, 10 (Madrid: 1951). With painstaking research, Father Iglesias traces the popular belief in the impossibility of a political restoration of Israel to its origins, and in doing so disposes of it. Father Congar's sympathetic and interesting study, *loc. cit.*, on the implications of the existence of the new state, is particularly valuable for a harmonious balancing of the natural with the spiritual aspects of Zionism. Father Paul Démann has presented two penetrating articles on the meaning of "ingathering" both in the Scriptures and in the state of Israel: "Le rassemblement des dispersés d'après la Bible," *Cahiers Sioniens*, IV, 10 (June 1950), pp. 92-110, and "Signification de l'Etat d'Israël," *Cahiers Sioniens*, V, 1 (March 1951), pp. 32-43. Father Giacinto Piacio's brief article, "Sionismo e Sacra Scrittura," *La Terra Santa* (March 1950), pp. 78-86, was written in 1950, when he was Custos of the Holy Land.

A CONTRADICTION OF SCRIPTURAL PROPHECIES?

THERE is little doubt that the establishment of the state of Israel came as a shock, even a scandal, to some Christians. They held that in punishment for the crucifixion of Christ the Jews would not return to their ancient homeland unless they came to believe in Him. There was the cry of the crowd before Pilate's palace: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mt 27:25); there were other biblical texts—all seemed to tell of lasting exile. Thus, the present restoration, partial though it was, seemed a contradiction of the inspired word.

Examples of the belief that Scripture demanded the barring of the Jews from the Holy Land are not lacking in recent times, nor have they been confined to the market place. When in 1869 the Spanish Cortes debated freedom of worship, Professor Emilio Castelar took up the cause of the Jews. He was answered by Vicente de Manterola, a deputy, who advised the Jews not to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, not to reorganize as a people under a scepter, a flag, or a president, for the moment they succeeded, "the Catholic Church will have been slain, because the word of God will have been slain." Francisco Mateo Gago went further. In an open letter he insisted that the Jews "walk the earth" because they carry a curse; that till the last judgment they will be without a country of their own, without a fixed abode, without prince, without sacrifice. This seemed to him the clear teaching of the prophet Hosea (see 3:4).⁷

Closer to our own time is the statement of Augustin Lémann, who in 1901 wrote: "The Temple will never be rebuilt; Jerusalem will never be the capital of a Jewish state; Palestine will never again be the Jewish homeland. . . . There is complete agreement between the Old and the New Testaments in treating any attempt to reconstitute a Jewish state in Jerusalem as a chimera. God's plan runs counter to the project of the Zionists."⁸

The Christian literature *Adversus Judaeos* frequently includes the assumption of perpetual exile as an argument for Israel's conversion. It seems safe to say that some form of "anti-Zionism" is never entirely

7. For a fuller account of this episode, see Iglesias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 403-405.

8. Augustin Lémann, *L'avenir de Jerusalem. Espérance et chimères* (Paris: 1901), p. 196.

absent from Christian apologetics. It is not my intention to survey this literature, but merely to indicate the continuity of this assumption through the centuries.⁹ As we go back, the opinion takes on a more theological coloring. In 1584, Pope Gregory XIII, known for his sympathy toward the Jews, wrote in his Bull of September 1 that the Church grieves to see Israel, because of her denial of Christ, dispersed over the earth and barred from the earthly Jerusalem, over which the Lord wept.¹⁰ In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas held that because of their guilt the Jews were consigned to perpetual slavery; their property could therefore be appropriated by their rulers, provided they were left with the resources necessary for their livelihood.¹¹ Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1135), in a letter to the clergy and people of eastern France, spoke of the Jews as "the witnesses of our redemption," enduring a hard captivity under Christian princes until the vespertime of history, the time of their deliverance.¹² Innocent III, in a letter to the Count of Nevers in 1208, likened them to Cain who wandered the earth carrying the sign of the Lord upon him.¹³ The author of the work *On the Messiah Already Come*, a letter reputedly written by Rabbi Samuel of Fez to Rabbi Isaac in 1072, made this plea: "I wish, my lord, to learn from you—and may the Law and the Prophets and the other Scriptures serve as witness—why we Jews have all been thrown by God into this captivity which can indeed be called God's unbroken wrath, for it has no end."¹⁴ In 846, Archbishop Amulo of Lyons thought that the Jews bore the curse which Moses uttered against all who break the law of God, and were thus to live dispersed all over the world.¹⁵ St. Augustine (354-430), too, was con-

9. For a more complete survey, see Father Peter Browe, S.J., "Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste," *Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae*, VI, 8 (Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1942). The thought of the Eastern Fathers is treated in an article by Father Augustus Spijkerman, "Afrahat der Persische Weise und der Antizionismus," *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, V (1954-55), 191-212.

10. See *Bullarum Diplomatum Et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis Editio* (1863), VIII, 487.

11. See *De Regimine Judaeorum*, i, *Opuscula Philosophica*, ed. Spiazzi (Turin: Marietti, 1954), p. 240, no. 727.

12. See *Epist.* 363 (PL 182:567).

13. See PL 215:1291; Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1933), pp. 126-127.

14. R. Samuel Marochiani, *De Adventu Messiae Praeterito*, i (PL 149:337).

15. See *Liber contra Judaeos*, c. 51 (PL 116:178-179); see also St. Jerome, *Epist.* 129 ad Dardanum, n. 7 (PL 22:1106).

vinced that the Jews suffered lasting exile for their rejection of Jesus.¹⁶ With him we enter the patristic period, where this conviction seems to have its roots.

THE PATRISTIC PERIOD

During the first three centuries there was little that was explicit: a few timid attempts to interpret the Jewish situation with the help of some scriptural texts, nothing more. In the fourth century, the belief in an unending Jewish dispersion gathered fresh impetus. There was first St. Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386). Some claim he held that the Temple could never be reconstructed, and may thus be enlisted as a witness to the belief under discussion. But this does not seem to be the case.¹⁷ He seems rather to have thought that Christ's prophecy that not one stone would be left upon another (see Lk 21:6) had only partly been fulfilled by Titus' destruction of the Temple, since some stones had remained upon others. St. Cyril was of the opinion that the prediction would be completely accomplished in some future attempt at reconstructing the Temple. When Julian the Apostate made his attempt in 363, Cyril judged this to be the fulfillment. But it was not the thought that the Temple's reconstruction was forbidden by Scripture that underlay Cyril's certainty of Julian's failure; rather it was his conviction that only the Antichrist, who was to appear later in history and would be a Jew,¹⁸ would reconstruct the Temple. St. Cyril cannot, therefore, be regarded as setting forth a universal belief or as summing up a tradition of his time. In fact, he was at variance with it.

With the advent of the second half of the fourth century, the conviction that the reconstruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple was contrary to Scripture had grown strong and widespread.¹⁹ The continuing dispersion of the Jewish people, despite attempts to restore City and Temple, viewed against the background of certain Old and New Testament texts that seemed to suggest such a dispersion, had

16. See *De Cons. Evang.*, I, 13 (PL 34:1051); *Enarr.* in Ps 56:9 (PL 36:666).

17. Such is the opinion of Father Iglesias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 426-429.

18. St. Cyril builds this interpretation on the words of St. Paul in 2 Thesalonians (2:3-4) and on Daniel's vision in chap. 7. But in neither is there any suggestion that the "son of perdition," the one who speaks against the Most High and thinks himself able to change time and laws, will be a Jew.

19. It is Father Iglesias' opinion that this is the period in which the popular belief originated. See *loc. cit.*, p. 416.

strongly influenced several Fathers of the time. St. John Chrysostom, whose conviction on the matter was firm and whose authority was great, added considerable weight to this belief. He was particularly impressed by the failure of the Apostate.²⁰ By the end of the fourth century, the belief had begun to harden and was more or less taken for granted.

Those among the Fathers who held this view sought support for it in both Testaments. As regards the Old, the most frequent appeal was to Dan 9:27, where the prophet speaks of the "abomination of desolation" and seems to imply the destruction of the City and the Sanctuary. In his research, Father Muñoz Iglesias found that of six Fathers who comment on this text, only three explicitly discuss the exile of the Jews.²¹ Even St. John Chrysostom, at the time of his commentary on this text, was uncertain how long the exile would last. Theodoret, however, was convinced it would have no end, and so was Basilus of Seleucia. St. Jerome merely collected opinions and discovered no substantial agreement. Obviously, it is not possible to discover in these comments a firm patristic tradition.

Numerous texts from the New Testament are cited by the Fathers.²² The one most often referred to is perhaps Christ's warning: "When you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . . then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains" (Mt 24:15-16). Of ten who treat the text, only two, Origen and St. Paschasius, affirm the impossibility of restoring the Temple, while eight limit themselves to comments of a moral nature. Twelve other commentators do not deal with the text at all.²³ Here again, there is no semblance of a traditional opinion.

Where, then, if not in Scripture and its early commentaries, are we to seek for the basis of the belief that the Jewish people will live in exile to the last days? Father Iglesias has come to the conclusion that the failure of Julian the Apostate to rebuild the Temple is at the root of the belief so common in the centuries following it.

20. See PG 48:834-835, 888 and *passim*.

21. See Iglesias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 407-409.

22. The principal texts examined are the following: Mt 8:10-12; 21:43; 22:7; 23:29-31; 24:2, 15; Mk 12:1-12; 13:2; Lk 11:49-51; 13:28-29; 13:35; 14:24; 19:41-44; 20:9-18; 21:5-6, 24; Rom 11:25.

23. See Iglesias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 414-416.

JULIAN'S FAILURE

Julian's unsuccessful attempt in 363 to reconstruct the Temple in Jerusalem, and the miraculous manner in which he was reported to have failed, appear to have decisively influenced the growth of the belief that no political restoration of the Jewish people would ever be possible. After the event, more and more of the Fathers approached the question of its possible scriptural foundation with confidence. St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Ambrose, and especially St. John Chrysostom, allude to the event again and again. Indeed, all Christians of the epoch saw it as a direct intervention of almighty God to safeguard the inviolability of the prophecies.

All historians of the period speak of Julian's failure. The first report is that of Rufinus of Aquileia;²⁴ others seem to derive their accounts from him. Even a pagan historian, such as Marcellinus, gives the following account: "Alpius (director of the project), assisted by the government of the province, had operations in full swing, when frightful balls of fire shot out of the foundations on several occasions, rendering the place unapproachable to the workers and even burning some of them. Thus, the elements so completely hampered the project that it had to be abandoned."²⁵ While the historians of this period agreed that extraordinary phenomena had forced a conclusion to the plan, there was disagreement, however, on the Emperor's motivation. Some contended that he wished to frustrate the prophecies of the New Testament.²⁶ Actually, this interpretation cannot be substantiated. The more likely view is that Julian was simply toadying to the Jews, whom he considered enemies of the Christians, and whose public prayers he had sought for his ventures in battle.

Among the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom made the most systematic use of Julian's failure. Whereas before the occurrence he was hesitant, yet tending toward the belief that the Jewish people would never again enjoy political independence, he was now certain. But close scrutiny of his writings reveals a threefold error in the development of his view on the subject. First, he assumed that Julian's defeat was

24. See Rufinus of Aquileia, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 37 (PL 21:505).

25. Quoted in Fernand Mourret's "Histoire Générale de l'Eglise," *Les Pères de l'Eglise* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1928), II, 183.

26. See Iglesias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 416-417.

proof of God's will to prevent forever any restoration. Thereupon, he found in the event a confirmation of Christ's words concerning the ruin of Jerusalem—although until then he had been unable to discover in them any suggestion about its duration. Finally, he attributed to Christ a definitive judgment that Israel never be restored. Doubtless, the same dialectic prevailed upon the other Fathers who came to the same conclusion. They realized no more than Chrysostom that when they thought their view derived from the Scriptures, it was a purely subjective conviction, indeed an *a posteriori* proof, based on the fact of Julian's failure. Needless to say, the refusal to accept this failure as proof of a divine prophecy does not necessarily entail a rejection of the miraculous character of the event.²⁷ Even if we assume a miracle, the most that can be said is that there is evidence of God's intention to prevent a restoration of the Temple at that time, to punish the Apostate, or to effect some purpose unknown to us.

Our conclusion must then be that the belief under discussion did not spring from a dogmatic patristic tradition, but from the conviction of some Fathers of the fourth century, who unknowingly—and understandably—were impressed by an impressive practical situation: three centuries of persecution and dispersion of the Jews, and at their end a miraculous intervention, bringing an effort to rebuild the Temple to nought. Thereafter, as century followed century and Israel herself became inured to her dispersion, the belief that the dispersion was divinely imposed and perpetual became a vague, ingrained assumption whose origin was no longer questioned.

THE SCRIPTURAL TEXTS

The absence of a universal patristic tradition on the complete and perpetual dispersion of the Jews is easily understood when we turn to the scriptural texts which are thought to predict it. Although many are invoked by the Fathers, a few will suffice for our purpose; they are the more representative passages, and on their probative value the case for all may rest.

27. Father Faccio thinks that "God miraculously intervened," but for unknown motives (see *loc. cit.*, p. 85). Father Iglesias is inclined to believe that a "severe historico-critical examination of the supernatural character of the event would diminish much of the objective force" of credence in miraculous intervention (see *loc. cit.*, pp. 416-417).

The most commonly used texts of the Old Testament are two, one from Hosea, the other from Daniel. Hosea predicted:

*Through many days the people of Israel shall remain
without king or prince,
Without sacrifice or sacred pillar,
without ephod or household idols.
Then the people of Israel shall turn back
and seek the Lord, their God, and David, their king;
They shall come trembling to the Lord
and to his bounty, in the last days.*

(3:4-5)

Here Hosea speaks of the punishment to be meted out to Israel for her infidelities. The punishment will be "many days" of exile, an exile which will make her expiate her sins. In the last days she will return to Yahweh and look for David, her king. Does the expression "the last days" mean that her exile will be perpetual, as some of the Fathers thought? In common with all the prophets, Hosea describes here the pattern of Israel's destiny: national sin, disaster, exile, repatriation, and brilliant restoration. Repatriation and restoration are spoken of together; the one is the prelude to the other. It seems that here a historical prophecy merges into a messianic one, which speaks of a new age and dispensation. The phrase "the last days" would then belong to the messianic part of the prophecy, and hence would not apply to the post-messianic Israel. The prophets are interested in Israel as the bearer of the covenant and not as a mere political entity—always, but particularly in the messianic era. Therefore, what might happen to Israel after the advent of the Messiah in a purely secular realm would seem to be outside the purview of this prophecy.

In Daniel the Fathers read:

*On the temple wing shall be the horrible abomination
until the ruin that is decreed
is poured out upon the horror.*

(9:27)

This verse is part of the prophecy of the seventy weeks, which again seems to combine a historic and a messianic vision, referring to the Maccabean age and, over and above it, to the days of the Messiah. Thus are foretold the advent of the Christ, His death, the dev-

astation of the City, and the "horrible abomination on the temple wing"—a sacrilege or profanation that will bring horror to the faithful. The profanation will last until the time determined by God, when His anger will end it.²⁸ But there is nothing in this prophecy to indicate that Daniel wished to pronounce on what would happen to the Jewish people politically, after Christ's coming.

Since for Christians He is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies, it is natural for them to look to Him for a definitive answer on all that pertains to the destiny of the Jewish people. As a matter of fact, it was in His predictions regarding Israel's future that some of the Fathers thought they had found clear proof for her perpetual exile. Christ spoke of her destiny on many occasions. By and large, we may distinguish in His prophetic utterances two strains: one dealing with the spiritual fate of Israel, the other with her temporal woes.

Most of what Christ said concerned the end of the salvific role of the Jewish people. It had been chosen "to be, before the Redeemer's merciful coming, coredeemer of the rest of men."²⁹ But this it would be no longer. The reasons were the incredulity of many; the hostility of Israel's leaders to the prophets and to Himself; Jerusalem's spurning the grace of her visitation. As a consequence of this, the people as a whole would not be part of the kingdom, that is, of the Church; the Gentiles would enter instead; and God's unique providence that had guided Israel in the days of patriarchs and prophets would no longer lead her. Moreover, the Holy City and the Temple would be destroyed, and the people dispersed.

Of the several sayings of Christ that seem to touch on Israel's temporal lot, I shall limit myself to two which are perhaps more explicit than others. The first:

Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth until you shall say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

(Mt 23:38-39)

There is disagreement among exegetes on the meaning of the word "house." Some interpret it to mean the Temple; others, Jerusalem; again others, both. Father Alexander Jones writes in part:

²⁸ See P. P. Saydon, "Daniel," *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. B. Orchard, O.S.B., et al. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1953), sect. 507k-n.

²⁹ Charles Journet, "The Mysterious Destinies of Israel," *The Bridge*, II, 38.

The city of God (5:35), assassin of his envoys (cf. 30, 34; 2 Par 24:20 ff.; Jer 26:20 ff.; 4 Kg 21:16, etc.) and finally rejecting the reconciliation through the Son! . . . The city with its temple ("your house") will be left forsaken as the prophet had threatened (Jer 22:5)—a repetition of the sorrows of the Babylonian exile. But Jesus does not yet speak openly of material ruin. He speaks rather of the spiritual loss his absence will bring.³⁰

When Jerusalem hails Him again as King, she will find Him. How soon this will be, Christ did not say. Nor is there anything in His words to lead us to believe that He envisioned a physical desolation that would endure to the end of days.

The second of Christ's prophecies reads:

They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led away as captives to all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the nations be fulfilled.

(Lk 21:24)

This prophecy announces not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but the disappearance of Israel as a political entity as well. How long this destruction and this dispersion will last is not stated. The Gentiles are, no doubt, the Romans, whose conquering armies set fire to the Temple and laid Jerusalem in ruins under Titus in A.D. 70, and who humbled her again when Hadrian, about the year 135, sought to turn her into a pagan city in the Greek style. But these humiliations came to a definite end. As Father Faccio has pointed out, Jerusalem was restored by Constantine and St. Helena as "the most venerated of spots in the world."³¹ Still, Jerusalem is no longer what she was, with her fall "the time of the nations" has begun, the time when all the peoples of the earth are to be brought under the rule of the Triune God (see Mt 28:19). Nothing in the text, however, indicates that Christ intended to preclude the possibility of a purely political restoration of the Jewish people some time during the Christian era, even centuries after the Roman conquest.

Thus, a study of the patristic and scriptural sources makes us conclude that the belief the Jews could never regain their lost nationhood did not have its origin in Scripture or in a dogmatic patristic tradi-

30. Alexander Jones, "St. Matthew," *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, sect. 714j.

31. Faccio, *loc. cit.*, p. 84.

tion. Rather is it based on the writings of several of the Fathers of the later fourth century—principally Chrysostom—who, unduly influenced by the dramatic failure of Julian the Apostate to reconstruct the Temple, interpreted certain texts of the Old and New Testaments in the light of this event and read into them temporal specifications which an exacting exegesis cannot discover or support. Hence, the existence of a Jewish state, be it the state of Israel or another, does not contradict sacred Scripture.

But if the state of Israel does not contradict the afflictions foretold by Scripture, does it perhaps fulfill those texts that predict an ingathering of the Jewish people? To answer this, we must consider these prophecies and then establish whether the present-day Israel corresponds to their vision.

A FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURAL PROPHECIES?

THOUGH there are few who hazard an affirmative answer, the question is not an idle one. In the end, even the Christian whose immediate reaction is a "no" may—if alert to the possibilities of integral Christian hope—qualify his original denial. And the pious Jew, who sorrowfully admits that the state of Israel is not the ingathering of which he reads in the Scriptures, seems to hope against hope that he may be mistaken. Despite fierce denials by some orthodox Jews, for whom "ingathering" holds a precise and sacred meaning, the word has been in constant use since 1946. We read it in popular articles; we hear it on radio synagogue services and from public platforms. Obviously, some ambiguity exists which, though not wholly recognized, is nevertheless real. This ambiguity is, I believe, but the reflection of a duality that marks the state of Israel, as it does Zionism itself.

It would be an error to see Zionism in a purely political perspective. For behind the political is a profound and spiritual movement which traces its roots far into the past, far beyond an Achad Ha'am to the Sacred Writers of Israel themselves. Indeed, one need not go back at all; the past is always present to almost every Jew. Today, as in days gone by, Jews pray for "the ingathering of the exiles" and ask the Almighty: "Gather us together from the four corners of the earth . . . and let our eyes behold thy return in mercy

to Zion."³² Can they avoid relating this prayer to the oath of the psalmist?

*By the streams of Babylon
we sat and wept
when we remembered Sion. . . .
How could we sing a song of the Lord
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand be forgotten!
May my tongue cleave to my palate
if I remember you not,
If I place not Jerusalem
ahead of my joy.*

(136:1, 4-6)

With tongue in cheek, Arthur Koestler calls Palestine the "Twice Promised Land." In saying that it was "doubly promised from Mount Sinai and Downing Street," he touched on a truth deeper than he realized.³³ Theodor Herzl and Lord Balfour have a definite place in the history of Zionism, but so does Moses, so do the prophets. It is they who gave the Jewish people the hope of ingathering and restoration in the land of promise. The disaster of the year 70 only widened a diaspora that was already Israel's lot; it only increased the yearning of the Jewish heart and the memories of a heroic past. Today, two thousand years after, even a secularized Jew, deaf to the prophets and kings of a bygone age, cannot altogether forget his people's hope. If he makes his contribution to the United Jewish Appeal, he not only wishes to help his fellow Jews in need, but unconsciously pays tribute to the ideal of restoration. No, the question of ingathering is not an idle one; indeed, with time it may grow in importance, should the Israelis, once danger is behind them, more and more seek to build their land after the vision of the prophets.

PROPHECIES OF INGATHERING

The history of Israel is a pattern of exiles and dispersions. Already in the eighth century, with the fall of the kingdom of the North and the

32. See the *Shemoneh 'Esreh*, "The Eighteen Benedictions," which the orthodox Jew recites at morning, afternoon, and evening services. (*The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, trans. and ed. J. H. Hertz, New York: Bloch, 1952, pp. 143, 151.)

33. Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 76, 33.

deportation of the ten tribes, dispersion began. Voluntary emigration followed, and before long Jewish communities were scattered throughout the known world. Then came two invasions of Judah in the sixth century, and the two exiles that followed in their wake. It is against this background that the motif of ingathering developed in the sacred writings of Israel. In prophecy and prayer alike, it ran as a counterpoint to the dread of dispersion until it became a pervasive and dominant theme in most of the sacred books.

In Deuteronomy we read: "The Lord, your God, will change your lot; and taking pity on you, He will again gather you from all the nations wherein He has scattered you" (30:3-4; see vs. 5; also 4:27; 27:62). It is in the prophets that the theme is developed. Some texts emphasize God's chastisement, others His mercy; some speak of the "remnant," others of the whole of Israel, all setting forth the hope that in the end God will save His people. Through Amos, around 750 B.C., the Lord said:

*I will bring about the restoration of my people Israel;
they shall rebuild and inhabit their ruined cities. . . .
Never again shall they be plucked
from the land I have given them.*

(9:14-15)

Hosea, Micah, and the early Isaiah, also of the epoch before the exiles, took up the theme. Most striking are the words of Isaiah:

*The Lord shall again take it in hand
to reclaim the remnant of His people
that is left from Assyria and Egypt,
Phetors, Ethiopia, and Elam,
Sennaar, Hamath, and the isles of the sea.
He shall raise a signal to the nations
and gather the outcasts of Israel;
The dispersed of Judah He shall assemble
from the four corners of the earth.*

(11:11-12)

The prophets of the Exile and of the postexilic period make the theme resound in its fullness. For Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the Book of Consolation (Is 40-55) it is the great motif of their teaching and fore-

telling. With them it is widened and spiritualized; to the historical outlook is added the messianic and the eschatological.

As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries over which you are scattered; and through you I will reveal my sacredness in the sight of the nations.

(Ez 21:41)

*Fear not, for I am with you;
from the east I will bring back your descendants,
from the west I will gather you.
I will say to the north: Give them up!
and to the south: Hold not back!
Bring back my sons from afar,
and my daughters from the ends of the earth.*

(Is 43:5-6)

The ultimate ingathering will be characterized by the influx of all nations and new conditions on the earth. Nature itself will be transformed, Jerusalem renewed, a reign of peace and joy established. Of this phase the second Isaiah is the seer:

*I come to gather nations of every language;
they shall come and see my glory.*

(66:18)

*Lo, I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
The things of the past shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness
in what I create;
For I create Jerusalem to be a joy
and its people to be a delight;
I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and exult in my people.*

(65:17-19)

*The wolf and the lamb shall graze alike,
and the lion shall eat hay like the ox,
but the serpent's food shall be dust.*

(65:25)

Throughout the Psalms there are prayers for the ingathering; they are also found in Chronicles (16 *passim*), Ecclesiasticus (36:13-14), and 2 Maccabees (1:27). The following is typical:

*Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
That we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in praising you.*

(Ps 105:47)

Even the few examples I have given show a twofold development. The first pertains to the scope of the ingathering which at the outset embraces only the people of Israel, later all the nations of the earth. This quantitative development goes hand in hand with another, a qualitative development: The historical merges into the messianic and the messianic into the eschatological. As the prophecies become catholic, they become more deeply spiritual. Generally, the two kinds of prophecies interpenetrate one another to such a degree that it is difficult to set their boundaries. The earliest are purely historical and refer to concrete circumstances in Israel's history. In later prophecies the historical remains, but now points to a future age, the age of the new David, who will gather all peoples into a new alliance. In others again, especially those of the later Isaiah, eschatological transfiguration appears as the crowning of the messianic age, when all nations will inhabit the new Jerusalem in joy and gladness, and when nature itself will yield to the glory of God.

The dominant note of these prophecies is their supernaturality. The ingathering is, above all, the work of Yahweh. He has chastised His people to keep them in the path of justice and holiness. Only after a change of heart, after a turning to Himself, does He liberate them from their enemies and captors. Hence, the end of the ingathering is the spiritual renewal of Israel. Thus speaks Ezekiel:

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the countries, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you; from all your impurities and all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, taking from you your stony heart, and giving you a human heart.

(36:24-26)

I bring them back from the nations and gather them from the lands of their enemies and prove my holiness through them in the sight of many nations.

(39:27)

The ingathering or restoration, then, of which the prophets speak is a deeply spiritual event. On the one side, God's initiative is needed; on the other, the conversion of the exiled. Father Démann sums it up tersely when he says that the essence of the ingathering is, objectively, God's love, free and without fault, His fidelity to His promises; subjectively, man's perfect trust in God the Saviour.³⁴

Are these terms met by the realities of the ingathering that has been taking place in the state of Israel since 1948 and earlier?

THE REALITIES OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

EVEN a quick glance at the new state shows that it is not the glorious restoration under the Son of David, leading His people into the land of promise in order to praise and glorify there the Almighty. What is happening there is of another order. Father Congar, calling it the "human significance of the state of Israel," states it well:

It is a matter of remaking a people that for centuries has known an abnormal, humiliated, and persecuted life. This life has obviously formed their mentality and character, for we all are formed by the environment in which we live, and perhaps even more by the image it takes on in our minds. . . .

We are face to face, then, with a people formed by a minority situation, a people that has lived under extreme difficulties, even catastrophic circumstances—always hemmed in. The Zionist idea is to grant this people the opportunity of finding its soul again by giving back to it, first of all, the soil. This is a great and noble idea.³⁵

Yet, Father Congar finds the picture of the new state not without shadows. He speaks of a nationalist atmosphere, with its collective festivals, its mobilization of youth, of a harshness, without pity and delicacy. "There is a military air about things, a certain pride in the slightest victory" that seems to him a little naïve, at times even irri-

34. See Démann, "Le rassemblement," *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 109.

35. Congar, *loc. cit.*, pp. 170, 172.

tating.³⁶ Very much a Frenchman in this, he appears no less worried by an overwhelming technical organization or, as he calls it, by a kind of "Americanism," an almost religious respect for the tractor or the frigidaire.³⁷ Everywhere in Israel there is a courage in the face of hardship, a spirit of endurance and invention, a will to live, a determination to hold the frontier—in a word, a pioneering spirit. But what will happen once the pioneering days are over, Father Congar wonders, for the *mystique* that pervades present Israeli life remains entirely on the human plane, its dominant spirituality is confined to this world.³⁸

This is not to say that the land that saw the birth of true faith has become a land of unbelief. There are now in Israel Jews from many lands mirroring the various historical phases of Judaism. There are Jews from Yemen who in their beliefs, melodies, and way of life reflect much of ancient Israel; there are those from North Africa who recall something of Jewish religious life of pre-Islamic days, and also of the "golden age" of Jews in Spain; there are Talmudists and Hasidim from eastern Europe; there are even Karaites who reject the traditions of rabbinical Judaism. But there are many more from various parts of the world who under the impact of modern thought and life have succumbed to religious indifference. If Orthodoxy has lost its hold over them, it is not entirely their fault, for it seems to make very little effort to reach and convince those outside its pale.

Father Marie Joseph Stiasny, who has lived in Israel for years, sees a variety of reactions among the Jews there toward orthodox life. For some it is like a treasure long hidden that can now be displayed in the full light of day. For others it is a way of life, abounding in moral values, which preserves the unity of the people, as it did in centuries past. For still others, it is little more than the festive spirit of the Sabbath meal, and the awesome atmosphere of the high holy-days. But for a goodly number the traditional way is looked on as a by-product of the ghetto, evoking memories of vexation and persecution, a witness to the past that has no right of existence in a free Israel. With all necessary caution, Father Stiasny estimates that from twenty to thirty per cent of the Jews in Israel adhere to the orthodox

36. See *ibid.*, pp. 175, 178.

37. See *ibid.*, p. 176.

38. See *ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

way of life, while the same percentage is antireligious or areligious. The remainder keep some of the observances, without submitting to the full rigor of the traditions.

It is in the seven hundred agricultural settlements, the *kibbutzim*, that both religion and absence of religion find their most vivid expression. Though they account for only fifteen per cent of the Jewish population, their influence far exceeds their number. In the about sixty orthodox settlements one finds great earnestness and deep spirituality. In the settlements of the "left," however, where the scientific materialism of the turn of the century still lingers on, the religious question is hardly felt. Not that its members are hostile to religion, but they lack all religious sense. The synagogues that are found in a few of these agricultural communities have only recently been established for newly arrived older people who "can do nothing but pray." Yet, in the towns religious practice seems on the increase.³⁹

In addition to the cleavage between religious and nonreligious Jews in Israel, Father Stiasny observes a tension, perhaps mounting, between the two. Because their political support is necessary, the religious parties are often a determining factor in Israel's coalition governments. They have used this power to impose talmudic law on public life. "By making ritual food obligatory in the army, in hospitals, and in government canteens, by bringing public transportation to a standstill, by ordering the closing of newsstands, restaurants, and motion picture theaters on the Sabbath, by considerably extending the power of the rabbinate, the religious parties think that they have deserved well of religion, without realizing the odious nature of imposing religious practices by law."⁴⁰ The struggles and difficulties of the first years have so exclusively claimed attention, Father Stiasny continues, that few Israelis have realized the true nature of the uneasiness which they obscurely feel. Yet, in order not to halt completely the indispensable public services on the Sabbath, the state has to call on the "irreligious" Jew who cares little about the ritual prescriptions, and it is only at this price that the pious Jew can live a normal life in Israel.⁴¹

As an example of how orthodox Jews try to cope with the diffi-

39. See Marie Joseph Stiasny, N.D.S., "Le problème religieux en Israël," *La Vie Intellectuelle*, XXVIII (November 1956), 82-84.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

41. See *ibid.*, p. 78.

culties of modern society, Father Stiasny quotes from an article by Chief Rabbi Herzog: "I have worked hard to solve the problem of the milking of cows on the Sabbath, and with the help of technicians I have arrived at the following solution: Cows may be milked on the Sabbath by an electric milking machine with an automatic device which has been set before the beginning of the Sabbath."⁴² It is not to be wondered at that an Orthodoxy overconcerned with legalistic problems is unable to move the hearts of most Israeli Jews. Still, Father Stiasny does not despair of the future. In spite of the weaknesses of religion in Israel, "one must not think," he writes, "that there is nothing to work in its favor. There is first the land itself which recalls the long history of love between God and His people. There is the Bible which a twelve-year-old in Israel knows better than many of our professors of holy Scripture."⁴³ There is the Hebrew language which makes everyone a contemporary of the prophets and sages. There is, finally, a youth ardent, filled with ideals, ready for sacrifices."⁴⁴

For the moment the spirit that moves most men and women in Israel is devotion to a just society, but not necessarily under the God

42. *Ibid.*

43. Israeli education on the primary level is centered around the Bible as "the basic textbook of Jewish culture." Of the thirty-two periods of the general state schools which seventy per cent of Israeli school children attend, four periods are devoted to Scripture, four to Hebrew, four to English, three to mathematics, two to history, two to science, and so on. As stated by the government, primary education is to be based "on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people, training in manual and farming skills, pioneering and the aspiration to a society built on freedom, equality, toleration, mutual help and love of humanity." (Quoted by Aryeh Newman, "Bringing 'Jewishness' to Israeli Schools," *Congress Weekly*, XXIV, 25, October 21, 1957, p. 5.) Thus the "ethical, social and artistic principles enshrined in the Bible" are seen as "embodiments of the Jewish national genius and vision." (*Ibid.*, p. 6.)

Recently, however, there has been some change in Israel's educational policy. Israeli educators realized that by avoiding all "theology" they had created a type of Jew that had little common ground with many Jews abroad. Ironically enough, this discovery owed a great deal to the International Youth Festival in Moscow. When the representatives of Israel's extreme left-wing party, most of them Israeli-born, who had never been to a synagogue, met with their Jewish brethren in a Russian synagogue, they did not know how to put on a prayer shawl, nor did they know how to pray. To find that without a religious bond their ties to other Jews were tenuous, seems to have had a sobering effect on them and others in Israel. In any case, the Ministry of Education plans to hold special courses for teachers so that, following a new policy, they may "familiarize" their pupils "with Jewish religious law and custom." (*Ibid.*, p. 6.)

44. Stiasny, *loc. cit.*, p. 85.

of justice. Theirs is a life of sacrifice, but it is not a sacrifice for His sake. In the summer of 1957, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's Prime Minister, gave an account of what he himself called his "confession of faith." He said in part:

What has secured the survival of the Jewish people throughout the generations, and led to the creation of the State is the Messianic vision of the prophets of Israel, the vision of redemption for the Jewish people and for all humanity. The State of Israel is an instrument for the realization of this Messianic vision. . . .

There is a tragic duality in the heart of every Jew in the Diaspora, and Diaspora Jewry is in danger of complete dissolution. It is only in Israel that Jews are free as men and as Jews. Only in Israel does the Jew achieve spiritual integrity; only here can he be a Jew and a man naturally, without barriers or cleavages. . . .

The State, as the standard-bearer of the vision of redemption, and every Jew who is concerned for the future and the unity of the Jewish people, must endeavor to deepen the Jewish consciousness among the Jewish youth in Israel and abroad; to strengthen their roots in the Jewish past and in their historic heritage; to intensify their attachment to the values of Messianic redemption; to consolidate the feeling of a common destiny and continuity which unites the Jews of the whole world in all generations and in all places; and above all to ensure Jewish education for the younger generation in the Diaspora, to bring about closer personal contact between Jews abroad and Israel, and to train Jewish youth in Israel and the Diaspora for bold pioneering enterprise that will implement in practice all the values of the vision of Messianic redemption.⁴⁵

This creed leaves the God of Israel unmentioned. Though David Ben-Gurion cannot divorce himself entirely from the faith of his fathers, though he must use religious language, words like "messianic redemption" no longer hold the meaning they once had. Undefined though the values are that he holds dear, they remain within the human realm.

True, physical exile has come to an end for all who have settled in Israel, but a spiritual exile has taken its place. For an ingathering of exiles that conforms to the biblical promise would have to be more than an answer to the legitimate desire for survival, more even than an

45. David Ben-Gurion, "Israel and Judaism," *Israel Weekly Survey*, I, 47 (July 1957), pp. 1339-1340.

unfolding of a rich cultural life as is now emerging in Israel. Forgetting here that the realization is far off, the ingathering of exiles must do more than realize the dream that Israel may some day become a fortress of peace and a model of democracy for the Middle East, indeed for the whole world. When in days past the people of Israel were freed from danger or foreign dominion, their delivery always had a religious meaning and was for a religious purpose. Father Congar has stated it well: It was never liberation for liberation's sake. Israel was not freed from the bondage of Egypt that, instead of making bricks there, she might merely cultivate vineyards in her own land, nor was she delivered from the captivity of Babylon that, instead of trading there, she might write the sacred books and perform the beautiful ceremonies in Jerusalem. She was freed in order to be in every way God's people.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

WHAT relates to the Israel of the Ancient Covenant and to the Israel of reintegration must in some degree relate to the Israel of the interim. Israel's singularity remains, her election has not been completely withdrawn. She is destined to remain a people apart in order to serve in the final act of mankind's salvation. Thus her exile cannot be ended on a merely secular level; Zionism, assimilationism, or any other human measure can never be adequate to the task of Israel's redemption. Her redemption must be a spiritual event.

No doubt, history is the judgment of God. The Christian and the Jewish tradition have therefore, though for different reasons, seen in

46. See Congar, *loc. cit.*, p. 200. An interesting search by a nonorthodox Jew in Israel for the religious significance of the new state is Schalom Ben-Chorin's *Die Antwort des Jona* (Hamburg: Herbert Reich, 1956). He begins his book with the words: "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land" (Jon 1:9). He ends it with an inscription the Israeli government had engraved in marble and placed over an ancient well in the birthplace of John the Baptist, an inscription taken from the Book of Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye for water" (55:1). Seeing in Hitler's defeat and in the founding of the state of Israel the workings of divine grace, he warns that a national regeneration without a spiritual rejuvenation would mean an assimilation more fateful than that of individual Jews of the last century. Israel and religion cannot be divorced, Judaism cannot exist without law! The solution of Israel's existential problem must be sought, however, not in the return to petrified forms of the law, but rather in a new life "beyond Orthodoxy and Liberalism."

Israel's exile a divine punishment. But must we really understand Israel's dispersion as a punitive intervention of God? It would seem that the more demonstrable divine intervention is not to have Israel remain scattered over the face of the earth, but to preserve her in the face of many dangers that threaten extinction. A large part of the "mystery of Israel" is not so much that her dispersion has endured, as that she has not vanished from the earth. Her exile is the crucible in which she is prepared once more for the final return. She must not "settle down" without her Messiah.

We may ask, then: If the state of Israel is not the ingathering promised by the prophets, has it any relation to the final ingathering promised by St. Paul? All the authors I have cited, Fathers Faccio, Congar, Iglesias, and Monsignor Journet, have in one way or another suggested that the present state of Israel may be a stratagem of divine providence to drive Israel into a "blind alley of grace."⁴⁷

An "ingathering of exiles" without Messiah will always be an abnormal situation for all Jews who adhere to a modicum of Jewish tradition. The disillusionment springing from this situation can only grow with time; eventually it may force them to weigh reality against promise and lead them to a new search. No less may those Jews whose life is not fed by Israel's religious tradition find themselves at the end of their resources. If Israel's present danger should pass, today's marvelous spirit of sacrifice may give way to routine, in which merely cultural values, however deep, will not be sufficient to hold the nation together. And if the danger should not pass for a long time, the heroic efforts of today may flag and weariness take their place. In either case, the men and women in the state of Israel will face a dilemma. With Father Congar, we may then think that God wished to bring a representative cross section of the Jewish people to the Holy Land in order to bring it there face to face with the great question of the Messiah. Israel's restoration to the land of promise, even though under secular auspices, may thus be a distant preparation for her final encounter with grace.⁴⁸

47. Congar, *loc cit.*, p. 206.

48. See *ibid.*, pp. 207-209.