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The Biblical Idea of a Holy Nation

BY R. E. NIXON

THE History of the Church began with the call of an individual—Abraham. The concept of a holy nation was developed from this one man and his faith and obedience. For God chose him for his purposes and sent him out on a journey which was to lead not only to Canaan and Egypt, but to Babylon and Rome, to Canterbury and Kampala, to Buchenwald and Tel-Aviv. The idea of a holy nation underlies the whole history of Israel and of the Christian Church and has had incalculable consequences for the entire world.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISRAEL

God chose Abraham and entered into covenant with him.

'I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God' (Gen. 17: 7f.).

The covenant was not just with the individual but also with the descendants who were promised to him and it included the provision of land for their possession. The faith and obedience of an individual led to promises of blessing for a race and a nation.

It is difficult to say when the family of Abraham could be counted as a race, but they did not become a nation until the Exodus. For, in the providence of God, Abraham himself only lived as a stranger in the land and his descendants went off and were taken into slavery in a foreign state. But through God's redeeming acts the people were brought out of Egypt and welded under Moses in the desert into something which could to some extent be described as a nation. They were a nation on the march. A nation seeking the goal of the promised land. A nation owing their whole existence to an act of God in accordance with His promise, but on the way to receive a greater measure of the fulfilment of that promise.

In the wilderness God made another covenant with the people. Where the previous one with Abraham had been in anticipation, this was on the basis of acts performed already. Where the earlier one had been with the individual, this was with the nation.

'Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Ex. 24: 8).

Here then there is, in theory at least, an identity of what we would call Church and State. The *'εκκλησια* is the people of God. They are what Josephus first called a 'theocracy'.

'Some legislators', he says, 'committed political authority to monarchies, some to oligarchies, others to the people. But our legislator had no regard to any of these forms, but he ordained our government to be what, by doing violence to words, may be termed a "theocracy", by ascribing the authority and the power to God.'¹

This is something which was not unusual among other nations and the combination of the offices of king and supreme priest has been common. In some cases the king would even be revered as a god. Here however it must be noted that the spiritual authority of Moses was in some measure delegated to Aaron, who became as T. M. Parker puts it, his 'Vicar General in Spirituals'.²

Through the chequered period of the judges and up to the reign of Solomon this idea continued. With David the conquest of the promised land was completed. Jerusalem was captured and made into a capital and Solomon in due course fulfilled the plan by building the Temple. So the race had become in the fullest sense a nation with its own king, land, capital and temple. Yet despite the unity of Church and State, all was not what it should have been. The people's request for a king revealed their falling short of the full acceptance of Yahweh as their King.

'The thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us". And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them"' (1 Sam. 8: 6f).

The unity of Church and State was threatened on the spiritual level by sin. But it was also threatened on the political level by the events which occurred after the death of Solomon. It was then that the Northern 'nationalists', whose relationships to the South had often shown signs of tension, refused to go to the capital for political decisions and to accept the religious sanction which was given to the Southern government. So the people of Israel split into two. They became two nations, though basically only one race. The unity of Church and State was demonstrably broken. Eventually many of the Northern kingdom were carried off into exile and the land was resettled with five nations and their baalim.

'And this was so, because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs which the kings of Israel had introduced' (2 Kings 17: 7f.).

The Old Testament inevitably sees the saving history continuing through Judah. But Judah had problems too on a spiritual level. The reign of Manasseh was something like national apostasy. The nation needed to be recalled to a sense of destiny—to a sense of being a theocracy, a holy nation. It was then that in the reign of good King Josiah there was made the momentous discovery of the book of

the Law. The impact of Deuteronomy's discovery (or the discovery of part of it) was enormous. It is an intensely theological document which brought home to Israel the true meaning of her national existence. I intend for a few minutes to look carefully at its theology, as it bears upon our theme, with the help of an excellent recent book on the subject, *God's Chosen People*, by Ronald Clements.³

THE TEACHING OF DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy is, as von Rad put it, 'preached law'. As Clements says

'Many of the regulations set out by Deuteronomy were not new, or were only relatively new in their detailed requirements. What was remarkably new in Israel was such a thoroughgoing attempt at providing everyone with an interpretation of the meaning and obligations of its religion. Israel was being taught to worship God with its understanding, as well as with its heart. In consequence of this we find that great stress is laid upon the attitude which was to be adopted towards God, and towards the public service of him in worship. Similarly we find exhortations regarding the attitude that was to be nurtured in thinking of one's fellow countrymen and of others resident in the land. Not only what ought to be done, but in what spirit it ought to be done, became important matters of principle.'⁴

It was important also that the king was in one sense an ordinary Israelite who had to submit to the Law. *Lex* was very much *Rex*.

The nation was one nation.

'The interval of time which separated those who came out of Egypt from the people of Israel living in the land of Canaan is overcome by a sense of the fundamental unity which bound all Israel together. The words of Moses are intended for every citizen of this nation extending across its history as well as throughout the variety of its individual members. Deuteronomy nowhere exhorts Israel to unity, because it presupposes this unity as a fact, given by God when he bound Israel in covenant to himself.'⁵

There is no doubt that it is treated as something which could properly be called a nation.

'We notice furthermore that Israel is not only a united body of people, but it also forms a nation with all those features which go to make up a national life. It lives upon a land which, Deuteronomy insists, has been given to it by God. It may have a king to rule over it, like all the nations round about. It may wage war against other nations, and it may administer its own courts of law. It even has regulations determining the conditions upon which the people of certain other races may participate in the religious life of Israel.'⁶

At the same time one cannot fail to see that there is something different about Israel.

'The reason for this is very clearly described: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen

you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth" (Deut. 7: 6. Cf. Deut. 4: 20; 14: 2; 26: 18f.). The uniqueness of Israel is fully disclosed in the brief phrase "a people holy to the Lord your God". What makes the citizens of Israel different from the citizens of any other country is the fact that they are in a sacred relationship to Yahweh as their national God. . . . It is important to recognise that the holiness of Israel of which Deuteronomy speaks is an established fact, not a spiritual ambition. Israel is holy by virtue of the specially tight bond which binds it to God. As we shall see, this link was forged by God and not by the members of Israel, and this point is strongly insisted on in Deuteronomy. Israel cannot "take time to be holy", because by its very existence it is holy. . . . All the various detailed regulations which appear in the laws of Deuteronomy are the outworking of this primary belief in the holiness of Israel, and they are intended to serve as guidelines to enable Israel to live up to its privileged position. They point out the way by which Israel can become, in practical expression, what it already is in theological affirmation.'

The theological approach of Deuteronomy gave a stronger ethical colouring to the concept of holiness. It was even extended to the Ministry of Defence (20: 1ff.; 21: 10ff.)!

'The nation was regarded as a unity and no exceptions were envisaged to the demands which were made in consequence of the nation's holiness. No citizen was permitted to excuse himself from keeping the law, and certainly no freedom of religious choice was conceded. Israel as a whole had been committed by God to obey His will. This certainly did not mean that other religions could not exist—for other nations this is fully conceded—but no other religion could exist for Israel. Deuteronomy would not tolerate that any citizen of Israel should have any other religion than that which had been established in the nation by God. Thus there was only to be one religion for the land and people of Israel, and any alien religious practice was to be ruthlessly dealt with.'

Despite all this a reaction had to come from individuals.

'In the personal response of each Israelite ultimately lay the response of Israel as a whole.'

Deuteronomy was therefore

'a last great attempt to call Israel to national reform, including everyone in its appeal to repentance and renewal. The basic conviction that underlies this appeal is that Israel is a holy nation.'

This point is reinforced by the fact that the covenant is treated as essentially conditional, rather than unconditional in the case of the Davidic covenant. (2 Sam. 7: 14f.; Ps. 89: 30-37). Loyalty and obedience are necessary. It is based on the covenant of Horeb with the tablets of the Law.

'The divine word, rather than the sacred king and temple, is the witness to Israel that it is the chosen people of God.'

The election of Israel was, of course, by grace.

'It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt' (Dt. 7: 7f.).

The relationship depended upon Yahweh's love and His covenant with their ancestors. He had done what He had promised through the Exodus and He still loved the people even when they sinned.

'Deuteronomy asserted as clearly as possible that God is gracious without being indulgent and righteous without ceasing to be merciful.'¹¹

The land of Canaan was an important part of the blessing which Israel received. It was held by her as a sacred trust so long as she was faithful to Yahweh. There is what Clements calls a 'holy materialism' in the sentiments expressed on this subject in Deuteronomy.

'For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you' (Dt. 8: 7-10).

Yet the dangers of prosperity are also seen.

'Beware lest you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth". You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth; that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as at this day' (Dt. 8: 17f.).

There is also a further point of importance about the land.

'Because the God who gave the land is the God of the covenant with its laws, there is a relationship between the land and the moral demands of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that the threat of losing possession of the land and its fruits is the fundamental punishment that is envisaged should Israel disobey God. Possession of the land is the sign of Israel's nationhood, and the continuing evidence of the goodness of God. A breach of the covenant is naturally seen to have its consequence in expulsion from the land, which is God's special gift.'¹²

It is necessary to remember that the primary purpose of the Law was positive rather than negative.

'Deuteronomy particularly emphasises that the purpose of the law was not to bind Israel to a set of arbitrary restrictions, but to guide it towards the fullest enjoyment of life. Repeatedly it is stressed that the law is given "that it may go well with you", and "that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your

God gives you". This must be interpreted not simply in the sense that God would reward the good behaviour of his people, but that the laws themselves were designed to increase the health and prosperity of men: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as at this day" (Deut. 6: 24). Nowhere in the Old Testament is the grace of the law more emphatically declared than here. It is God's gift, showing how men can enjoy to the full the benefits of life and possessions which are also divinely given.¹⁴

It was therefore of considerable importance that, at one end of the national scale, the king should keep the Law and, at the other, families should be instructed in it.

The worship which was called for by Deuteronomy was based on the idea of the one God, even if it could not quite be described as monotheism.

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might' (Dt. 6: 4f.). 'The undivided God demanded the undivided loyalty of his people's devotion.'¹⁵

This was of course the reason for the intense hostility towards other cults within Israel.

'Deuteronomy was waging no abstract ideological battle over the merits of differing religions, but was involved in a life and death struggle for the maintenance and survival of its own God-given religious insights. The issue at stake was whether Israel could survive as a nation if its religion were not better than that of the nations which it has supplanted. . . . What was at stake was ultimately the union of morality with religion, and what we find in Deuteronomy is the refusal to accept that God could demand of men, in the name of religion, what the conscience of society condemned as immoral. The strongest affirmation of the uniqueness of Israel's God, and the demand that every Israelite should yield a total allegiance to Him, were necessary if the Deuteronomists were to preserve the integrity and moral character of their society. Their religious controversialism was the outcome of a deep moral passion for the welfare of every citizen of the nation which they loved.'¹⁶

Another feature of the teaching of Deuteronomy was the place given to a central state sanctuary which was to provide a focus for religious and political unity.

'Deuteronomy set out to provide a single unifying interpretation of Israel's religion, and it intended that this should be acceptable to, and binding upon, all sections of the nation. It has therefore some features which represent a compromise between the various traditions of earlier Israel. While Jerusalem is accepted as the site of the sole legitimate sanctuary for the worship of Yahweh, such acceptance is set within the context of an over all focus on the Mosaic covenant made on Mount Horeb. . . . Here for the first time the principle of canonicity was connected to an extended written document which claimed to be binding upon the whole nation.'¹⁷

G. E. Wright emphasises the fact that covenant and Law were prior to king and Temple. In Deuteronomy

'the intention of God for the whole life of the nation was disclosed, with the result that the people not only knew what they should do but were also able to interpret their history. The revealed order and the actual order stood in tension with one another, so that the former was the judge of the latter. To Israelite religious leaders, therefore, the normative period of the nation's life was not the golden age under David and Solomon, much as that was admired and by Josiah especially emulated. It was rather the Mosaic era, the period spent in the wilderness when the nation was organised in covenant with its Lord.'¹⁸

If then it provides the norm for judging Israelite history, and if the book is in a sense an introduction to what follows in the canon (the books up to 2 Kings), then we must see how the ideals set forth in the book worked out in practice.

EXILIC AND POST-EXILIC JUDAISM

At once we see the impossibility of spiritual renewal by 'act of Parliament'. We see the breaking on Israel's part of what might be called the 'election manifesto'. So as he entered into the experience of the disappointed hopes of those who longed for a true revival, there came to Jeremiah the revelation of the new covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34). The terms of this indicate that there must be a remnant within the nation, for no whole nation can have the Law written on its heart, access to God and the forgiveness of sins. There is still a people with whom the covenant is made—'I will be their God and they shall be my people'—but it is the people of God reconstituted on a spiritual basis.

Within a few years of the discovery of Deuteronomy disaster was to overtake Judah in the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar and the deportation to Babylon of many of its leading citizens. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept. They asked plaintively 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?' (Ps. 137: 4). But they soon found that separation from Palestine did not mean separation from Yahweh. This was a vital discovery, for the next two and a half millennia have witnessed the great dispersion of Israel. Sometimes it was voluntary, sometimes enforced. We have come to a new era, for after the Exile we speak of 'Judaism', since no longer could Israel (or Judah) be conceived as an entity where race, nation and religion were coterminous.

Within the nation there had always been provision for the stranger, the *gér* who came to live amongst another people. Deuteronomy is especially anxious to defend, help and love the *gér* (Dt. 10: 18; 14: 29; 24: 14, 19), to allow him rights (Dt. 24: 17; 27: 19). He was not compelled but was allowed to follow the religion of Israel (Dt. 14: 29), but he could not intermarry with Israelites (Dt. 7: 1-5). He could take no full part in the Passover and other feasts until he was circumcised. From the *gér* who lived in the nation and shared in some of its benefits, there grew the idea of the proselyte who was attracted by

the religion of Israel. It was through the Dispersion that most proselytes were made, for many Gentiles were impressed by the moral standards of the Jews who lived amongst them and wished to partake in their religion. But, as H. H. Rowley says,

'Judaism never wholly emancipated itself from the thought of a nation even when it began to embrace the idea of a church. The proselytes had to associate themselves with the Jewish nation as well as with the Jewish faith.'¹⁹

In a sense, by accepting circumcision they almost became members of the Jewish race, while the prescribed visit to Jerusalem linked them up loosely with the Jewish nation. But they were never treated as being quite the same as those who were Jews by blood.²⁰

The outreach of Judaism however never really became a missionary programme. Things were centred in Jerusalem. It was Mount Zion which was at the hub of the world acting almost as a magnet.

'It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it . . . ' (Is. 2: 2-4).

The Gentiles must largely find their own way in to join the Jewish nation. This sentiment at its best is summed up in Zechariah where

' . . . In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" ' (Zech. 8: 20-23).

Any hope of the *extension* of Israel's election (as Rowley calls it) rested on what he describes as its *limitation*. Mission depended upon the remnant doctrine, and it rested on the understanding that the remnant was the saving as well as the saved remnant. The discovery that Yahweh was far greater than the idols of Babylon led to the monotheism of Deutero-Isaiah and with it a sense of universal salvation.

'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth' (Is. 49: 6; cf. 42: 6-8).

But this was too little understood and acted upon and many of the pious remnant groups had no sense of mission at all. Yet such making of proselytes as was done was achieved more by those like the Pharisees who stood for definite principles than by those like the Sadducees who subordinated their religion to the pagan state.

With all these various attitudes in Jewish thought, there is no doubt that the idea of a unity of nation, race and church had disappeared except in the visions of the apocalyptists.

'By the period of the literature of late Judaism, or the inter-testamental literature, both Land and People are still part of the Inheritance, but because of the Exile and other factors the People were only a remnant and the possession of the Land was put off until the Eschaton. One further element was added. Strict obser-

vance of the Law, accompanied by the doing of good deeds, was the condition for inheriting the earth.'²¹

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Such then was something of the position of the Holy Nation, broken and scattered, when her Messiah came of her race to her land to renew her faith. He came to challenge her to be true to herself and a blessing to the world. Some wished Him to be a nationalist Messiah. Did not the temptations point towards this—a messianic programme of feeding, or wonder working or of crude power? Was not the question about the tribute money designed to draw Him out in this way? Did not many see the entry into Jerusalem as the action of a nationalist leader? Amongst the Twelve there was probably more than one Zealot and it seems likely that the feeding of the five thousand had about it some of the features of an intended messianic uprising.²² Yet Jesus refused to accept this role. He preached the Kingdom of God which he would identify neither with Church nor with State.

If he disappointed the Zealots, he worried the Sadducees, the collaborators. For they in particular felt the danger of his teaching and his actions.

'If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation' (Jn. 11: 48).

They have a vested interest in the current establishment. As John brings out so strikingly, it is essentially 'the Jews'—the Judaeans, those who cling to pride of nation as well as of race—who are so contemptuous of Galilaeans, Samaritans, the Dispersion. It is they who in their inward looking attitudes are so opposed to a dangerous innovator who may upset the *status quo*.

So Jesus was condemned (at least by implication) and crucified as a Zealot King of the Jews by the Roman state against which He would not lead a revolt. He was crucified at the instigation of the spiritual leaders of the people of God who preferred not to risk their religious or their political position. A Zealot was released in His place by the Roman government. So, in the most extraordinary irony of history, Jewish nationalism and ecclesiasticism combined to remove at the hands of Roman imperialism the only one who could have given hope to their religion, their nation and their race for the future.

What were the consequences of this for Judaism? The parable of the wicked husbandmen makes that clear (Mk. 12: 1-9). Jesus came as the true Heir to God's inheritance, to His land and to His people.²³ Those who claimed to be heirs were to be disinherited. Judgment was to come upon them, such as was threatened in the latter chapters of Deuteronomy for the people when they broke the covenant.²⁴ But the people were not abandoned. Jerusalem was still the base for mission. The Gospel had to go to the Jew first, even if often the Gentile responded first. And, if I read Romans 9 to 11 correctly, the place of the Jews in the outworking of history still has an important part in God's plan of redemption.

In the New Testament most of the ideas associated with Israel

in the Old are frankly transferred to the Church. The Church itself is the *ἐκκλησία*. Christians inherit the Kingdom (Mt. 25: 34), for it is given to a nation bringing forth its fruits (Mt. 21: 43). Israel after the flesh has broken the covenant. Israel renewed is the people who have put their faith in the Messiah. There is continuity but new birth. Paul in particular wrestles with this idea in Romans 9 to 11. Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. The people of God are reconstituted on a new basis. The Gentiles are grafted in. Where the synagogue has rejected its election, the Church has inherited it. The Church is the heir to the mission of Israel to the world, but also the heir to the warnings which are given to the faithless people of God.

Because the Church went to the Dispersion, she broke out, as the Jews of the Dispersion had done, beyond the bounds of the nation. More important, because she went to the Gentiles, she broke out, as no Jews had really done, beyond the bounds of race. So we find the great controversy about the Gentile mission which dominates the New Testament. Were the Gentiles to be circumcised? Were they to become Jews before they could become Christians? As Paul saw it, acceptance without circumcision was essential to bring back the basis of the people of God to what it had been in the case of Abraham—faith. If that is Paul's battle, it is the battle of the Epistle to the Hebrews to combat not racialism (circumcision is not mentioned) but nationalism. Christians have a heavenly city (Heb. 11: 10). His readers are to go outside the camp (Heb. 13: 13f.).

The most striking passage concerning the way in which Israel gave place to the Church is in 1 Peter 2: 9f. Here the Church is described in terms taken over from the Old Testament (Ex. 19. 5f.; Is. 43: 20f.). The Church is a *genos* (race). If the distinction in the words may be pressed at all, it probably refers to their sharing a common birth by faith. It is an *ethnos* (nation). Perhaps we are to see here implied some organisation. It is the *laos*—the people of God, called for the priestly service of God on behalf of the world. Here in the New Testament is the Holy Nation.

What about the pagan state? In the Old Testament foreign nations were seen as instruments in God's hand. In the New Testament the references seem to be mainly to rulers rather than nations as a whole. The Gospels tell us that Jesus kept the Roman law. The tribute question (Mk. 12: 13-17) shows that the state has rights but must be resisted if they are overstepped, for if money belongs to Caesar the whole man belongs to God. He accepted the authority of Pilate as 'from above' (Jn. 19: 4) and the penalties imposed upon Him, while also presenting a moral challenge to the Roman governor. The Acts shows us that there were no Christian ghettos in the earliest days. Members of the Church were expected to be good members of the state also. The classical passage in the Pauline epistles is Romans 13: 1-7, where the apostle sees the government as 'God's servant for your good'. 1 Peter treats Christians as aliens and exiles (1 Peter 2: 11) but they must submit to authority even when it is unjust (1 Peter 2: 13-17). When the Roman Empire tried to become a theocracy, then the call was for resistance for Caesar was usurping the place of God.

The Apocalypse records the different attitude of the Church to the state in such circumstances.

Essentially the New Testament has an eschatological perspective. It sees the *πολιτευμα* of Christians to be in heaven (Phil. 3: 20). It is only at the eschaton that Church and state can be one—a true theocracy.

'From Revelation 21 we learn that it is not the real Church (*ἐκκλησια*) but the real city (*πολις*) that truly constitutes the new age. Or, to put it otherwise, the Church sees the future and its hope, not in any heavenly image of its own existence, but in the real heavenly State.'²⁵

This gives significance to the State for 'every State, even the worst and most perverse, possesses its imperishable destiny in the fact that it will one day contribute to the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem and will inevitably bring its tribute thither.'²⁶

The state then is something provisional and

'on the side of the State the stipulation is—not that it must necessarily be Christian—but indeed that it knows its *limits*.'²⁷

CONCLUSION

No nation can be the chosen people of God except Israel. There may be a real eschatological significance in the refounding of the state of Israel. Here there is an attempt to reunite race and nation, and Christians believe that they need now to return to their true religion as it is revealed in Christ. The Jews have resisted genocide, the state of Israel has resisted what we might call 'ethnocide'. Yet the debate still goes on about whether Jews should define themselves in terms national, racial or religious.

There are great dangers in any other nations thinking of themselves as God's people. It is true that a religious awakening usually gives a new sense of national destiny, but there is no *Heilsgeschichte* on which to base it. The Lord may have brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir (Am. 9: 7). He may have given us the destruction of the Spanish Armada and the Battle of Britain, but this is not saving history for the world. Yet we should not say that there can be no application of the principles of the holy nation just because there can be no fulfilment until the *'εσχρατον*. G. Henton Davies suggests that Deuteronomy

'did for Israel in the new life in Canaan what still remains to be done for the Christian faith as it crosses over into the industrial and atomic age.'²⁸

He goes on to say that '8: 12-14, 17-18 are the precise revelation for the welfare state.' Even if there may be pardonable exaggeration here, it reminds us that Christians must seek with all their power to make states conform to the will of God. The fact that no modern state has the theological status of a holy nation should not prevent us from trying to make it into a just society. Our efforts will not be in vain

when we remember the divine perspective and look forward to the day when

'the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev. 11: 15).

NOTES

¹ Josephus: *Cont. Apion.* ii. 16, cited by T. M. Parker, *Christianity and the State in the Light of History* (London, 1955), p. 8.

² Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³ R. E. Clements, *God's Chosen People* (London, 1968).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 32f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 57f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁸ G. E. Wright in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York, 1953) Vol. II, p. 314.

¹⁹ H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (London, 1964), p. 89.

²⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 140.

²¹ J. D. Hester, *Paul's Concept of Inheritance* (Edinburgh, 1968), p. 43.

²² See H. W. Montefiore in *New Testament Studies* 8. 2 Jan. 1962, pp. 135ff.

²³ Hester, *op. cit.*, pp. 37f.

²⁴ R. E. Nixon, *The Exodus in the New Testament* (London, 1963), pp. 17f.

²⁵ K. Barth, *Church and State* (London, 1939), p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁷ O. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (London, 1957), p. 91.

²⁸ G. Henton Davies in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London, 1952), p. 270.