

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISRAEL IN BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY

Mark W. Karlberg*

Recent critical studies in Biblical typology have generated renewed debate among scholars of various and diverse theological traditions.¹ Leading issues pertaining to hermeneutical methodology include the relation between history and revelation on the one hand and the nature of the continuity/discontinuity between the OT and the NT on the other. The present essay focuses on the second of these two issues. The chief point of difference among evangelicals is the question of the relationship between Israel (the old covenant community) and the Church (the new covenant people of God).² Specifically, does the supplanting of the old covenant by the new (cf. the epistle to the Hebrews) involve the dissolution of the theocratic form of the kingdom of God under Moses?

I. ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH IN COVENANT PERSPECTIVE

Historically, dispensationalism and covenant theology have presented two alternative positions concerning the relationship between Israel and the Church. Though both theological traditions have undergone significant changes in recent years—in some instances radical revision—the subject of Israel's place in redemptive history continues to be prominent in these discussions.³ Generally speaking, both schools of interpretation recognize the importance of typology in Scripture. It is in the interest of furthering dialogue among dispensational and covenant theologians that the topic of Israel and the Church is pursued here from the standpoint of Biblical typology.

Of paramount importance is the matter of law and gospel (works and grace) as descriptive of the two historical administrations of the covenant of redemption (traditionally called the covenant of grace). When treating Paul's teaching on the law, a growing number of both dispensationalists and covenant theologians have adopted the so-called misinterpretation view of the

*Mark Karlberg is part-time instructor in theology at Chesapeake Theological Seminary in Ellicott City, Maryland.

¹See especially the articles by W. Eichrodt, G. von Rad and H. W. Wolff in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (ed. C. Westermann; Richmond: John Knox, 1963); cf. also G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (SBT; Naperville: Allenson, 1957); Lampe, "Typological Exegesis," *Theology* 56 (1953) 201-208.

²Cf. most recently D. L. Turner, "The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology: Key Hermeneutical Issues," *GTJ* 6 (1985) 275-287.

³M. W. Karlberg, "Legitimate Discontinuities Between the Testaments," *JETS* 28 (1985) 9-20. In modifying and clarifying earlier dispensational teachings present-day dispensationalism approximates the classic premillennial interpretation.

Mosaic law. According to this view the Mosaic covenant consists exclusively of a sovereign administration of grace and promise (unconditional). But the Judaizers had misinterpreted the law of Moses to teach justification (i.e. salvation) by works of the law. Hence the apostle Paul's negative statements concerning the law of Moses (law versus grace) are to be understood in terms of the peculiarly Judaizing point of view. Positively stated, the misinterpretation view holds that the law of Moses preaches the pure grace of Christ as the only source of life now and hereafter. The difference between the two covenants, consequently, is merely one of degree and circumstance. Under the new covenant the gospel is proclaimed with greater fullness and clarity (along with its universal scope and application of the saving benefits of Christ's work to the elect). Contrary to this popular explanation of Paul's teaching, the apostle recognized that there was indeed a works-principle operating on the typological level of the old covenant and that the fatal error of the Judaizers was that they misconstrued the works-principle as though it were the basis of inheriting the antitypical reward (Rom 9:31-32).⁴

On the other side of the debate, the teaching of traditional covenant theology emphasizes the unity and continuity between the Testaments (meaning that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ in all ages subsequent to the fall) in a way that does not obliterate the obvious discontinuity between them. The Scriptures clearly teach that there is both continuity and discontinuity between the old and new covenants with respect to the opposing principles of inheritance, law and grace.⁵

The principle of inheritance on the ground of works is an indispensable element in a genuinely Biblical formulation of the theology of the covenants. In the case of the old covenant, as observed above, the works-principle operated on the typological level while the grace-principle concurrently functioned on the eternal/spiritual level. The earthly, temporal blessings were granted to God's people Israel under the conditions of the Mosaic administration. As long as Israel was faithful to the covenant with her Lord she would enjoy life and prosperity in the promised land. By reason of disobedience those temporal blessings would be forfeited by the whole house of Israel, including the remnant of grace, as actually occurred in the Babylonian exile. Hans K. LaRondelle correctly observes: "Israel would only remain God's treasured possession and holy nation if Israel would obey God and keep His covenant (Exodus 20-24). This is a clearly conditional aspect regarding Israel's future status in God's covenant."⁶

On either dispensational or covenantal interpretations one must distinguish between national, theocratic Israel (God's "elect" people) and the rem-

⁴I have treated the exegetical and theological inadequacies of the misinterpretation view in "Justification in Redemptive History," *WTJ* 43 (1981) 213-246; see also "Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant," *WTJ* 43 (1980) 1-57.

⁵In the articles referred to in the previous footnote I have attempted to go beyond the ambiguities of earlier Reformed statements. The reader should consult those studies for fuller treatment of this subject than can be provided here.

⁶H. K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1983) 83.

nant of grace chosen according to God's sovereign purpose in election (those whom the apostle Paul calls true Jews). According to the premillennial scheme, on the one hand, a future time is posited within preconsummation history when national Israel will be restored by the Spirit of God and regathered in the land of Palestine under the theocratic rule of Christ (details vary among advocates of this position). Premillennialism suggests a twofold significance of the theocratic form of the kingdom of God under Moses: (1) prophetic (as regards the future, literal millennial reign of Christ on earth), and (2) typological (as regards the messianic, semi-eschatological realization of the promise in the age of the Church). Amillennialism, on the other hand, maintains that the type (national, theocratic Israel) is comprehensively fulfilled by the antitypical reality (the kingdom that began to come in the ministry of Jesus). The decisive issue dividing these two schools of prophecy is whether national Israel in OT revelation genuinely typifies (in the true sense of the word) the messianic fulfillment, or whether national Israel possesses an independent and irrevocable status as the chosen race throughout history, despite its episodic history of divine blessing and cursing in the time prior to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. On the premillennial view, national Israel is more than a type. Does this not imply, in the final analysis, that Israel is really not a type at all? How can national Israel serve both as type (with regard to the relationship between Israel and the Church and the continuity of the Testaments) and as a distinct ethnic group alongside the spiritual kingdom of Christ, the Church? If one grants that national Israel in OT revelation was truly a type of the eternal kingdom of Christ, then it seems that, according to the canons of Biblical typology, national Israel can no longer retain any independent status whatever.⁷ For premillennialists literal fulfillment of the promise concerning the land of Palestine is essential in order to demonstrate God's supreme power and dominion over the forces of unrighteousness and wickedness in history, a prelude to the catastrophic transformation of the heavens and earth at the close of human history. Is not the consummation, on this view, somewhat anticlimactic? Assuming that one does not accept the idea of two distinct forms of the kingdom—Israel and the Church—what purpose does the restoration of national Israel serve if in fact Jesus did inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth? The NT writings clarify the spiritual meaning of Israel's election and calling, while the external shell (the shadowy and typical appearance of the kingdom) falls away. To be sure, there is still to be at the consummation an antitypical fulfillment of the land promise, a cosmic antitype to typological Canaan-land, such as does not obtain in the present Church-age stage of the new covenant. But genuine typological interpretation rules out any additional literal fulfillment of the land-promise in a future

⁷On the other side of the argument Turner writes: "Genuine typology and analogy between OT and NT should not be viewed as destructive to the literal fulfillment of the OT promises to Israel, but rather an indication of a greater continuity between Israel and the church than dispensationalists have often been willing to admit" ("Continuity" 282). The both/and position of Turner cannot be maintained by the analogy-of-Scripture principle in a consistent Biblical-theological exegesis of the text of Scripture. Consult further G. Vos, *The Kingdom of God and the Church* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972).

restoration of national Israel subsequent to or alongside the messianic fulfillment, as found in certain varieties of premillennial and postmillennial schemes.⁸

II. TYPOLOGY AS A LEGITIMATE METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

Various definitions of typology have been offered in recent studies because of differing understandings of the relation between typological interpretation and exegesis. Richard T. France correctly states:

Typology may, indeed must, go beyond mere exegesis. But it may never introduce into the Old Testament text a principle which was not already present and intelligible to its Old Testament readers. Sound exegesis, and a respect for the sense of the Old Testament text thus discovered, will prevent typology from degenerating into allegory.⁹

⁸In an attempt to break from traditional patterns of interpretation among pre-, post- and amillennialists W. Van Gemen explores new avenues of approach to the age-long question of Israel's place in redemptive history. See his two-part series, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy," in *WTJ* 45 (1983) 132-144; *WTJ* 46 (1984) 254-297. In addition to my critique of the first of these two articles in "Discontinuities" 16 ff., objection must be raised to Van Gemen's reading of the history of Reformed eschatology in his second installment. What consensus does he have in mind when he states that "there is no clearly-defined position on Israel in Calvin's writings" (p. 254)? Did Calvin need the impetus of Jewish nationalism to arrive at a position on the Jews? Certainly Calvin has not given the last word on this subject among Reformed interpreters. There is still room for greater clarity that comes with the ongoing theological reflection of the Church. But Calvin has reached a mature understanding of the relation between Israel and the Church. The cause for Van Gemen's reassessment of eschatological options among Reformed theologians is his reservation concerning typological interpretation of Scripture as commonly expounded (pp. 282-284). It is just at this point, however, that he is no longer faithful to the views of Calvin (contrary to his own claims). The balance of his second article, by far the lengthiest section, is taken up with the development of Van Gemen's view of eschatology. Arising out of his objection to typological interpretation of Scripture as formulated by amillennialists, Van Gemen entertains an erroneous conception of the relation between exegesis and Biblical theology. He favors a literalistic "historico-grammatical interpretation of the text" (p. 272). He supports his views by misleading citations from Calvin's commentaries. In place of the promise/fulfillment pattern of interpreting the relation between the Testaments Van Gemen proposes the idea of promise/confirmation (pp. 280 ff.). Despite his distaste for systematization, one wonders just how different crucial aspects of Van Gemen's views are from certain varieties of present-day dispensationalism. There appears to be mutual sympathy for a both/and approach to the subject of Israel and the Church (see n. 6 above). A similar though favorable evaluation of Van Gemen's position is made by Turner, "Continuity" 282 n. 24. It would be helpful if Van Gemen and other evangelicals interacted more extensively and critically with some of the recent literature of contemporary theologians such as H. Berkhof and A. A. Van Ruler. The following is a representative sampling of current thinking: "Many theologians are used to defining the church in a more or less thoughtless way as 'the New Israel.' They believe that in the New Testament the church is the more spiritualized heir of a nation called Israel, which was in a former stage the shape of God's people in the world. Nowhere in the New Testament, however, is Israel considered as the first stage of the 'salvation rocket,' thrown off at the right moment after having served its turn. . . . We believe that in one way or another we have to consider them as the *other half of God's people*" (H. Berkhof, "Israel as a Theological Problem in the Christian Church," *JES* 6 [1969] 335). Van Ruler urges us to recognize "that there is a special place for the people of Israel in God's plan for the world. If we relate the Old Testament exclusively to Christ and find the people of Israel only in the body of Christ, we cannot integrate the Jews, the synagogue, and the State of Israel into our systematic theology" (*The Christian Church and the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 35). He concludes with the question: "Does everything, not only Israel, but history and creation, exist for the sake of the church? Or is the church only one among many forms of the kingdom of God?" (p. 98).

⁹R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1971) 41.

And D. L. Baker observes: "Typology is not an exegesis or interpretation of a text but the *study of relationships* between events, persons and institutions recorded in biblical texts."¹⁰ These remarks highlight the fact that typology deals with the relation between distinct yet inseparable epochs of redemptive revelation. As LaRondelle points out: "The typological approach of the New Testament is motivated by the idea of fulfillment in salvation history. Typology is a theology of the progression of God's acts of salvation through Jesus Christ."¹¹ According to E. Earle Ellis:

For the NT writers a type has not merely the property of "typicalness" or similarity; they view Israel's history as *Heilsgeschichte*, and the significance of an OT type lies in its particular *locus* in the Divine plan of redemption. When Paul speaks of the Exodus events happening *typikōs* and written "for our admonition," there can be no doubt that, in the apostle's mind, Divine intent is of the essence both in their occurrence and in their inscription. The rationale of NT typological exegesis is not only "the continuity of God's purpose throughout the history of His Covenant," but also His Lordship in moulding and using history to reveal and illumine His purpose. God writes His parables in the sands of time.¹²

What is the connection between type and prophecy? The answer depends upon one's understanding of Scripture as the Word of God. In his comparison of the work of Fairbairn and von Rad on typology, John Stek favors Fairbairn's adherence to the historicity of the Biblical narrative in contrast to von Rad's relativizing of Biblical history. He remarks that

a type is a historical reality which served a significant historical purpose within its own historical horizon (not merely a symbolic one), but it was also fashioned by Providence in such a way as to contribute to the larger purpose of God, namely, to reveal "in successive stages and operations the very truths and principles which were to find in the realities of the Gospel their more complete manifestation."¹³

Along similar lines Stanley N. Gundry questions neo-orthodox advocates of Biblical typology in particular: "Proponents of the new typology use such terms as 'analogy,' 'correspondence,' 'prefiguration,' 'pre-representation,' 'fore-shadowing,' and 'corresponding reality.' But what meaning can such terms

¹⁰D. L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," *SJT* 29 (1976) 41 (*italics mine*). "The biblical text has only one meaning, its literal meaning, and this is to be found by means of grammatical-historical study."

¹¹LaRondelle, *Israel* 44. A good example of typological interpretation of Scripture is found in LaRondelle's essay, "The Biblical Concept of Armageddon," *JETS* 28 (1985) 21-31. "The nature of John's use of typology in the Apocalypse can be characterized as the consummation of the NT Christological and ecclesiological applications" (p. 27).

¹²E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957) 127-128.

¹³J. Stek, "Biblical Typology Yesterday and Today," *CTJ* 5 (1970) 139. Mistakenly, Stek detects a kind of dispensationalism in Fairbairn's work, in which "a dispensation of merely earthly symbols [is] followed by a dispensation of spiritual realities" (p. 159). See especially his critique of Fairbairn on pp. 140-141.

have in a system of interpretation that repudiates predictive prophecy and verbal inspiration?"¹⁴

The pattern for sound interpretation of the OT Scriptures was enunciated for us in the teaching of Jesus. He said that the law and the prophets witnessed concerning himself as the Messiah. Only through the eyes of faith could one grasp the true meaning of the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 45–47). Jesus' teaching underscored the continuity and discontinuity between the old order that was in process of passing away and the new order that he was inaugurating. The NT writers, particularly Paul and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, further elucidated the typological significance of OT persons, events and institutions.¹⁵ Christological interpretation of the OT, vital to Christian proclamation, was not suddenly a new way to read the OT (cf. 1 Pet 1:10–12). Rather, such interpretation was implicit in the sacred writings themselves. To be sure, there was greater clarity and depth of understanding with the coming of Christ. We may therefore speak of new perspectives on OT revelation. In broadest terms there is movement from promise to fulfillment, from shadow to reality. The historical, covenantal transition from old to new administrations of the kingdom of God brought about a number of changes in the life and worship of the community of faith.

The Messiah revealed himself as the New Israel. In the imagery of the vine Jesus identified his person and mission with God's purposes of old (John 15:1; cf. Ps 80:8 ff.; Isa 5:1–7). And as the New Man Jesus called all nations and peoples into his spiritual household. By his death on the cross he made satisfaction for sin, removing the curse of the law that was standing against his people (Eph 2:14–18). The apostle Paul describes the transition from old to new covenant in terms of the death of the "old man"—typified by Israel under the law of Moses (Rom 6:1–7:13).¹⁶ The law as Israel's schoolmaster has terminated with the coming of Christ (10:4; Gal 3:23–4:7). In contrast to the shadowy form of OT revelation, Jesus reveals the fullness of God's self-revelation. The law came by Moses; grace and truth came in Jesus Christ (John 1:17; cf. Heb 8:13; 10:1). G. Vos remarks:

"Truth" here [in John 1:17] means what it means in Hebrews; it expresses the heavenly character of the Christian realities of revelation and redemption in which the higher world directly communicates itself, and the opposite of "the true" is the typical, wherein the connection with the heavenly world is present only in a mediated, shadowy form.¹⁷

¹⁴S. N. Gundry, "Typology as a Means of Interpretation: Past and Present," *JETS* 12 (1969) 240.

¹⁵L. Goppelt, *Typos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (New York: Scribner's, 1953). H. Ridderbos comments: "The nature of that which has taken place in Christ is rightly known only from prophecy, just as, on the other hand, it becomes clear in the light of the fulfilling action of God how much the Old Testament is the book of Christ (2 Cor. 3:14; 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 3:16). For this reason one of the leading motifs of Paul's preaching is that his gospel is according to the Scriptures (Rom. 1:17; 3:28; cf. Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6ff.; 4:21ff.; 1 Cor. 10:1–10; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 2 Tim. 3:16, *et al.*)" (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975] 51).

¹⁶See M. W. Karlberg, "Israel's History Personified: Romans 7:7–13 in Relation to Paul's Teaching on the 'Old Man,'" *Trinity Journal* (forthcoming).

¹⁷G. Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. R. B. Gaffin, Jr.; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980) 201.

Israel as the old covenant people served a temporary purpose in God's plan of salvation. She occupied a peculiar role in redemptive history as preparation for the gospel age. The Christian Church is "the true people of God, with the privileges, the responsibilities, and the destiny of Israel. . . . [It is they who] assume and carry to completion the destiny which in the Old Testament was to be Israel's."¹⁸ Whereas the focal point of Israelite worship was the temple, new-covenant worship is no longer localized. Consistent with the universalism of the gospel the community of believers is free to worship in the Spirit, unhindered by place and occasion (John 4:21-24). The temple, intended as only a temporary symbol of the dwelling of God's presence in the midst of his people, had become for unbelieving Jews something ultimate (cf. 2:19-22; 4:1-42). What was in fact essential to spiritual communion with God was a vital hope-trust in the coming Messiah.

III. THE ELECTION AND MISSION OF ISRAEL

Elements of law and grace defined the peculiar nature of Israel's standing in the covenant with Moses. In the historical section of the Deuteronomic treaty Moses reminds the Israelites that their election did not rest upon their own righteousness but solely upon God's grace. In the progressively unfolding history of revelation each renewal of the covenant between God and Israel was a reaffirmation and partial fulfillment of God's promise of grace to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3; 17:3-7). One feature of the promise to Abraham involved the territorial land grant, a symbol of the heavenly inheritance bequeathed unconditionally to the elect seed of Abraham (12:1; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8). The promise of a land found temporary fulfillment in the ancient Israelite theocracy. But from the standpoint of the typological works-arrangement under Moses, physical blessing in the promised land was contingent upon Israel's faithful observance of God's law. As long as the covenant with Moses was in effect Israel was obligated to keep the entire law. (Division of the Mosaic law into distinct categories—such as civil, ceremonial and moral—was unknown to the OT Israelite. Within the theocracy the law of Moses was a unified entity.¹⁹) The retention of the land was thus conditioned upon Israel's obedience. The principle of inheritance in the symbolic-typical sphere of covenant life was one of works, not faith.

If we are to do justice to the unity and integrity of the law of Moses we must consider the law in its proper historical setting and function as that

¹⁸France, *Jesus* 61, 65. "The implication is that the Jewish nation has no longer a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community, and in them God's purposes for Israel are to be fulfilled" (p. 67).

¹⁹Concerning the law as a temporary provision within the administration of God's kingdom F. F. Bruce remarks: "If we like, we may say that Paul has the moral law mainly in mind [in Gal 3:24-25], whereas the author of Hebrews is concerned more with the ceremonial law—although the distinction between the moral and ceremonial law is drawn by Christian theologians, not by those who accepted the whole law as the will of God, nor yet by the New Testament writers" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964] 145). "This does not mean that the distinction is not a valid one," states Bruce, "but it does not come to the fore in either OT or NT" (*ibid.*, n. 48). See also the remarks of D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 68, 91 n. 74.

peculiar legal instrument, instituted and ordained by God and regulative of life within the ancient theocracy. The commandments and ordinances of Moses were binding upon the people of God. A change in the priesthood and its attending regulations necessitated a change in the law (Heb 7:5, 11-28). Specifically the coming of Christ in the fullness of time marked the end of the old order and the beginning of the new. The typical, earthly inheritance finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The establishment of the NT Church was in direct fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham, who together with all his faithful seed was looking for the heavenly inheritance (Heb 11:10, 16). Calvin writes concerning the true Israelites:

It is certain that they looked higher than that earthly land; indeed the land of Canaan was only thought of as of value for the reason that it was the type and the symbol of our spiritual inheritance. Therefore when they had obtained possession of it, they ought not to have rested, as if they had arrived at the answer to all their prayers, but rather to have thought on the spiritual meaning it contained. Those to whom David addressed the psalm enjoyed possession of the land, but they were encouraged to look for a better rest.²⁰

Unlike the true and lasting inheritance, the typical kingdom-inheritance was conditioned upon Israel's obedience to the law of Moses. There is a direct correlation between the probationary status of Israel under the Mosaic administration of the covenant of redemption and the probationary status of Adam under the original Adamic administration of the covenant of creation (traditionally called the covenant of works).²¹ In both instances the principle of kingdom-retention (or of tenure) was one of works (in contrast to faith soteriologically defined). Israel's cultic holiness, as prescribed by the legal covenant, distinguished this peculiar people from the other nations of the earth. The principle of law enunciated in Lev 18:5 operated in a manner consistent with God's saving purposes during the period from Moses to Christ and in a manner appropriate to the overall symbolic-typical picture drawn by God in the life and history of Israel.²²

²⁰J. Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 48.

²¹See further M. W. Karlberg, "The Original State of Adam: Tensions in Reformed Theology," *EvQ* (forthcoming).

²²"The two Covenants [the Abrahamic and the Mosaic] also provide the structural framework upon which the Exodus typology is built. The Abrahamic Covenant stands in continuity with the 'New Covenant' (*kainē diathēke*); the *palaia diathēke* of Sinai stands in contrast. The events of the Exodus, the 'redemption' under the 'Old Covenant', provide a pattern of 'types, foreshadowing the redemption in Christ'" (Ellis, *Paul's Use* 130-131). "Some elements in Pauline typology are obscure, and it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a 'type' or merely an illustration is in mind. Some OT references which are probably no more than analogies or application of principles may conform to a typological frame of reference. NT typology did not involve merely a catalogue of 'types'; it penetrated into the spirit of NT exegesis in all its forms. In the Pauline writings two basic typological patterns appear—Adamic or Creation typology and Covenant typology. Each is related to a particular aspect of God's redemptive purpose in Christ, and, over all, they unite to form one interrelated whole" (p. 134). Cf. G. R. Osborne, "Type, Typology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 1117-1119.

Life in the ancient theocracy is marked above all else by holiness (Exod 19:5-6; Lev 20:7). Blessing and prosperity in the land of Canaan are contingent upon obedience to the law of Moses. In keeping with the Mosaic typology a certain measure of righteousness and holiness is requisite for the well-being of God's people. "[Israel's] very existence and character as a society were to be a witness to God, a model or paradigm of his holiness expressed in the social life of a redeemed community."²³

In contrast to this typological kingdom-administration the antitypical kingdom-inheritance was a gift of sovereign, electing grace (unconditional).²⁴ According to the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, the accomplishment of redemption through Jesus' life and death was so decisive an event in history that it made necessary a new covenant. Jesus was mediator of a better covenant, one characterized by the forgiveness of sins. Commenting on Heb 7:18-19, F. F. Bruce observes:

It was inevitable that the earlier law should be abrogated sooner or later; for all the impressive solemnity of the sacrificial ritual and the sacerdotal ministry, no real peace of conscience was procured thereby, no immediate access to God. That is not to say that faithful men and women in Old Testament times did not enjoy peace of conscience and a sense of nearness to God; the Psalter provides evidence enough that they did. . . . The whole apparatus of worship associated with that ritual and priesthood was calculated rather to keep men at a distance from God than to bring them near. But the "hope set before us" in the gospel is better because it accomplishes this very thing which was impossible under the old ceremonial; it enables Christians to "draw nigh unto God". How it enables them to do so is explained in greater detail later on [Heb 10:19-22]; but the fact that the gospel, unlike the law, has opened up a way of free access to God is our author's ground for claiming that the gospel has achieved that perfection which the law could never bring about.²⁵

Similarly in his teaching on the covenants of God in redemptive history the apostle Paul characterizes the new covenant as a ministration of life and blessing in contrast to the old as a ministration of death and condemnation. Repeatedly Paul asserts that the law works wrath. Although the sacrificial system of the Mosaic law made provision for atonement of sin on the typological level (to an extent appropriate to the overall symbolic-typical picture) there was no permanent and lasting satisfaction for sin. Consequently the sins of the old-covenant people were overlooked during this period of the Mosaic economy (Heb 9:15 [8:1-10:18]; Rom 3:21-26).²⁶ Life within the ancient

²³C. J. H. Wright, *An Eye for an Eye* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983) 43. Wright offers here a very helpful introduction to the question of OT ethics and its application to issues of personal and social morality in contemporary society. Cf. also M. W. Karlberg, "Reformation Politics: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics in Calvinist Political Theory" (forthcoming).

²⁴The original bestowal of the typological kingdom (as distinguished from its retention) was an act of grace, even though not an election to permanent kingdom possession.

²⁵Bruce, *Hebrews* 148-149.

²⁶Early Reformed federalists sometimes distinguished between the forgiveness of sins of God's people under the new covenant (*aphesis*) and the passing over of sins under the old covenant (*paresis*).

theocracy was characterized by bondage and servitude. As long as the pedagogical, probationary function of the Mosaic law was in effect the people of God did not yet experience the full blessings of freedom and sonship associated with life under the new covenant.

Another crucial distinction to be drawn is that between national election of Israel and individual election unto salvation. The latter is sure and indefectible, while the former is losable and of limited duration.²⁷ Whereas there is a conditional element in the covenant between God and the nation Israel, individual election is unconditional (cf. 1 Pet 2:4-10). Vos writes that

the same world of heavenly spiritual realities, which has now come to light in the Person and work of Christ, already existed during the course of the Old Covenant, and in a provisional typical way through revelation reflected itself in and through redemption projected itself into the religious experience of the ancient people of God, so that they in their own partial manner and measure had access to and communion with and enjoyment of the higher world, which has now been let down and thrown open to our full knowledge and possession.²⁸

The personal assurance of salvation and the perseverance of the faithful in the way of the covenant are vital concomitants of saving grace in every age of redemptive history.

The sacrificial cultus represents the focal point of Israelite life and worship. Here the Lord God of Israel provides a remedy for the sins of his people until the time should come when true atonement for sin would be made in the offering up of God's own Son. Jesus Christ, the better sacrifice, established a new and secure way of access to God. Whereas the priestly functions were performed by the Levites according to the Mosaic legal prescriptions, these same ceremonial and theocratic practices pass away under the new covenant (Heb 10:15-22). Symbol and type give way to reality. And once the reality has come there can be no return to the former system of types and shadows. To do so would militate against the sufficiency and finality of Christ's reconciliation and atonement. "Anyone who still holds to, or wants to restore, the shadows of the Law," Calvin remarks, "not only obscures the glory of Christ, but also deprives us of a great blessing in that he puts a barrier of space between us and God, to approach whom freedom is given us by the Gospel."²⁹

Despite the shadowy and transient nature of the old covenant administration of the kingdom of God, his redemptive purposes were being accomplished. At every stage of the progressively unfolding covenant of redemption the message of God's sovereign grace in humanity's eternal salvation was revealed by prophetic word and symbolic institution (i.e. the typological system

²⁷Cf. recent criticisms of traditional Reformed teaching on the doctrine of election in H. Boer, *The Doctrine of Reprobation in the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); N. Punt, *Unconditional Good News: Toward an Understanding of Biblical Universalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). For a defense of the traditional formulations see F. Klooster, "Harry Boer's Battle Against Reprobation: A Review Article," *CTJ* 19 (1984) 50-68.

²⁸Vos, *Redemptive* 199.

²⁹Calvin, *Hebrews* 100. "The shadows flee away at the sight of the substance. Therefore our first concern must always be to teach that Christ is the end of the Law" (p. 49).

under Moses). The eternal, spiritual blessings were received by OT believers through faith. There was no mixture of faith and works. The principle of inheritance was faith alone (Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:6-9). As prophet and mediator Moses interceded with God on behalf of Israel. And in the faithful exercise of his office Moses served as a preacher of gospel as well as law (Rom 10:5-8). Likewise the same Spirit who called and empowered Moses inspired the prophets to herald the new covenant (2 Pet 1:21; cf. Deut 18:15-20). As God's treasured possession Israel was privileged to receive the oracles of God mediated through Moses (Rom 3:2; cf. Gal 3:19-20; Heb 3:1-6). And in keeping with her special calling in redemptive history Israel served as a light to the nations.³⁰

The sanctions of the divine covenant were twofold: blessing for obedience, and curse for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). The latter prophets served as agents in God's covenant lawsuit against his own rebellious people. Included in their message was the prospect of a future and glorious day when the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth and the seas. Having endured the curse of the covenant, Israel would once again enjoy the blessing and favor of God, ultimately through the vicarious suffering of the Lord's Anointed (cf. Isa 40:1-5). In that day the nations of the earth would come to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God. The company of the faithful, the true heirs of the promise to Abraham, would find its identity in union and communion with Christ, the seed of Israel's race. In that day the typological phenomenon of the ancient Israelite theocracy would be dissolved into the antitypical reality of the Church as the New Israel.³¹ John the Baptist, the

³⁰From the modern ecumenical point of view T. F. Torrance writes: "If we are to understand and interpret divine revelation in the specific spatio-temporal forms which it assumed in and through Israel, we cannot detach the Old Testament Scriptures from the land any more than from the people of Israel. The people of the book and the people of the land belong inseparably together, for they have been forged together by the way that God himself has taken in the actualisation and the dynamic course of his covenant partnership with Israel. What happens when the inner constitutive connections between people, land and revelation are severed, can be seen from what happened to Judaism when the Jews themselves suffered radical detachment from the spatio-temporal milieu of God's self-revelation. Judaism tended to become an abstract ethical religion, largely bereft of its all-important priestly and redemptive tradition and characterized by a serious loss of relevance in space and time" (*The Mediation of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] 25-26). "Thus in all our relations with the Jew, we must learn to appreciate that he is what he is for our sake, and that it is through what he has done, even in the rejection of Christ, that reconciliation has come upon us Gentiles also. But this means that we may look upon the Jew only in the light of Jesus, the Jew in whom the Son of God became man, and who in gathering up in himself the whole movement of God's reconciling love in and through Israel, gave himself in atoning sacrifice for us and all men. Our indebtedness to the Jew and our faith in Jesus Christ are inextricably woven together in the fulfilled mediation of reconciliation" (pp. 44-45). "God has been making it clear to us in our day, as perhaps never before since the first century, that Israel retains in the purpose of God's grace an essential role in the mediation of reconciliation, and that the Christian Church will not be able to fulfill its own mission in proclaiming that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, except in so far as it is incorporated with Israel in the one mission of God's love for all his creatures. That is what the fullness of the mediation of reconciliation in Jesus Christ means" (pp. 55-56). For a critique of the similar views of P. van Buren see M. W. Karlberg, "Israel as Light to the Nations: A Review Article," *JETS* 28 (1985) 205-211.

³¹"In the application of *testimonia* from the Old Testament, it is a fundamental postulate that the Church is the true, and ultimate, people of God, the heir of the divinely-guided history of Israel, which emerged out of the crisis in which God visited his people in judgment and redemption" (Dodd,

forerunner of the Messiah, set before the Israel of that generation the final ultimatum. The gravity of Israel's offense lay in her failure to believe Moses and the one greater than Moses (see e.g. John 6:32-33, 55-58).

IV. CONCLUSION

To appreciate the significance of Israel in the OT Scriptures one must understand the system of Biblical typology associated with the Mosaic economy of redemption. The meaning of Israel's election is determined by the context of the symbolic-typological purposes of the old covenant in the unfolding historical drama of redemption. According to the sanctions of the covenant made between God and Israel, typological blessing was contingent upon Israel's compliance with the law of Moses. With respect to God's purpose of eternal salvation Israel's failure did not annul the promise of God. God's purposes in election stand firm in spite of the unfaithfulness of his people. The weakness of sinful human flesh was overcome by the Son of God (Rom 8:1-4). What Israel could not do, God has done in Jesus Christ. The dissolution of the temporal, earthly theocracy coincided with the new covenant's reign of God in the hearts of his people through the Spirit. In the eschatological age of the Spirit the kingdom of God is a spiritual reality unencumbered by the shadowy, earthly forms (types) characteristic of the ancient theocracy. In the period between the advents of Christ the presence of the kingdom is in anticipation of the realization of the land-promise in the consummation.

The destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 signals the termination of the typical-external form of the kingdom of God. The inauguration of the new covenant with the coming of Christ results inevitably in the passing away of the old order of things. The eternal priesthood of Christ necessitates a change in the law. True spiritual worship is not bound by outward ceremonies and regulations. (This is not to deny the sacramental nature of the new covenant signs and seals—baptism and the Lord's Supper—or to minimize, more broadly, corporate worship as a true means of grace.) As a kingdom of priests and kings the people of the new covenant comprise a living temple of the Holy Spirit (Heb 12:18-24; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 21:1-3, 22).³²

In Biblical typology each type (person, event, institution) both resembles and differs from the antitype. As in the interpretation of Jesus' parables, it is necessary to discern the proper limits of types in Scripture. Otherwise typology

According 111). The "mystery" revealed in the NT age, contrary to the teaching of dispensationalism, is not the Church. The mystery is God-come-in-the-flesh, crucified and risen. It is the actual historical accomplishment of redemption through Christ's atoning death. From the standpoint of God's everlasting decree, Christ was slain before the foundation of the world. Now, in the fullness of time, God's salvation has effected a new age, such that if anyone be in Christ he/she is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). Cf. Ridderbos, *Paul* 44-49.

³²Upon receiving the revelation of Jesus Christ on the island of Patmos the apostle John views himself to be already in the kingdom of God (Rev 1:6, 9). The kingdom is a present spiritual reality, not futuristic (as some dispensationalists maintain). As far as Christ's spiritual kingdom is concerned, the barrier between Jew and Greek has been broken down once for all. There are no ethnic distinctions in the present age, nor will there be in the age to come.

logical interpretation can result in false allegorization. On the other hand, failure to recognize that the promises to Abraham were given typical prefigurement in the earthly theocracy (in conjunction with the eternal redemptive realities enjoyed by the spiritual seed of Abraham throughout the period of the Mosaic economy) represents a major oversight in Biblical interpretation. National Israel as such does not retain its covenant identity in the new, eschatological age of the Spirit.³³ Israel's future is shaped by the great event at Pentecost: the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church and the present ingathering of the nations. As elect Israelites are provoked to jealousy, the remnant of grace is perpetuated in Israel until the full number of the elect of God (both Jews and Gentiles) is attained (Romans 9-11; Rev 22:14, 17-19). In these last days the gospel goes out to all peoples, calling sinners to faith and repentance. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts both Jew and Gentile alike: "Since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it" (Heb 4:1).

³³Comparison of Van Gemenen's review of LaRondelle's *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (WTJ 47 [1985] 110-113) and that of A. A. Hoekema (CTJ 20 [1985] 110-112) is illuminating. Unfortunately, Reformed theology in recent years has not come any closer to reaching a consensus on even basic issues in the doctrine of eschatology. Biblical theology, consistently set forth, is synonymous with covenant theology, as evidenced both by the historical development of the discipline and by the writings of such exponents of covenant theology as G. Vos, M. G. Kline and Hoekema. In addition to works cited earlier see Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); "Kingdom Prologue" (2 volumes; privately published, 1981, 1983); and Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979). Among the various schools of prophetic interpretation within the Reformed tradition only amillennialism is fully compatible with covenant theology—specifically, covenant typology.