

Notes on Israel and the Nations

J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church. A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London: Lutterworth, 1962).

(19) Quotes Gen. 12:3. Here it becomes clear that *the whole history of Israel is nothing but the continuation of God's dealings with the nations, and that therefore the history of Israel is only to be understood from the unsolved problem of the relation of God to the nations.*

(24) The election of Israel is a matter of divine initiative which has as its goal the recognition of God by all nations over the whole world. The way to this goal is the theocracy of Israel; the means is Israel's separation from the other peoples.

(25) If the election of Abraham, i.e. Israel, is to have a universal purpose, the consequence of it for the world of nations is that they can be described as 'peoples whom Yahweh does not know'. The designation 'nations' is identical with 'heathen'; in other words, the designation 'nations' (*goyyim*) does not have a political or national, but a religious meaning.

The nations come into view variously in the Old Testament, but always *in their relation to Israel* as the people of God . . . the distinction between Israel and the nations is exclusively connected with God's dealings. In principle, then, the possibility is always open for reception into Israel as the people of God and for *sharing* in the salvation and blessing of Israel.

(26) the way the judgment of Yahweh works: He punishes Israel for her infidelity and uses the nations as His instrument.

The nations are *witnesses* of Yahweh's deeds in Israel. This is their most prominent function. In God's dealings with Israel, however, they, too, are summoned to recognize the God of Israel as the God of the whole earth. The existence of other gods was never theoretically denied; in the light of Yahweh's deeds, however, they are unimportant and powerless. That God's dealings with Israel *directly* concern the nations comes explicitly and clearly to light in the Psalms.

The recognition by the nations of Yahweh, the God of Israel, as the God of the earth is anticipated by the message of the prophets, who involve the nations most intensively in their preaching.

(28) The active presence of God in Israel is a sign and guarantee of His presence in the world: and the presence of Israel is thus a continuing appeal to the nations of the world. in this chapter we are speaking only of the *universal* and not (yet) of the *missionary* character of the Old Testament. It is, however, of great significance, not only for a 'theology of missions', but also for a 'theology of the church', constantly to call to mind this universal task of Israel in and for the world.

(29) 'The Old Testament Message of Universalism as Missionary Message' (Chap. 2. 29-43).

While there is broad agreement as to the trend toward universalism in the Old Testament, great differences arise whenever one proceeds from this universalism to the *missionary* intention and commission.

He discusses the 'high points' such as Isa. 40-55, Jonah, etc.

(42) Part of summary. When one turns to the Old Testament to find a justification and basis for missions in the current meaning, that is, 'foreign missions', one is bound to be disappointed. It does not seem advisable to build a theology of missions on a few statements, especially on those which are still exegetically in dispute.

It is not the human activity that stands in the foreground of the Old Testament but the divine acts for the redemption of Israel. These acts cannot be confined to Israel, for the existence and redemption of Israel has consequences for the nations. The nations do not know this themselves, it has been avowed to Israel alone; but one day it will be avowed to the nations themselves. And then the destiny of the nations will be determined in their coming to Yahweh or in their refusing to come. But this belongs to eschatological expectations, not to promises already realized.