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MODERN ISRAEL IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

EDMOND JACOB, Translated by J. Robert Jacobson.

Camrose: Camrose Lutheran College Press, 1974.

19 Pages, paperback. \$1.40

This brief monograph, written by an eminent Protestant Old-Testament Professor at Strasbourg University in France and expertly translated by the Rev. J. Robert Jacobson, could hardly touch upon a more burning and complex contemporary issue than the role of the State of Israel. Considering the circumstances under which the book was written, the consistency with which the author adheres to the Biblical perspective and maintains his objectivity is noteworthy. It could easily have been otherwise. The original French edition was published in 1968 shortly after the 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel's future political and national prospects appeared brightest. Dr. Jacob, however, is not unduly swayed by the immediate existential situation. He indeed notes that "certain Biblical facts have lent support to the State of Israel," but he nevertheless is very wary of a too facile and romantic relating of modern developments in Israel to prophecy and fulfilment. Also, from this viewpoint, Israel's role under God ultimately is not dependent on political developments, nor is it determined even by ethical or sociological considerations. It is rather grounded in God's free action in electing that nation to be his instrument of salvation to the world.

As seen in Jacob's struggle with his unknown adversary in the darkness at Peniel, Israel's election would be marked by mystery and ambiguity. The patriarch emerged as "Israel," simultaneously defeated by and victorious over God, to follow a vocation that would be marked by human infirmities and fraught with suffering, but that would also bear testimony to the faithfulness of God.

The argument of the book is too closely knit to be traced in a brief review. Suffice it to say, on the basis of the Biblical perspective, the author finds no evidence that Israel's election has been repudiated, the divine promises voided, and the assurance of possession of the land revoked. Jesus Christ is Israel, and in him is fulfilled the election. Nevertheless, our Lord himself bluntly refused to disassociate himself from his people. For Paul, Israel remains as the holy root into which the Christianized pagans are grafted like wild olive branches. Dr. Jacob hopes that Israel will eventually be the instrument through which, in contrast to Babel, all nations will be reconciled.

Harold T. Floreen