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Summary *Is God veranderd (Has God changed?)*

The title of this thesis indicates the point on which three important protestant theologians in the Dutch church have been studied: *Has God changed? An inquiry on the relation God-Israel in the theology of K.H. Miskotte, A.A. van Ruler and H. Berkhof*. This study gives an overview on the structures of their theological concepts and the place of Israel therein. The results of this study can be used for the development of a theological concept in which the relationship between God and Israel is acknowledged as fundamental and of far-reaching meaning for a Christian theology of hope for the world. In this summary the conclusions of this thesis are broadly described in order to encourage further reflection on the relationship God-Israel.

In chapter 1 it is pointed out that Miskotte (1894-1976), Van Ruler (1908-1970) and Berkhof (1914-1995) represent a mainstream in protestant theology. Therefore, the survey of their theological concepts can later comparatively be used to reflect on how other theologians think about Israel. In short, their theological point of view on Israel can be characterised as follows: open to the acknowledgment of the importance of Israel in the past (as the people to whom God revealed himself and from whom the Messiah descends), critical of Israel in the present (both in its religious appearance and as the state of Israel in de Middle East), but at the same time conscious of biblical notions on the future of Israel (related to promises of salvation to the whole world).

Miskotte, Van Ruler en Berkhof emphasize that Christian theology cannot ignore the importance of Israel: the relationship of God with Israel constitutes the background of the Christian Church. They translated their points of view in their contribution to the church order of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) of 1951, pleading for articles that would express the special relationship of the Church with Israel – in which they succeeded. The contacts with the Jews have since that time been described in terms of the ‘dialogue’. It is a recognition that Israel’s position differs from that of other peoples in the apostolic mission of the Church and it indicates openness for the critical questions from Jewish side to the Church.

But: the idea of a permanent relationship of the Church with Israel is not self-evident. And the question is whether the models in which Miskotte, Van Ruler en Berkhof regard Israel are strong enough to withstand criticism of this idea of a permanent relationship. How do they found their ideas about Israel? And is how they argue consistent or are there inconsistencies in it? All three acknowledge the election of Israel by God as a given fact, which has consequences from the past to the present and the future. But they also state that the Old Testament shows that Israel did not live according to the objectives of its election and even rebelled against God; they see the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah in this light.

There is a tension between these two aspects in the relationship between God and Israel. One might say: Israel loses its unique position due to the disobedience to

God. On the other hand one has to reckon with the loyalty of God to his promises which are embedded in his election of Israel. How do Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof deal with this problem? In this thesis the problem is approached from the election of Israel by God. The question to be answered is: Has God changed? If he has given his election of Israel one could say he has changed; but what does that imply for the preaching of the faithfulness of God by the Church? When God insists on his election of Israel: what consequences should that have for how the Church estimates its own position in relation to God and Israel?

To examine these questions in the theology of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof we have developed two sets of concepts: theological (dis)continuity and historical (dis)continuity of God in his relationship with Israel. Theological continuity means: there has been no change in God in relation to himself and his former intentions. Theological discontinuity means, that there has been a change in God. Historical continuity means: God has remained faithful to Israel in its historical appearance as the people of God. Historical discontinuity means that the relationship of God with Israel in its ethnical appearance has come to an end or has been interrupted. By means of studying the works in which Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof explicitly treat their view on Israel it is possible to get a clear view of what they do with the relationship of God with Israel, measured after the standards of theological and historical (dis)continuity.

Due to the exegetical and biblical-theological aspects in the examination of the works of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof the primary way of looking at Israel is ethnical, in the sense of the twelve tribes as they are called 'Israel' and 'Jacob' in the Old Testament. Within Israel a distinction can be made between the two-tribal and the ten-tribal part: the house of Judah and the house of Israel. After the reign of King Salomon the kingdom of Israel was divided into these two parts, a northern part (formed by ten tribes) and a southern part (consisting of two tribes). The northern part was conquered by the Assyrians, followed by a deportation (722 b.C.); the southern part was conquered by the Babylonians, also followed by a deportation (586 b.C.).

Although Old Testament prophets announced the return of both parts of Israel to the country that God promised them as an inheritance and a reuniting of them under the government of a king in the lineage of David, such a reunion has never taken place in the history of Israel. Ever since the Assyrian and Babylonian exile Israel lived and lives in the Diaspora, scattered all over the world. From this primary way of looking at Israel a second way is derived and has become dominant in the theological debate about Israel, namely Israel in the sense of 'the Jewish people' (the Jews), 'Judaism' and 'the state of Israel'. In this thesis it is indicated or explained in the context of the reviews of the works of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof in which context sense they speak about Israel.

In chapter 2 a review is given of how Kornelis Heiko Miskotte thought about the relationship God-Israel. Some of his major works are discussed: *Het wezen der joodsche religie* (The essence of the Jewish religion; 1932), *Edda and Thora* (a comparative study of the worldview in the *Edda* and in the *Thora*; 1938) and *Als de goden zwijgen* (also translated into English: *When the gods are silent*; 1956). And several articles on the subject are taken into account, such as 'Het jodendom als

vraag aan de kerk' (Judaism as a question to the Church), publications on hermeneutics, the reaction of Miskotte on the foundation of the state of Israel in 'Het theologisch memorandum betreffende Israel' (the theological memorandum concerning Israel) and a later reflection on Judaism in 'Das grosse Schisma' (about the great schism between Judaism and Christianity).

During the Second World War Miskotte (together with other theologians) wrote two pamphlets against the nazi-regime. In these pamphlets and in his sermon just after the end of the war he characterised anti-Semitism as hate against the God of Israel. This line of thinking is typical for his theology on Israel: Miskotte was deeply impressed by what the Old Testament teaches about God in his mercy and love to mankind as is shown in his relation to Israel. He who denies this special relationship removes himself from God and he who turns against Israel turns against the God of Israel. The Church should rise against anti-Semitism because the Church confesses that the God of Israel is the Father of Jesus Christ. The Church should pay attention to Judaism because of its view on what the Old Testament teaches about God. Although Judaism has converted the election of Israel into an absolute, which Miskotte criticizes, Judaism permanently reminds the Church of the provisional state of the salvation in Christ because there is no worldwide peace. In his reflection on the state of Israel and the claim that it is founded on 'promised land' Miskotte is reserved; this is also due to his conviction that man cannot claim any rights from God's promises.

Concluding provisionally on the theology of Miskotte on the point of Israel it becomes apparent that his focus is on the knowledge about God as it can be derived from the Old Testament and about which the Church can learn from Judaism: he frequently stresses the meaningfulness of the Name with which God made himself known to Israel. For Miskotte the significance of Israel as an historical people is minor, not only due to his view on the rejection of Jesus, but also due to his interpretation of the election of Israel. Miskotte considers the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah as a disruption in God's relationship of the election of Israel. It is on this point that historical discontinuity arises. Miskotte also gives a universal interpretation of the election of Israel: Israel cannot claim any rights to its election because it was meant to be beneficial to all the other peoples and nations of the world. So Israel in its historical appearance is of minor importance for Miskotte; all emphasis lies on the knowledge about God in his mercifulness to man, as he can be known from the history of Israel. In an eschatological perspective Miskotte does not give a special place to Israel as the people of God. Although he thinks in geographical terms about the coming peace for Jerusalem, he is very reluctant to combine this hope with the returning of the Jewish people to Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel. For Miskotte the reason for the acknowledgement of the relationship between the Church and Israel can best be described in terms of theological continuity.

From the overview of the theology of Miskotte on the relationship God-Israel the question arises: can the confession of God as 'Lord of Israel' be separated from Israel as in its historical and ethnical appearance without taking into account the promises with an historical implication that God as 'Lord of Israel' gave to them? Or in short: can God be 'Lord of Israel' without Israel?

In chapter 3 a review is given on how Arnold Albert van Ruler thought about the relationship God-Israel. Van Ruler pleaded for special attention for Israel in Christian theology, especially within the scope of the apostolic mission of the Church. He also stated that from the history of Israel the Church can learn that God's plan of salvation for the world is not spiritual, but concrete and earthly. His theology on Israel comes to expression in his publications on the Old Testament, in his thesis *De vervulling van de wet* (the fulfilment of the law / thora), in his articles on the apostolic mission of the Church and in his lectures on Christian faith which he gave on Dutch radio (especially *Ik geloof* (I believe), about the Apostolic Confession is of importance). For this thesis a special study was made of the sermons of Van Ruler so to obtain a better view on questions that could not be answered from publications in which he reflected on the relationship God-Israel.

According to Van Ruler the apostleship of the Church has to be defined from the revelation of the Thora in Israel. God revealed the Thora to Israel with the purpose of renewing human existence and society from hatred to love; from selfishness to mercifulness. The Old Testament teaches us to value creation and man in a positive manner. The Fall affected this positive value, but the Thora (the teaching of God meant in a broad sense) indicates how to turn the negative consequences of the Fall into a positive renewal of life. Therefore Van Ruler makes the revelation of God in Israel coordinate with the revelation of God in Christ; he often speaks about 'the revelation in Israel and in Christ'. But in all this his focus is not the people of Israel. His focus is the Thora. (The same can be said about his interpretation of the coming of Christ: it is a means for God to achieve his purpose with mankind). Van Ruler also states that the Church – in taking over the calling that Israel had to represent God in the world, which was taken from Israel due to the rejection of Jesus as the Christ – will never succeed in doing better than Israel; Christ will be crucified over and again due to the failure to fully live according to the Thora. For his reflection on Israel as a people his theology of the apostleship has as a consequence that Van Ruler is relatively mild regarding the Jewish people (not condemning them as the people of God for the rejection of Christ) and he values the Jewish knowledge of the Old Testament, especially on the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. For this reason he estimates that the model of dialogue should be the way to convert the Jewish people to Christ. On the state of Israel and the promise of land Van Ruler is reserved to conclude to rights that can be claimed; God's choice for a specific territory for the fulfilment of his Thora is interpreted by Van Ruler as 'pas pro toto' for the whole world.

Concluding provisionally on the theology of Van Ruler on the point of Israel it is important to note in the first place that Van Ruler's frequent indication of God as the God of Israel does not indicate God's relation to Israel. It is meant as an expression that all other peoples do not have any knowledge of God of their own; it comes from God's revelation to Israel. Despite this way of talking about the knowledge of God Van Ruler is not very explicit about the relationship of God to Israel as the people of God in the present, nor about consequences of this relationship to Israel as a people in the future. With his remarks on the revelation of God in Israel Van Ruler wants to demonstrate the necessity for the Church for a theological reorientation: in Christian theology too much attention has gone to the person of Jesus Christ. The fact that in the New Testament and in history from then on there still

seems to be room for a special relationship of God with Israel as a people is rather puzzling for Van Ruler; he calls this a mystery of God on which he is not allowed to give a concluding comment ('non liquet mihi').

Although Van Ruler uses the history of the revelation of God in Israel as a model for his theology on the apostleship of the Church, he hardly ever combines his speaking about 'the revelation of God in Israel' with remarks on Israel in its contemporary appearance (Judaism, Jewish people, state of Israel, Israel in the Diaspora). This can be explained from his Christ-centred view on the plan of God with the world; he is more Christ-centred than he seems to be at first sight. Due to his Christology he gives a universal interpretation of the covenant of God with Israel in which a special place for Israel as a people disappears. This has as a consequence for his Eschatology that there is no special place for Israel as the people of God: the promise of peace includes all peoples without any distinction between other peoples and Israel. The fulfilment of this promise implies theological continuity, but in relation to Israel how Van Ruler thinks about Israel can be characterized in terms of historical discontinuity.

From the overview of the theology of Van Ruler on the relationship God-Israel the question arises: can the fulfilment of the Thora be achieved without the participation of Israel in its ethnical form, where its original context is that of the relation of God with Israel as a people, a relationship that has never been revoked by God in later times?

In chapter 4 a review is given on how Hendrikus Berkhof thought about the relationship God-Israel. His theology on Israel can be derived from his main work *Christelijk Geloof. Een inleiding tot de geloofsleer* (also translated into English under the title *Christian Faith. An introduction to the Study of the Faith*) and from several articles in which Berkhof explicitly deals with questions on Israel (as a people and in its religious appearance as Judaism), such as: 'De messias, Israël en de kerk' ('The Messiah, Israel and the Church') and 'Israel as a theological problem in the Church' (in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*) and parts of his book *Christus de zin der geschiedenis* (Christ, the intention of history). To obtain a better insight into certain aspects, a closer study was made on hermeneutical and biblical-theological notions in the theology of Berkhof and on his Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology and Eschatology.

In his chapter on Israel in *Christelijk Geloof* Berkhof describes the relationship God-Israel as a struggle between the loyalty of God and the disloyalty of Israel. God is faithful, but Israel constantly disappoints God by disobedience to the law that God has given. Berkhof considers Israel as a model for mankind; God wanted to find a way out of the disturbed relationship with man and therefore he chose Israel as a testing ground to develop this way out. According to Berkhof the history of Israel demonstrates the impossibility for man to restore the relationship with God; this restoration is only possible through the interference of God. However, Israel refused to accept this interference by God in the person of Jesus, and by the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah Israel placed itself aside in the salvation plan of God with the world. Ever since the road of Israel as people of God and the road of the Church (considered by Berkhof as the other half of God's people) have been separated. Israel should not be rejected as the people of God because of the rejec-

tion of Jesus; it is through this that the salvation through Christ has come to the whole world. In 'Christelijk Geloof' Berkhof describes the relationship God-Israel as the historical prelude on the coming of Christ. Contrary to what it seemed to be, the rejection of Jesus introduced a complete new starting point in God's plan of salvation of the world. Berkhof is very positive about the historic consequences of the resurrection of Christ; he interprets this as the daybreak of the Day of the Lord with all its positive consequences. In other publications Berkhof focuses more on Israel in its historical appearance, both in its religious form (Judaism) as well as in its ethnical form (Jewish people, state of Israel). In these publications he is more positive about the enduring relationship of God with Israel; the Church should give notice that Israel is the chosen people to whom God will fulfil his promises. Especially in the ecumenical context of the World Council of Churches Berkhof has pleaded for a more open and positive approach of Israel, especially of Judaism and the Jewish people. He regretted that a negative view on the state of Israel blocked this openness. In his earlier articles Berkhof himself was more positive and hopeful about the state of Israel than he was in his later publications.

Concluding provisionally on the theology of Berkhof on the point of Israel it should be noticed that for Berkhof his Christology dominates his interpretation of the relationship God-Israel: everything that can be said about God in relation to Israel comes to fulfilment in Christ. Therefore Israel disappears to the background of the theology of Berkhof. In his Eschatology his focus is universal without acknowledging a special place for Israel as the people of God. Although Berkhof takes Israel as a model for how mankind reacts on God, coming to a low in the rejection of Jesus by Israel (represented by its leaders), he does not make a connection between the significance of the reconciliation and atonement in the death and resurrection of Christ and the renewal of God's relationship with Israel. This can be marked as an inconsistency. Its consequence is that Berkhof does not combine the promise of a new covenant with promises to Israel as the people of God. In his model the relationship God-Israel becomes exemplary and loses its historical implications; this means historical discontinuity. Because of his interpretation of the resurrection of Christ as the coming of the Great Day of the Lord there even arises theological discontinuity: the promises connected to the election of Israel as the people of God come to an end in this approach; in his Eschatology there is no place left for Israel as the people of God in its ethnical appearance.

From the overview of the theology of Berkhof on the relation God-Israel the question arises: is it consistent to consider the promise of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33) as fulfilled in Christ without taking into account that this promise was made to Israel in its ethnical appearance, including Israel in the Diaspora?

In chapter 5 a concluding analysis is given on the results of the survey on Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof. Their views on the relationship God-Israel are also compared to each other. In these final analyses special attention is given to the aspects of historical and theological (dis)continuity.

In 5.2 a final analysis is given on Miskotte. For Miskotte God's promise to Abraham has its continuity in God. Israel has the function of a bridge: God wants to realize his kingdom on earth and he chose Israel to bring the testimony about his

kingdom in the world. But Israel made its vocation and election to an absolute and therefore the universal purpose of its election disappeared to the background.

However, God went on to fulfil his plan for the world, which was demonstrated again and definite in the coming of Christ: all that can be said about the merciful, sovereign turning of God towards the sinful and failing mankind was already revealed in the Old Testament and in his relation with Israel. The coming of Jesus affirmed the original intention of the election of Israel. Originally this election was meant to have a universal range and although Israel shattered this original purpose God stayed with his plan; this came to a low in the rejection of Jesus as the Christ.

For Miskotte this does not mean that Israel has been rejected by God. But there is no special place for Israel in the relationship of God with the world; in the approach of Miskotte Israel was never a goal in itself. From this point of view it has to be explained that there is no special attention or place for Israel in the eschatological perspective that Miskotte develops. The implications of God's relationship with Israel in its historical, ethnical appearance almost completely disappear from this model. Israel becomes a paradigm for the theological continuity in God's relationship with the world. This explains the difficulty and hesitation that Miskotte had in dealing with contemporary questions on Israel as a state in the Middle East and the return of the Jewish people to Palestine.

In evaluating this model several more questions arise than the one mentioned above. Miskotte makes the special position of Israel relative to that of all other peoples. The question is: does this validly take into account that the election of Abraham and his posterity is marked with emphasis as an everlasting and unconditional choice of God?

On the basis the rejection of Jesus by Israel Miskotte comes to historical discontinuity in the function that Israel had as the chosen people of God and that the Church has taken over this function. In doing so Miskotte considers the entire people of Israel responsible for the rejection of Jesus. This raises the question: what to do with the fact that only a part of the people of Israel lived in Palestine in Jesus' days and the house of Judah and the house of Israel were living in the Diaspora by then?

Furthermore: is it justifiable to give a universal interpretation to the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant without taking into account that this promise was originally given to Israel as the chosen people? The emphasis on the theological continuity in God raises the question whether this corresponds with the notion of God's own choice to commit himself to a relationship with an elected ethnical group: is it right to pull God's sovereignty apart from his relationship with Israel in its historical appearance (like Miskotte does)?

In 5.3 a final analysis is given on Van Ruler. He explains the flow of history as God coming to mankind. God encounters mankind to reconcile all human guilt and bring man into the full light of his blessing nearness. Israel has been chosen by God as 'pars pro toto' for all people and nations. In its uprising and rebellion against God Israel represents all peoples; Israel should not be isolated in this from all other people. God gave Israel his principles of life, the Thora, as his means to establish his reign on earth; he sent his prophets to criticize Israel and bring it back to his original intention.

To restore all that went wrong, God sent Jesus. That was necessary to cope with the rebellion against God. Israel rejected Jesus and thereby also rejected itself as the people of God; but God remained faithful to his plan and gave Israel's mission to the Church. The Church was built up according to the ground pattern of Israel (with twelve apostles like the twelve patriarchs before) and the process of Christianisation begun. However, the Church has also proved to be unable to fulfil the function that it took over from Israel: Christ is crucified again and again in the process of Christianisation.

The wait is for the kingdom of God to come in fullness. Till then the Thora is the paradigm by which to organize to organize life, inspired by the Holy Spirit which is given to sanctify the existence (keywords for Van Ruler in this are 'orthopraxis', 'israelizing' and 'humanizing' existence). In all this Van Ruler includes Israel; he does not consider Israel as rejected or disposed of by God. But Israel has set itself aside during after the rejection of Jesus as the Christ. Nevertheless, Van Ruler is aware that the foundation of the state of Israel indicates the possibility of a new encounter between God and Israel. But he also considers it as a mystery on God's part on which he is not allowed to comment decisively.

In Van Ruler's approach there is a kind of historical continuity: seen from the end of history God reveals himself in his acts of love and grace. But it is not a continuous process: it goes on from one moment of acting to a next moment of acting by God. And God can accommodate his acts to a new situation. This does not mean that there is discontinuity in God, but it might be seen as such from the historic point of view. In the approach of Van Ruler there is, however, historical discontinuity on the point of the relation God-Israel: Van Ruler integrates Israel in God's plan with the world in such a way that the relation God-Israel becomes something of the past (in his Eschatology there is no special place left for Israel as the chosen people).

In evaluating this model several questions arise. In the approach of Van Ruler the promise of the land points out that the whole world is meant to be the realm of God. But the promise of the land has a specific connotation, namely: Israel. Does Van Ruler do justice to the faithfulness of God, when he translates the promise of the land from 'Israel' to 'the world'? Van Ruler makes clear that the crucifixion of Christ has to be seen as a personal choice of Jesus (in his commitment to his vocation); Israel should not be blamed for it, but it set itself aside in this rejection. Van Ruler does however not apply the reconciliation in Christ to Israel as the people of God. The question is: what would the consequences be if he did?

Van Ruler also considers the Church as the successor of Israel in the apostleship in the world; the Church becomes the 'true Israel' and Israel in its ethnical form is degraded. But: did Israel have the mission that Van Ruler suggests? In line with this Van Ruler applies the promise of a new covenant to the Church and all the peoples of the world, not specifically to Israel. But: does this do justice to the fact that the promise of the new covenant was made to Israel as people of God? In all this Van Ruler appears to develop a existential-soteriological model in which historical discontinuity arises in the relationship of God with Israel as a people. Could this discontinuity be avoided by thinking strictly along historic lines, not only about the reconciliation of Israel in the relationship with God but also on the point of the extending of the salvation of God in the world?

In 5.4 a final analysis is given on Berkhof. Berkhof uses the relationship God-Israel for its existential-anthropological meaning. The history of Israel shows the deepest problem of mankind in relation to God: unfaithfulness. The history of the covenant with Israel ('verbondsgeschiedenis') also reveals the faithfulness of God. For Berkhof the relationship God-Israel is primarily of historical significance, as the background of the coming of Christ and the renewal of man's existence through him. The dialectics of the covenant are solved in Christ, but rejected by Israel as a whole. Therefore Israel still lives under the old covenant (of the Sinai) and the Church lives under the fulfilment of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31). According to Berkhof this means that there are two manifestations of the people of God: Israel and the Church. Although God will remain faithful to his promises to Israel, Israel has set itself aside in the plan of God with the world and those who were 'later called' (the converted from the other peoples) enter the kingdom of God before the 'first called' (Israel).

In Berkhof's view the path that God went with Israel comes to its fulfilment in Christ. Christ incorporates and represents the calling that Israel had for the world. He represents Israel and the other peoples before God and he incorporates all human sin and unfaithfulness to God. Jesus did what Israel did not do and that meant a new episode in the history has come in the history of God with man. For Berkhof this does not mean that God's relationship with Israel has come to an end (he frequently uses Romans 11:26 to make this clear), but until the completion of all things Israel does not play a role of significance in God's plans with the world. Yet, the simple fact of the existence of the Jewish people is a constant commemoration of the incompleteness of the Church and is a sign that in the end God will restore his relationship with Israel. Berkhof considers the return of the Jews to Palestine and the state of Israel under the reserve of the coming completion; no rights can be claimed on the basis of promises made by God, although it is clear to Berkhof that the promise of the land indicates that God's kingdom will be an earthly one.

Berkhof's can be explained from his reflection on the imperfection in the human existence and the true humanity in Christ. Hence Berkhof is less historical in his approach than one would presume at first sight. He gives a soteriological interpretation of the covenant of Sinai and relates the faithfulness of God to his election of Israel with the obedience that was demanded from Israel in the old covenant. Because Israel did not obey to God, God had to devise some other scheme for his reconciliation with man. This led to the fulfilment of the new covenant in Christ. However, Israel lost its place in all this. Berkhof interprets the new covenant universally without relating it to Israel in its historical and ethnical existence. This historical discontinuity in the model of Berkhof is combined with theological discontinuity, because Berkhof does not relate his idea of incorporation and representation of Israel in the person of Christ back to Israel as the people of God. In his interpretation of the resurrection of Christ the connexion with Israel as the people of God disappears.

In evaluating this model several questions arise. On the point of the incorporation of Israel in Christ the question can be asked: is it consistent that Berkhof does not apply his ideas on this to Israel? If he did, than this would mean an opening to a more open reflection on Israel in its ethnical and historical appearance. But there

does not seem to be much room for nuance in this: in relation to the rejection of Jesus Berkhof thinks of Israel 'as a whole'. In this he disregards the fact that the larger part of Israel lived in the Diaspora during the lifetime of Jesus. Berkhof uses a narrowed conception of Israel to make Israel as a whole responsible for the rejection of Jesus. Does this do justice to New Testament notions that indicate a broader conception of Israel, in the sense of twelve tribes (e.g. Acts 26:7)?

In his interpretation of the resurrection of Christ Berkhof poses that by the resurrection of Christ new humanity has been revealed and grows in mankind. Israel failed in this. Berkhof states that Israel did not succeed in the task to represent the other peoples before God, but in the resurrection of Christ this representation has been achieved. This interpretation leads to theological discontinuity in the model of Berkhof. But: did Israel have this task of representation of the nations before God? If not, this could solve the theological discontinuity in his model. On the point of the historical discontinuity in his model the question arises whether it is consistent that Berkhof puts strong emphasis on the prophecy of judgement and condemnation of Israel and applies that on Israel in its historical and ethnical appearance, but does not apply prophecies of hope on Israel in its historical and ethnical appearance as well.

In 5.5 the theological concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof are compared to each other on their view concerning the relationship God-Israel.

In 5.5.2 similarities between Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof are discussed. Although their concepts differ in certain aspects, each of them uses the relationship God-Israel to develop a soteriological concept in which Israel in its historical and ethnical appearance belongs to the past and in which God goes on to fulfil his plans with the world in the present. They agree in their approach, that Israel had a special function for the world without being a goal in itself for God: Israel was meant to be a bridge between God and the other peoples in the world. In this functional outlook Israel is subordinate to the plan of God; there is no room for a special privilege for Israel on the basis of the election by God.

In all three concepts historical discontinuity arises due to the interpretation of the rejection of Christ. That rejection is explained from the view that Israel made its election to an absolute and therefore did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Because of the rejection of Jesus a new people of God is formed, called the 'new' (Miskotte) or the 'true' (Van Ruler, Berkhof) Israel: the Church. In their interpretation of the rejection of Christ none of them takes into account that Israel as a whole did not live in Palestine during the lifetime of Jesus. They also use a narrowed conception of Israel, namely as the Jewish people. This reduces Israel from twelve to two tribes, where in the Old and New Testament Israel as a whole is indicated as consisting of twelve tribes, dispersed in the Diaspora since the Assyrian and Babylonian Exile. This narrowed conception of Israel works out as a lattice-work for the interpretation of history, as a result of which even the Jewish people in the Diaspora are disregarded.

All three of them consider the promise of the Holy Spirit, related to the promise of the new covenant to Israel (Jeremiah 31) as fulfilled and being fulfilled in the Church. They do nothing with the fact that in the Old Testament context this prom-

ise was especially made to Israel as a whole (as twelve tribes that had been divided into the 'house of Judah' and 'house of Israel' after the kingdom of Salomon). Although they make the position of Israel to a relative in doing so, none of them places the Church above Israel: the same mistakes that Israel has made are made by the Church. They are clear about a theological antithesis between Judaism and Christianity, but they intend to have an open relation to Judaism; the Church can learn from the questions from the Synagogue.

A similarity between them can also be seen in their view on the foundation of the state of Israel (1948) and the return of Jews to Palestine: they are all three reluctant to relate this to Old Testament prophecies for a new future for Israel. This can be explained from their view on God's acting in history; history does not have an intrinsic power to develop itself into the direction of the kingdom of God. For Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof it was not obvious enough whether God had his hand in the emergence of the state of Israel. They consider it as a possibility, not as a fact. As for Israel in the eschatological outlook none of them gives a special place to Israel in its appearance as the elect people of God. Israel is not excluded by them, but they do not relate the prosperity of the new world and the coming of a 'new Jerusalem' (Revelations 21) to Israel. The difference between Israel and other peoples disappears in the eschatological outlook of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof.

In 5.5.3 the differences between the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof are discussed. Especially the difference in the starting point for the reflection on the relationship God-Israel between Miskotte and Van Ruler on one side and Berkhof on the other should be noted. Miskotte and Van Ruler reflect from the election as a starting point, whereas Berkhof uses the notion of the covenant. In Berkhof's concept this leads to a theological discontinuity, due to his idea of incorporation of Israel in Christ (who took over the disloyalty of Israel to the covenant of God) without relating the meaning of this incorporation in Christ back to Israel. In the concepts of Miskotte and Van Ruler no theological discontinuity arises, because they regard God's continuous acting as based on his election of Israel.

In valuating the Old Testament there is a significant difference between Miskotte and Van Ruler on one hand and Berkhof on the other. For Miskotte and Van Ruler the Old Testament is a positive expression of how God reveals himself to man and of his earthly directed plan of salvation. For Berkhof the Old Testament is the negative reflection on the guilt and disloyalty of man against God, demonstrated in the history of Israel. On the point of the rejection of Jesus it is interesting to note the emphasis that Van Ruler puts on the element of choice by Jesus in it. This in contrast with Miskotte and Berkhof who ascribe the death of Jesus to Israel (the Jewish people), although they condemn any hatred against the Jews for it. In Miskotte's concept room remains for an encounter by God with Israel. In the concept of Berkhof Israel has to convert to God.

Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof also differ in how they see the dialogue with Israel (which they all three pleaded for). For Miskotte this dialogue would help the Church in its critical self-reflection. For Van Ruler the dialogue would have the character of a Socratic discourse in which Israel discovers that Jesus is the Messiah. For Berkhof the dialogue would bring the Church to a better understanding of the Jewish Religion as the religion of its elder brother. For Miskotte the central theme would be the delayed coming of the completion of the world; for Van Ruler the

central theme would be the earthly (not spiritual) implications of the salvation in Christ; for Berkhof the central theme in the dialogue would be the questions on the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant.

A last difference to mention is their view on the place of the coming of Christ in history. Miskotte describes the coming of Christ from a historic point of view: it follows from the fact that God will not leave what his hand has begun. Van Ruler has an eschatological approach: the coming of Christ marks a new movement of history in the direction of the coming kingdom of God; the coming of Christ has to be explained from this future goal of history. Berkhof describes the coming of Christ from an existential-soteriological point of view: the dialectics in the relationship between God and man had to be solved and therefore Christ came. None of them however makes explicit how the coming of Christ is related to promises for Israel as the elect people of God. In an eschatological outlook the distinction between Israel and the other peoples disappears.

In 5.5.4 it is described to which questions the comparison of the three concepts leads. The first question is related to how Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof interpret the history of the relationship God-Israel. To them this relationship is a model from which conclusions can be drawn about the relationship God-mankind. By means of analogy they relate the history of Israel to that of the contemporary way in which God acts with mankind. But in this model of analogy Israel becomes a fixed point of analogy in the past. A gap arises between the past and the present, let alone the future. In all this Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof consider Israel as the representative of the other peoples before God. In doing so, they disregard the fact that in the Old and New Testament a clear distinction is made between Israel and the other peoples. Each has its own responsibility for the relationship with God. Only by acknowledging the Lord of Israel could other peoples come under the blessing abundance of this God. But this distinction is disregarded in the models of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof. This is caused by their unhistorical way of interpreting the history of Israel (as an analogy). Had they taken into account the further developments in the relation of God with Israel, they would certainly had taken into account the fact of the dispersion of Israel in the Diaspora and the prophetic promises which enhance a return of Israel to the land that was promised as an inheritance to Abraham and his seed. This is a question that asks for further reflection: what to do with the historical fact of the Diaspora of Israel in connection with the interpretation of the relationship God-mankind?

Taking the Diaspora into account has consequences for Christology, especially on the point of ascribing the rejection of Jesus as the Christ to Israel as a whole: how could Israel as a whole reject Jesus, when they actually could not have heard about him everywhere in the Diaspora? And what to do with the awareness of the absence of the ten lost tribes of the house of Israel (as can be derived from the Old and New Testament and from Jewish Eschatology)? In their narrowed conception of Israel Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof disregard the Old Testament prophecies about a future return of all the tribes of Israel to the land of inheritance. In not taking this into account an historical discontinuity arises in the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof. This has consequences for the place given to Israel in the relationship of God with the world: the special place Israel had as the elect people of God disappears. So a question to reflect on is: can historical continuity in the rela-

tionship God-Israel be maintained when the notion of the Diaspora of Israel (in its ethnical appearance of twelve tribes) is integrated into the ground plan of Christology? The same question can be posed in relation to the Pneumatology of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof, in which they relate the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit to the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant (a promise made to Israel as a whole, Jeremiah 31).

Not in their conceptions of apostleship, nor in their ecclesiology, nor in their eschatological outlook do Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof acknowledge a special place for Israel as an elect people in distinction to the other peoples of the world. This can partly be explained from their view on the rejection of Jesus by Israel (Israel set itself aside) and it can be explained from their ecclesiology (within Christ there is no difference between 'Jew or Greek'). In their view the consequence of the existential crisis in the relation of God with Israel is that Israel loses its special position as the elect people. But does this do justice to the sovereignty of God? In his sovereignty God elected Israel from all other peoples. So the question is: are there any biblical references that make clear that this sovereign election of Israel by God can be disrupted by the disloyalty and unfaithfulness of Israel? Or posed even more directly: can God dispose of Israel or does he have to go on with Israel – because he would otherwise be disloyal to his sovereign election of Israel and in that way to himself?

In chapter 6 an opening is given for further reflection on the relationship God-Israel from the outlook of both historical and theological continuity.

In 6.1 it is noticed that Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof assign great value to the properties of God's nature which they deduce from their reflection on the relationship God-Israel and which they relate to the relationship[of God with mankind. For Miskotte the concept of Soteriology undergoes a correction because of his view on the credits ('het tegoed') of the Old Testament in the sense of the mercifulness of God. From his reflection on the rejection of Christ by Israel Van Ruler is deeply impressed by the fact that God encounters the human guilt in his grace. Berkhof interprets the relationship God-Israel in the direction of the predominate faithfulness of God, who – despite the unfaithfulness of man – is always headed on the salvation of man on which God accommodates his acting.

These aspects of the knowledge of God might also be used to develop an approach in which continuity in de relationship God-Israel is sustained. By doing so the inconsistency in the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof is solved. In their approach they try to avoid the impression that there has been a change in God himself. According to them the only change lies in the relationship of God with Israel. But in this they assume that God could give up his original goal with his election of Israel without coming into conflict with his own loyalty. But here a tension arises in the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof, because their view has no support from texts in the Old Testament that state an everlasting loyalty of God to Israel. That implies that departing from his original goal in the manner described by Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof would mean a change in God's loyalty to himself. To avoid the inconsistency as it arises in the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof one should not take the starting-point in Christology. In fact their starting-

point is a dogmatical one and as such a-historic: the existential need for the coming of Christ prevails above the historical context and relation of the coming of Christ to Israel as the elect people. Due to their Christological starting-point Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof use a model of analogy to interpret the history of the relationship God-Israel. Taking the knowledge of God as a starting-point makes room for a more organic view on the relationship God-Israel and on the development of this relationship in the course of time. Reasoning from the principles of the mercifulness, grace and loyalty of God it is possible to conclude to both historical and theological continuity: God never gives up what he has begun.

In this approach mercifulness is the key word to interpret the relationship God-Israel and God-mankind. In his mercy for the world God elected Israel and through Israel he brings his mercy into the world. Should God give up his mercy towards Israel, then this would block the way for other peoples: the election of Israel is directive for God's relationship to the world and for the expansion of his blessing throughout the world, not only in an existential manner, but also in time and space (in a historical and geographical sense). On this point a connection can be made to the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof: each of them thinks in terms of a concrete, earthly realisation of the kingdom of God. The notion of geographics is fully taken into account by them and they leave room for new developments in history by the acting of God.

Hence there arises room for a new reflection on the significance of the historical situation before, during and after the coming of Jesus. Especially the Diaspora of Israel will become a fact to take into account. Before the coming of Jesus the twelve tribes of Israel were dispersed over the other nations ever since the Assyrian and the Babylonian Exile. Although Old Testament prophecy foretold the reunion of the twelve tribes in their country of origin, this prophecy never came to a fulfilment. This was the situation when Jesus came; the peace for Jerusalem still had to come. Jesus also made mention of his awareness of the Old Testament prophecy concerning the reunion and return of the twelve tribes from the Diaspora. He sent his disciples into the Diaspora to preach the gospel to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matthew 10:6) and on the question of his disciples whether he would restore the kingdom of Israel in their days Jesus answers that they will be his witnesses all over the world (Acts 1:6-8). This can be seen as an indication that he reckoned with the Diaspora and the necessity to preach the gospel among all peoples with the purpose of reaching Israel in the Diaspora.

By interpreting the coming of Christ as belonging to God's relationship with Israel no theological or historical discontinuity will arise. The coming of Christ anticipated on the fulfilment of the prophecies and promises to Israel in the Diaspora. To reach Israel in the Diaspora all peoples would hear the good news of Jesus; in that way they would share in the mercy of God towards Israel. Or in the terms of a parable of Jesus (Matthew 13:44): God bought the whole field (the world) in order to obtain the treasure (Israel). Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that this treasure (Israel) was not obtained by God or that God withdrew from buying the field in which the treasure was hidden. But it has to be taken into account that it will take time to reach Israel as a whole; this gives an eschatological perspective to the task that Jesus puts on the shoulders of his disciples: their apostleship is part of the way in which God will fulfil his promises towards Israel.

In 6.2 some lines are drawn to the relationship between the Church and Israel. Reasoning according to historical and theological continuity in the relationship God-Israel, one cannot any longer sustain the idea that God created a new people (a 'true' or 'spiritual' Israel) out of a part of Israel and the other nations who were converted to Jesus. Israel remains Israel. In his metaphor of the olive tree, symbolising the blessing of God to mankind (Romans 11), Paul clearly makes a difference between natural and wild branches on the olive tree: Israel and the heathens. The blessing that was meant to be for Israel (the nourishment that comes from the stem of the olive tree) also reaches the heathens, due to a partial defiance of Israel which can be made undone by God: all of Israel will be saved 'when the complete numbers of gentiles come in' (Romans 11:26).

So the Church should note the special relationship of God with Israel as his elected people. This special relationship does not end. The Church should therefore acknowledge Israel in its ethnical appearance as the one and only elected people of God. In its apostleship the Church is used by God to reach Israel, scattered among the nations, but still God's own people to whom he promised the realisation of his blessing. The apostleship of the Church is part of the ongoing movement that originates from God's everlasting relationship with Israel. In this movement all other peoples are blessed, as was promised to Abraham: together with you all people will be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The Church is subordinated to the plan of salvation that God wants to fulfil towards Israel, including the world as a whole. In Christ (Ephesians 2:14) there is no difference between Jew or Greek: in Christ the peace for Israel also comes to all other peoples. Israel in its ethnical and historical appearance as the people of God should be included in the message and teaching about God by the Church; only then can the Church justly speak about the loyalty, mercifulness and grace of God.

Reasoning from the idea of historical and theological continuity in the relationship God-Israel and its eschatological outlook, it is not possible to consider the foundation of the state of Israel in the Middle East as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies that foresee the reunion of the twelve tribes of Israel in the land of inheritance. The land was promised as an inheritance, so it cannot be claimed as possession. Therefore it is not right to indicate Palestine as the 'promised' land. It should be indicated as 'the land of promise'. The present state of Israel should not be compared with the Old Testament form and foundation of Israel; it is not based on a religious principle. But at the same time this is the reason why it can not be considered as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies: there still remains an eschatological outlook for this.

The point of view of historical and theological continuity also implies an expectation of a geographical (earthly) situation in which Jerusalem will be the city of peace. In Revelations 21 a new Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth and all the peoples of the earth will come to God to learn about his peace, coming into the city passing through its gates – on which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written, symbolic for the blessing of God that comes to the other peoples through Israel. Because of this eschatological outlook the Church should support attempts and projects in Israel and the Palestine Territories in which reconciliation between Jews and Arabs and Palestinians is aspired. In its relationship to Judaism the

Church should go on with the dialogue in order to deepen the knowledge about God. In doing so the Church should devote to the relationship with the Messiah-confessing Jews, especially on the point of their eschatology.

In 6.3 the conclusive question is posed: “New covenant: when?”. In the description of the concepts of Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof it has been observed, that they interpret the covenant of God’s relationship with Israel as a universal covenant, especially the gift of the Holy Spirit in it. This requires further reflection. The gift of the Holy Spirit is related to the promise of a new covenant to Israel, which is meant to replace the old covenant (the covenant of Sinai; Jeremiah 31). But Miskotte, Van Ruler and Berkhof hardly give any notice to the fact that the promises that they consider as fulfilled in and after the coming of Christ in a universal range are originally related to Israel as the elect people of God. This is an inconsistency in their approach, caused by their interpretation that the new covenant has come to its fulfilment in the coming of Christ. But from an approach in which historical and theological continuity is supposed the question arises whether that interpretation is justifiable.

First of all the Old Testament context of the promise of the new covenant should be taken into account: it is a promise to the twelve tribes of the houses of Israel and Judah (the two parts in which Israel was separated after the kingdom of Salomon). This new covenant would include the return to the land of inheritance and the reunion of the twelve tribes under a Davidic king who would reign over them in peace (Ezekiel 34). But: when did this situation occur in the history of Israel? No such moment can be denoted. But neither was there a moment in which the promises belonging to the new covenant were revoked by God. So the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that the promise of the new covenant has not yet come to its fulfilment and still awaits its fulfilment for Israel in the future.

Meanwhile the gift of the Holy Spirit indicates the beginning of the renewal of God’s relationship with Israel which will come to its fulfilment on the Day of the Lord at the completion of the world. In the New Testament there are several texts that point in this direction. Peter explains the gift of the Holy Spirit as an anticipation on the coming day of the Lord (Acts 2:17-21). Paul notes that the Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee of the coming fulfilment of God’s promise to his people (Ephesians 1:13-14). In Hebrews 8 (verse 13) it is posed that the old covenant has not yet disappeared, but is not far from it; so the new covenant for Israel (Hebrews 8:7-12) has not yet come. It in this eschatological perspective that the words of Jesus in Luke 22 should be understood when he puts the Passover under the expectation of the coming fulfilment of the new covenant: it will be fulfilled when the kingdom of God comes and the disciples ‘will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Luke 22:30).

Under this eschatological outlook the reflection of the Church on the relationship of God with Israel will lead to new perspectives in dogmatics, not only regarding Israel, but also regarding the position of the Church in God’s relation to the world. It will bring several aspects of dogmatics (like Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology and Pneumatology) into new light. It deepens the knowledge about God, who is even more merciful than already was seen by the Church. But this approach from historical and theological continuity in the relationship of God with Israel also leads

to new questions. May the reflection on those questions be a blessing to Israel and to those who dare to keep asking and reflecting on such new questions, without pretending to be able to solve them. The dynamics in God is simply too great for that.

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Curriculum Vitae

Andries Hielke Drost werd geboren op 10 juli 1960 te Zwolle. In 1988 deed hij zijn doctoraal-examen aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden. In het kader van zijn hoofdvak kerkgeschiedenis bestudeerde hij de zestiende eeuwse polemieken tegen het jodendom ('Johannes Hoornbeeck en de polemieken tegen het jodendom'). In het kader van het bijvak Nieuwe Testament schreef hij 'Oudtestamentische citaten en reminiscenties in de 1^e Petrusbrief', vanuit zijn belangstelling voor de verhouding tussen Oude en Nieuwe Testament. In het kader van het bijvak Bijbelse Theologie behandelde hij in zijn eindschrift ('Godsleer als hermeneutische sleutel') een aantal hermeneutische benaderingen rond de vraag naar de eenheid van Oude en Nieuwe Testament. Hij is sinds 1990 werkzaam als gemeentepredikant in de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland; daarnaast was hij enkele jaren lid en voorzitter van het Regionaal College voor de Visitatie in de provincie Utrecht. Sinds februari 2007 is hij lid van de Raad voor Kerk en Israël, een adviesorgaan van de Dienstenorganisatie van de Generale Synode van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland.