There is a general consensus among New Testament scholars that Romans 9–11 presents us with difficulties which Cranfield goes so far as to call 'notorious' (1979:445). E Käsemann (1980:253) says, 'Probably no larger portion of Paul's writings can be said to have had a history of exposition which is more a suffering course of misunderstanding, acts of violence, and experimentation with shifting methods and themes', and Cranfield (1979:445) refers to Gaugler (1958:327) who compares it with the precipitous North Wall of the Eiger! In 1977 a combined effort was made by scholars of repute, inter alia W G Kümmel, C K Barrett, J Jeremias and Markus Barth, to solve some of the difficulties in these chapters without great success. It was W G Kümmel (1977:13) who referred to Willibald Beyschläg, who had said in his book Die paulinische Theodicee Römer IX–XI (1868), that whoever reads these chapters and the various commentaries and monographs written about them, cannot escape the impression that they are a crux interpretum. Examining the literature of the last thirty years on Romans 9–11, Kümmel (1977:14) goes on to say that one must agree with Peter Stuhlmacher (1971:555) in his introduction to a study of Romans 11:25–51, 'Nach wie vor stellen die bekannten Kapitel Römer 9–11 einen Testfall gegenwärtiger Paulus Interpretation dar. Im exegetischen Urteil über diesen komplex des Römerbriefes wirkt sich unverkennbar aus, welches Bild man von der Rechtertigungstheologie des Paulus hat, wie man den Charakter des Römerbriefes beurteilt und in welcher Weise man den Missionskonzeption des Paulus ansieht'.

One of the greatest difficulties about these chapters is their relationship with the rest of the letter. About this we have a great diversity of opinion. C H Dodd (1959), for example, says that these chapters constitute an excursus, a sermon which the apostle has already made and which he inserts here because of his spiritual ties with Israel. These chapters, according to Dodd, have no connection with the rest of the letter. Against Dodd's view we have the views of U Wilckens (1978:181f), Cranfield (1979:445) and Michel (1977:289), who maintain that Romans 9–11 form a unit, but that these chapters are also connected with the rest of the letter.

Schlier (1977:282–3), finds that the concept of the dikaiosûnê tou theou, which is to him the basic theme of the whole letter, is continued in Romans 9–11. In Romans 9–11 we also have to do with the dikaiosûnê tou theou and with the dikaiosûnê ek tês pîsteos
that is, with the revelation of God's faithfulness to his covenant which was revealed in Christ and the gospel, which saves him who accepts Christ and places him in the right relationship with God.

It is no accident or exception that in the centre of Romans 9-11, in 9:30ff and 10:1ff, the concept dikaiosûnê or dikaiosûnê tou theou occurs, which is the basis of the letter to the Romans. The tragedy of Israel is that they did not accept the dikaiosûnê of God which appeared in Christ, a salvation which the Torah and the prophets had announced and witnessed to (3:21). The elected Israel who preferred to cling to their idia dikaiosûnê and refused to accept the gift of God's dikaiosûnê, in this way refused to accept the gift of God's promised salvation. Schlier (1977:283) concludes that the main theme of the letter to the Romans, the dikaiosûnê tou theou, does not disappear in Romans 9-11, by which conclusion it is clear that these chapters are a part of the letter. E Käsemann (1980:255f) shares this view.

The title of this paper is: 'The salvation of Israel according to Romans 9-11', with the result that an analysis will have to be made of all three chapters. It is therefore clear that we can only discuss in depth the specific parts which have a direct bearing on our subject, although, on the other hand, it is also clear that these chapters as a whole have something to say about the salvation of the Jews. We shall have to use our discretion in our selection of the sections or texts which require more attention.

A further point must be stressed again right at the beginning of this study, and this is the difficulty of the material (cf. Kümmel 1977:5ff), and the immense body of literature on this subject (cf. Barrett 1957:98). An original contribution to this discussion can hardly be expected, but it is rewarding to make a new effort to try to discover what Paul said and meant to say in Romans 9-11.

Although I have not done a detailed structural analysis of these chapters, I have gratefully made use of the work done by scholars like J P Louw, to point out what is structurally important for the main argument. We shall discuss Romans 9-11 under the various pericopes which are demarcated by means of structural analysis.

A. PAUL'S SORROW AND PAIN FOR HIS PEOPLE (Rm 9:1-5)

Paul starts this chapter with an expression of the pain and sorrow he experiences for his people. He accentuates the fact that he is speaking the truth 'in Christ', that is 'in the presence of Christ' (Käsemann 1980:257), or 'in accordance with the standards which obtain for one, who is in Christ, with a due sense of his accountability to Christ' (Cranfield 1979:452), and that his conscience is strengthened and illumined by the Holy Spirit. We have here strong
statements to validate what the apostle says. Structurally, a chias­
tic pattern in ἱππή and μεγδίη: adidleiptos and ὀδύνη adds to the
veracity of the conviction expressed (Louw 1979b:97). The state­
ments may have been caused by accusations made by Jews that he
was an enemy of the Jews (Ridderbos 1959:205; Schmidt 1976:155,
cf., however, Kümmel 1977:24).

He goes on to say that he would wish (note euchōmen - imperfect
expressing an unattainable wish pertaining to the present) (Louw
1979b:97, Käsemann 1980:258) to become anāthēma cursed and sepa­
rated from his people. The reason for this strong wish is not given
in the text, but it is clear that for Paul his fellow-Jews (he calls
them ὠι ἀδελφοί καὶ ὠι συγγενεῖς) are still fellow-members of the
people of God, in spite of their unbelief. Unbelieving Israel is
within the elect community, not outside it. The apostle goes on to
list in verses 4 and 5 the special privileges of the Jews. This re­
cital seems at the same time to underline the sadness of the Jews' present unbelief, to explain the depth of Paul's grief on their be­
half, and also to indicate the continuing fact of their election (Cran­

To start with, he calls them Israelites, a name which does not only
have a national meaning, but indicates them as the objects of God's
election (cf. Gn 32:39; Rm 11:1 and 2 Cor 11:22). God adopted
them as his children, and they are called 'children of God' (Ex
4:22; Dt 14:1; Hs 1:10; 11:1). Furthermore they have partici­
pated in God's δόξα, God's own manifestation of his personal pre­
sence with his people, which is always his presence in the sovereign
freedom of his gracious condescension and is never a presence under
their control or at their disposal (Cranfield 1979:462). They were
also the people with whom God had made covenants: with Noah (Gn
6:18; 9:9); with Abraham (Gn 15; 17ff, cf. Ex 2:24); with Israel
at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:5; 24:1ff) in the plains of Moab (Dt 29:1ff),
and at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (Jos 8:30ff), and possibly also the
covenant with David (2 Sm 23:5; Ps 89:3f, 28f; 132:11f).

They were also the people who possessed the law, having received
it via Moses from God himself. What is of special importance is
that they received the epangelía (cf. also 4:30f), the promises given
to them by God on various occasions. What is characteristic of
these promises, is the certainty that they will be fulfilled in con­
trast to the law where it is a question of reward or payment which is
given (Gl 3:17ff).

In verse 5 the account of Israel's privileges is continued: their
ancestors were the fathers to whom God attached himself and whose
God he wanted to be called (Ex 3:16ff). They were in general the
prominent figures in the history of salvation whose descendants the
Israelites are (cf. Lk 1:55, 72; Jn 7:22; Ac 3:13, 25f). The great
importance Paul attached to this descendancy is clear from 11:28 and 15:8. The end and climax of these privileges is Christ. The birth of Christ from Israel is the strongest proof of the special privilege of Israel and also the strongest argument against a final condemnation of Israel in spite of their rejection of Christ (Ridderbos 1959:28). katà sárho is a further accentuation of Christ's descent from Israel. There is a great diversity of opinion about the doxology that follows, but the most likely solution is that Christ and not God is meant here (cf. Schlier 1977:288 and Ridderbos 1959:209).

This section points out the utter inconceivability of Israel's refusal to believe in Christ. Israel is the chosen people of God and yet refuses the salvation he wants to give. This enigma is explained in the following section.

B. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S ELECTION OF ISRAEL
(Rm 9:6-18)

It is not clear from verses 1-5 what the apostle has in mind with the expression of his concern for Israel and the mention of all their privileges. Now it becomes clearer. By ho lógos tou theou is meant 'the declared purpose of God' (Cranfield 1979:473), or 'the specific promises to Israel, as in the lógia tou theou in 3:2' (Käsemann 1980:262). What the apostle has said in these verses is certainly not to be understood as implying that the present unbelief of the great majority of Jews has succeeded in making the word of God ineffectual by frustrating God's declared purpose of grace or the specific promises to Israel.

The apostle points out that in the history of Israel the declared purpose of God never included all the descendants of Israel. Not everyone who belongs to the people of Israel, is the Israel to whom God has attached himself as his people and the promised seed of Abraham. What makes Israel the real Israel is not determined by the faith and obedience of Jacob, but it is determined by what God promises and does. This is illustrated by two quotations from the Old Testament where reference is made to God's promise to Abraham as the basis of spiritual descendancy (Gn 18:10,14; 21:21). Only those who are born through God's promise as in the case of Isaac, are, or really belong to Israel (vv.6a,7b). Reference is also made to Rebecca's children who had one and the same father, Isaac; and yet, in order that God's selective purpose might stand (based not upon men's deeds but upon the call of God), she was told, even before they were born, when they had as yet done neither good nor bad, that the elder would be the servant of the younger. This is substantiated by Scripture, 'Jacob I loved and Esau I hated' (Mt 1:2ff). 'The multiple relations portrayed by the syntactic
structure of verses 10 and 11 stress the fact that though Rebecca had two sons, the promise became effective only in the case of one of these sons because God's choice, ekloge, is the vital feature' (Louw 1979b:99). God is free to choose to whom his promises may apply. With ἐγκατάλειψα election is meant, and with ὄμισσα rejection. According to Wilckens (1978:195), the praedestination gemina is found here, but not in a cosmological sense. It must be seen in a history-of-salvation context or sense, as an illustration of the total freedom God has in the world to form or gather his people (cf. Käsemann 1980:265, 'Certainly Paul has no speculative interest in pro-temporal predestination'; also Ridderbos 1959:227-31).

The feature of ekloge may raise the objection that it is not fair. 'The style of the diatribe is particularly evident in this section' (Käsemann 1980:267). The presumed criticism is met by a direct answer, 'no', which is explained in verses 14-18. The apostle concludes that God not only shows mercy as he chooses, but also makes men stubborn as he chooses. Here he is referring to what God said to Moses, namely that he shows mercy where he will show mercy and pity where he will show pity, as well to God's words to Pharaoh, that is that he had raised him to exhibit his power in his dealings with him, and to spread his fame throughout the world. From what has been said, it is clear that God has his own purpose and that his will is supreme. Paul's argument is that God's will cannot be questioned.

C. GOD'S WRATH AND MERCY (Rm 9:19-29)

Verse 19 introduces a question which can be raised by an opponent. If it is a matter of God's choice alone, it seems that man is not answerable. This possible objection is replied to in verses 20-29, with verses 21-29 offering illustrations which expound verse 20. The illustrations are twofold: verses 20b-21 are an illustration from secular life, while verses 22-29 apply to what God does (cf. Louw 1979b:101). This question must, however, be stated and answered, because the whole exposition has to do with Israel (Ridderbos 1959:218). The apostle speaks in general terms (v.18), but when he speaks of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, he has Israel in mind (cf. 11:7-8). Michel (1977:311) on the other hand, feels that the words 'also makes men stubborn as he chooses', concern all people including the Jews (9:24).

The question put here has therefore, in accordance with what has been said from verse 6, this implicit meaning: if God's power is as absolute as it is described here, can Israel be blamed for lack of faith? If the potter can do as he pleases (vv.30b-21), how much more may God, is the answer.
In verses 22-24 God's way is explained in a long and difficult sentence. Verse 22 is the matrix, though grammatically it is the protasis of a conditional clause. It is used as a matrix since no conclusion (which should have been the matrix) follows the εἰ-clause. Constructions like these often occur in Greek, having the effect that the εἰ-clause, used as a matrix, serves to underline the validity of the statement. Therefore εἰ δὲ θελῶ ὁ θεὸς ... ἐνέκενσεν σκέυες ὄργες may be understood as a strong statement of fact (Louw 1979b:102).

In relation to verses 22 and 23, the argument of Paul runs as follows: God has absolute autonomy to show mercy to any person he chooses, both Jew or Gentile. This is validated by verses 24-29 by quotations from elements or parts of Hosea 2:22 (LXX 2:25) and a direct quotation from Hosea 2:1 (LXX 1:10), where God says that those who were not his people, he will call his people and the unloved nation he will call his beloved. In Hosea these words have to do with the restoration of a people who have been rejected by God. Ridderbos (1959:223) thinks that when God says 'you are no people of mine', that Israel is meant. What is expressed in the quotation, is the free and merciful pity of God for those who no longer have the right to call themselves the people of God. Wilckens (1978:206 and Schlier 1977:303) are of the opinion that the heathen are meant. Ridderbos' opinion is to be preferred as it agrees with the context.

The second quotation from Hosea says basically the same thing, 'For in the very place where they were told you are no people of mine, they shall be called the sons of the living God'. Ridderbos (1959:223) sees in τόπος, 'the very place', Canaan, where God judged and punished his people. There he will show his love for them once again and they will be called sons of the living God. Here, also, it is not Israel's merit or right to be the people of God, but it is God's mercy that makes it possible. Schlier does not agree with Ridderbos (1977:304), but Ridderbos' view has much to support it.

This second quotation is connected with Israel in a special way. It is derived from Isaiah 10:22-3 and speaks of the remnant that will be saved, though they be countless as the sands of the sea (v.27b), as was promised to Abraham by God. It will happen, for 'the Lord's sentence on the land will be summary and final' (v.28 NEB).

In the context this quotation from the prophets serves to prove that membership of Israel does not guarantee salvation. What will be saved from Israel will only be a remnant. It is therefore not in conflict with Scripture when salvation bypasses so many in Israel, but it is rather the confirmation of it. This quotation in
verses 27b,28 explains the situation in Israel. From 9:6-13 it is clear that not all who are from Israel, or belong to Israel, are Israel, but only those who are born on the basis of God's promise and according to his will, the so-called 'remnant' (cf. 11:3ff). What has been said, is confirmed by another quotation, namely from Isaiah 1:9, where the prophet says that if the Lord of hosts had not left for them 'the mere germ of a nation, they should have become like Sodom, and no better than Gomorrah'. A stronger condemnation of pretension and prestige is not possible, because Sodom and Gomorrah were seen as the prototypes of godlessness (Ridderbos 1959:224). In these quotations the apostle gives Israel much food for thought. It is as if he wants to show to them from Scripture itself that salvation can bypass Israel and can be given to others. The word of God has not lost its power or become ineffectual, verse 6 (cf. 3:4ff).

In verses 30-33 we have a summary of the whole of the preceding argument. Here the apostle already gives an indication of the wonderful way in which God rules the world - a subject to which he will give further attention or treat more fully in chapter 11. But what is of special importance is that, in contrast with what one would expect on the basis of human calculation and natural descent, not Israel, but the heathen achieved righteousness, in spite of the fact that they made no effort to procure it. This is a righteousness based on faith, deliverance from judgement and punishment which should have been Israel's due before God (cf. 1:17; 3:21). This righteousness the heathen received without the work of the law, a righteousness through or by God's mercy. In receiving what they did not search for, the wonderful and absolute power of God is revealed. He gives righteousness to man, not on the ground of or because of human exertion, but only out of mercy and love, verses 12,16. Israel, on the other hand, searched for a law through or by which they could procure righteousness, but they did not succeed in finding such a law. They did search for righteousness, but in another way; that is through obedience to the law in a legalistic manner (cf. v.32). Because Israel acted from a wrong principle and did not submit to God's rule but tried to build their lives on their own works, they did not procure righteousness. The conflict between submission to God's rule and grace on the one hand, and their human efforts to achieve righteousness on the other hand has been made clear in 3:21-4:25 (Ridderbos 1959:226). Another factor is now added: to build one's faith on works and not on faith (v.32), cannot give any righteousness (2:1ff), and is not only contrary to what God has revealed in Christ and in Scripture (3:21-4:25), but is also in conflict with the deepest motive of God's plan of salvation and of the adoption of Israel as his people.

It is not what a man is or would be, or human effort and virtue, that makes man acceptable to God. It is only God's grace that
makes this possible (Ridderbos 1959:226 and Schmidt 1976:171). Israel disregarded this absolute power of God and that was the cardinal sin.

It is important to note that in chapter 9 Paul does not ascribe Israel's downfall to God's predestination, but to Israel's own sin. The apostle's purpose is not to show that Israel's fall was predestined by God, but to accentuate the absolute character of God's rule and grace, especially with reference to Israel. Thus it was from the beginning of Israel's existence. Israel was God's people in this way alone and in this way her special privilege. Israel did not realize this and was unwilling to accept it. The Israelites wanted to achieve their own righteousness.

Because their efforts were not built or based on faith but on deeds they fell over the 'stone' mentioned in Scripture. The 'stone' over which they fell, is Christ, the stone in Zion (v.33). In the quotation in verse 33 two prophecies of Isaiah are combined, Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16. According to the first quotation the Lord is 'a boulder and a rock which the two houses of Israel shall run against and over which they shall stumble' (NEB), and in the second one, Isaiah 28:16 it is said, 'Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious cornerstone for a firm foundation, he who has faith, shall not waver'. This free use of Scripture accentuates the fact that what for the faithful and the believers in Israel is the basis of their existence, namely God's special care and his purpose for his people, has become a stumbling block for the unbelievers and for the people who do not rely on God.

Paul applies these thoughts which were so clearly expressed by the prophets, to Israel's search to attain righteousness from or on the ground of their works rather than through faith. What brought about their downfall is the absolute freedom of God's grace (Ridderbos 1959:257). In this way, Christ, through whom God gave righteousness through faith alone and without the works of the law, has become for them the stone over which they have tripped. On the other hand, it is true that anyone who has faith in him will not be put to shame, because he is completely reliable. This also explains why Israel is surpassed by and becomes, in a certain sense, inferior to the heathen (v.30). God has definitely not broken his word to Israel. Because the people of Israel disregarded the special way of God's election and their adoption as his children, they fell from favour. They fell because they wanted to be saved by their own efforts and not by the grace of God. In this way they rejected their own privileges and election.

The main points of chapter 10 are discussed prior to chapter 11 which contains more details about our subject: the salvation of
Israel. In chapter 9 it is often stressed that Israel did not obtain salvation in Christ because they did not do justice to the special way in which God had elected them to be his people (cf. 9:31,33). The apostle also accentuates the fact that God had not acted unjustly towards them and had kept his promises of salvation. The situation which now arises as regards Israel and the heathen is in accordance with the prophecies of Scripture (9:24-33).

Chapter 10 contains an extension of what has been said in 9:30-33 where Israel's irresponsibility and guilt are accentuated. The first four verses of this chapter are interesting and important. In the first verse the apostle again accentuates for his Roman readers how deep his desire and his prayer is for the salvation of his people (cf. 9:1ff). What he says about his people in the preceding chapters is not out of irresponsibility or enmity towards them. He can testify to their zeal for God; but it is an ill-informed zeal (v.2). This is because they ignore God's way of righteousness and try to set up their own. They have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness (v.4). Christ ends the law because on the one hand he supersedes the law for the attainment of righteousness (v.5ff), and on the other hand he brings to an end the legalistic way in which the Jews tried to attain righteousness. In him God has acquitted the sinner and without exception has given righteousness to everyone who believes in him.

D. SALVATION FOR ALL (Rm 10:5-13)

Verses 5ff give more details of what has been said in the preceding section by contrasting again the principles of righteousness through the law and righteousness by faith, and by illustrating it with quotations from Scripture (Lv 18:5 and Dt 30:12-14). The principle of the righteousness of the law is illustrated by the words of Moses in Lv 18:5 (cf. Gl 3:12), where he says that the man who did these things shall gain life by them (see Cranfield 1979:520-1; Ridderbos 1959:234-5; Kasemann 1980:284-6 for the difficulties and various interpretations of vv.5,6).

After this the apostle describes the righteousness that comes by faith by quoting another statement of Moses (without mentioning Moses himself) from Deuteronomy 30:12-14. In Deuteronomy 30:12-14 the gift of the law which will open the way of life to Israel is mentioned. Paul applies what was said of the law given by God of Deuteronomy 30 to the contents of the gospel. With this quotation the apostle says that what can be said about the righteousness by faith, can also be said about God's word in Deuteronomy 30. These things are not beyond man's reach, so that he has to do the impossible to obtain righteousness: to go up to heaven or go down to the abyss (NEB). When a man wishes to earn this righteousness,
he attempts the impossible. Such an effort is a complete denial of the coming of Christ and of his work. Christ descended into the depths of death and returned so that we may have righteousness (cf. 4:25). He who would therefore try to obtain righteousness in another way than by faith, wants to do what God has done in Christ: he attempts to bridge the chasm between heaven and earth and to conquer death. The apostle adds to this the words of Deuteronomy 30:14, 'The word is near you; it is upon your lips and in your heart'. What is completely impossible for the righteousness of the law to obtain, lies within the immediate reach of everyone who believes, because it is revealed in the gospel (1:17; 3:21). If anyone confesses that 'Jesus is the Lord' and in his heart believes that God raised him from the dead, he will find salvation. 'For the faith that leads to righteousness is in the heart, and the confession that leads to salvation is upon the lips' (v.10), says the apostle (NEB).

Paul goes on to say that Scripture states that everyone, Jew or Gentile, will be saved by faith in him, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him. But all have not responded to the good news proclaimed about salvation through faith in Christ. People have no excuse because the good news has been proclaimed all over the world and Paul asks whether it can be true that Israel has failed to recognize the message (v.19). He quotes Moses who said in Deuteronomy 32:21 that God will use a nation that is no nation to stir their (Israel's) envy and a 'foolish nation to rouse their anger' (NEB). With this Paul indicates that Israel will see with envy and anger that another nation, not formed by God like Israel, will receive Israel's privileges and supersede them or take their place. He goes on to quote Isaiah in Isaiah 65:1, where God says that he has been found by those who were not looking for him; he has been clearly shown to those who have never asked about him, while to Israel he says that all day long he has stretched out his hands to an unruly and difficult people.

With these words of Moses and Isaiah, representing the law and the prophets, the apostle accentuates Israel's responsibility and their guilt which leads to their loss of salvation. And with this he brings the second great theme of Romans 9-11 - the guilt of Israel - to an end (Ridderbos 1959:244). The first theme was that of the free and absolute power of God.

Cranfield (1979:541) says that the quotation in verse 21 confirms incidentally that Israel has known God's grace but the special function of this verse is twofold. (i) It looks back to what has already been said concerning Israel's disobedience and gathers it up into one comprehensive statement which, by making it clear that this disobedience is precisely rejection of God's steadfast grace,
brings out its full enormity; and (ii) it looks forward to what is going to be said of hope for Israel, depicting vividly the steadfast patience of that divine grace against which Israel has so continually sinned. But there is no equilibrium between these two things, for in this sentence the statement of Israel's disobedience is strictly incidental (it is confined to the participal phrase dependent on ἁμοι), but the statement of what God has done with regard to this people is central and decisive. The quotation points firmly to the fact that the last word is not with Israel's disobedience but with God's mercy and patience. Perhaps Cranfield is over-accentuating the value of the participial phrase dependent on ἁμοι' for making the statement of Israel's disobedience strictly incidental in the quotation, but it may be true that this quotation (v. 21), contains an element of hope for Israel.

E. THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL (Rm 11:1-10)

Because of what has been said in the preceding chapters 9-10, one could make the deduction that Paul indicates that God has rejected his people. The verb and its tense here used, ἀποκατάστασα, denotes a radical severance and cancellation of the ties between God and Israel, the seed of Abraham. The terms, however, in which the question is expressed, presuppose the negative answer it must receive - (μὴ introduces a question to which a negative answer must be given) - for these terms are clearly reminiscent of the Old Testament passages which declare categorically that God will not cast off his people (1 Sm 12:22; Ps 94:14; LXX (93):14; cf. Ps 60:74; 103:1; Cranfield 1979:543). That God has not completely rejected his people, is proved by the fact that Paul himself is an Israelite, of the stock of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, from whom the first king of Israel came and whose name he himself had, and to whom the prophet, Jeremiah belonged (cf. Ac 13:21). Paul does not make this statement because of patriotism (Jülischer). He does it to prove his thesis. He himself as an Israelite of the seed of Abraham is a living example of God's will to save. As in 2 Corinthians 11:22 and Philippians 3:5, there is pride in this self-predication and in the mention of his tribe. Paul thus qualifies as an example because he represents his people up to the time of his former persecution of Christians. 'With his conversion a sign was set up that all Israel is not by any means rejected' (Käsemann 1980: 299; cf. Wilckens 1978:237 and Ridderbos 1959:245). Ridderbos puts it very clearly when he says that Paul did not say this out of patriotism, but as one who, in spite of unbelief and enmity, received grace from amongst the people of Israel, as an apostle of the salvation that appeared in Christ. As such he himself is a living proof and example that God has not rejected Israel, but is continuing his work of grace in and through this people. Cranfield (1979:544) has a different view on this subject. He considers that
Paul had in mind not just the fact that he, a Jew (and one who has particularly and ferociously opposed the gospel), is God's chosen apostle to the Gentiles. Were God intending to save only a mere handful of Israel, casting off the people of Israel as a whole, would he have chosen an Israelite to be the apostle of the Gentiles and the chief bearer of the gospel message? In the person of Paul, the missionary vocation of Israel is at last being fulfilled and Israel is actively associated with the work of the risen Christ.

That God has not rejected his people, is repeated and proved. Israel, the people he acknowledged of old as his own (cf. 8:29), has not been rejected by God. Israel is the people of God's gracious election without any distinction between individual members. Although God differentiated in history between Israel and (the real) Israel (cf. 9:6-13) and still does (cf. 2:28-29), this does not mean that Israel is not the people of God whom he selected out of the nations and attached to himself. The rejection of Israel would mean that God has altered his plan for them.

This purpose of God in spite of Israel's sin is demonstrated by the history of Elijah (11:2). When it looked as if not one of the people of God had survived as a result of the sin of Israel and their opposition to the prophet of the Lord and their apostasy from the service of the Lord, Elijah pleaded with God against Israel because of what they had done. However, the Lord answered that he had left for himself a remnant of seven thousand believers in Israel. This statement amounts to a declaration of his faithfulness to his purpose of salvation for his people, a declaration that that purpose will continue unchanged and unthwarted to its final goal (Cranfield 1979: 547). The number 7000, occurring as it does is not a statement which purports to give matter-of-fact-historical information, but is a solemn and mysterious divine utterance. It is hardly to be understood either in 1 Kings or here as a mere reflection of a traditional estimate of the actual number of those who remained faithful in this time of national apostasy, but is rather to be understood in the light of the special significance attached to the number seven and to multiples of seven in the Bible and in Judaism. It appears as a symbol of completeness and perfection (Cranfield 1979: 547, cf. the 144,000 in Rv 7:48; 14:1,3 and Wilckens 1978:237). For Käsemann (1980:300) 'the remnant is nothing other than Jewish Christianity'. We shall return to this later on.

From this statement of the Lord, Paul deduces that in the same way at the present time a 'remnant' has come into being, selected by the grace of God. The statement in 1 Kings 19:18 casts light on the fact that Israel as a whole has not rejected Christ. This is the work of God (Ridderbos 1959:247). Those in Israel who accepted Christ and believe in him are not merely an incidental 'remnant' which may perhaps completely disappear. They are also not the
proof that God can always rely on a part of Israel: they are the result of what God has done, the proof that God will not abandon Israel as his people. Paul ascribes this to God's gracious election and not to human merit (cf. 9:11; 11:28).

Paul goes on to say that if it is by grace, then it does not rest on deeds done otherwise grace would cease to be grace (v.6). When Israel exists as people of God by the grace of God, there is no other way in which they can exist as people of God. The apostle returns here to what he said in 9:11,12, with an explicit condemnation of the principle of works or deeds done, which is the cornerstone of the Jewish scheme of salvation. What in Israel does not rest on the grace of God is in conflict with Israel's privilege to be the people of God.

The conclusion to which the apostle comes with regard to Israel, is that they have not achieved what they were looking for: the righteousness with which they can stand before God (cf. 9:31). In spite of all their zeal and exertion (cf. 10:2-4) they have not succeeded in their quest. The select few, however, have achieved it (v.7), the 'remnant' or 'rest', who through their obedience and faith have shown that they are the 'rest' of his people who are kept by God (cf. v.4). They are the true or genuine Israel, to whom the promise of God to Abraham can be applied (cf. 9:6f). The apostle speaks here of the elect of Israel, not of all (from the Gentiles) who share with them in the promise of God (cf. Gl 3:16,29 and Ridderbos 1959:249). Wilckens (1978:238) points out that many exegetes see the Gentiles as the elect, but he himself thinks of the 'rest' who are the objects of God's gracious election (cf. Luz 1968:82 note 227).

The apostle speaks about the elect of Israel. The others who were blind to the truth or hardened, εποροθήσαν were those from Israel who did not show that they were the objects of God's gracious election. The apostle says concerning them that they were blind or hardened. Of them it cannot be said that they have no hope of becoming part of the people of God (cf. viivv). Furthermore nothing is said of a rejection decision by God (Ridderbos 1959:240). The passive form of the verb, εποροθήσαν, must be seen as a deed of God, punishment which he inflicts on them, but, as it appears from the whole context, this hardening or blindness is not God's last word to the hoi loipoi (Craigie 1979:549). The word 'hardening' is according to Barrett (1957:210) a very important Biblical word (cf. v.25; 9:18). In this case σκληρουνεί is used (cf. Is 6:10). Barrett also feels that the passive form of the verb refers to God as the one who hardens, but he finds it impossible to discriminate between 'hardened because disobedient' and 'disobedient because hardened'. The more those among Israel who did not belong to the 'rest' or the 'remnant' tried to obtain righteousness (as all Jews did,
10:3) the more they failed to procure it. Their religious fervour became sinful. Paul does not hesitate to say that it was God's will (determined by grace) that it should be so and he confirms it with a few quotations from the Old Testament. The first quotation is from Isaiah 29:10, combined with words from Deuteronomy 29:4 (also compare Is 6:9,10, where mention is often made of punishment given where people did not accept the word of God). This lack of response by people to accept the Word is sometimes compared with a deep sleep in which people are not able to respond to things happening around them. Isaiah says that it is not only a 'state' or 'state of mind' but a power which brings about a numbness of spirit, which God has brought upon them. Concerning this numbness of spirit, it is further said that it is as if a man has eyes but does not see and ears but does not hear.

This state in which Israel is must not be seen as passivity or numbness, but as an active refusal to accept what God gives to see and to hear. This happened once in the signs in Egypt (cf. Dt 29:3) and now in the coming of Jesus (Ridderbos 1959:249). And all this, just as in Egypt (cf. Dt 29) can be applied to the present situation, says the apostle (v.9). The words are important and the punishment has not been done away with or abolished, but we must remember that Paul does not speak of an unchangeable situation but aims rather to convince Israel of its folly and to make them repent (Ridderbos 1959:249).

Paul adds a statement of David in Psalm 69:23ff to the first quotation. Here the writer calls upon God to punish his enemies. This quotation is the more remarkable because the unbelieving Jews, quite contrary to what they thought themselves to be (i.e. the people of God), are treated in the same way as the enemies of the people of God. A stronger judgement on their unbelief could not have been given.

The punishment which David calls for is that they, his enemies, should lose their possessions, 'may their table be a snare and a trap' (NEB). The idea is that their wealth and prosperity should cause them to fall. This curse also includes a blinding of their eyes, so that they may no longer see and know what to do. Their backs must also be bowed: this is a picture of a man who can no longer hold himself erect and who ultimately collapses.

This curse which David speaks against his enemies is applied by Paul to Israel and he accentuates the possibility which is so often found in Scripture, namely, that they will fall because of the abuse of their privileges. This possibility is not fantasy but has become reality to a certain extent. Already Israel 'stumbles' (cf. v.11), as if caught in a net or trap. Already that which should have brought them salvation, has become a stumblingblock to them, (cf. 1 Cor
1:23), and their eyes have become blind. In them the image is also seen of people who are on their way to perdition, because they have hardened themselves in their unbelief against God, and because of their enmity against his anointed. That the apostle does not want to take over this curse from the quotation and apply it directly to Israel is quite clear from verses 11ff. By quoting the words of David, he wants to describe the fate that awaits Israel if they do not repent of their sins (cf. Ridderbos 1959:250).

F. THE SALVATION OF THE GENTILES (Rm 11:11-24)

The apostle does not want to be misunderstood and he asks the rhetorical question whether Israel's failure means their complete downfall. He denies this emphatically. He uses two motifs here in the history of God with his people to which he has referred in the preceding chapters: (a) in his sovereign grace God uses the punishment of some to draw others to him (cf. 9:17,22,23); (b) he gives his grace to those who are not his people to awaken the envy of Israel or 'stir Israel to emulation', as the New English Bible puts it (cf. 10:9). The first has happened already with the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (9:17), and God's absolute power to do so with Israel is shown in 9:22,23 (cf. Ridderbos 1959:252).

Paul returns to the second motif and applies it to Israel's sin and the punishment they received for it. Their hardening of the heart becomes the reason why salvation comes to the Gentiles. This is one of the central thoughts in what follows (cf. vv.12,15,20). The apostle does not give an historical succession of facts, in the sense that when Israel rejected Christ, God turned to the Gentiles and brings them into a causal relationship. It was because Israel did not understand that their election was a question of grace and did not recognize the salvation given to them that God first went to the Gentiles (cf. Schmidt 1976:189 and Ridderbos 1959:252). God's grace remains fixed on Israel however. Israel has to be made jealous and God's purpose with them is that they will desire salvation and therefore repent.

From this it is quite clear that what has been said about Israel's hardening of the heart, verse 7 (cf. also v.15) and what follows in verses 8-10, is not a 'closed situation'. It is this hardened section of Israel who must be made jealous or envious. God is still concerned about Israel, says Schlier (1977:329).

After making this connection between the Gentiles and unbelieving Israel, the apostle goes on to stress the importance of his argument from a minori ad maius, 'But if their offence means the enrichment of the world, and if their falling-off means the enrichment of the Gentiles, how much more their coming to full strength?' (NEB).
It is quite clear that we have here the motif of 9:23, even in the terminology. About the word *plerōma*, which the New English Bible translated with 'coming to full strength', there is a diversity of opinion (cf. Cranfield 1979:558). Käsemann (1980:305) combines *plerōma* with the thought of the 'remnant' and sees it as the filling up of the remnant as a new whole (cf. Delling 1959:305; Wilckens 1978:243 and Ridderbos (1959:254) says that the word can have two meanings, 'the full total', or 'the full measure of salvation given to them'. Ridderbos' solution seems the more acceptable to me: the full total, as he says further on (1959:263), qualifies it as the full total of Israel, determined by God, saved from all their sin and decay, in whom God will fulfil the promises given to Israel.

In any case Paul cannot mean Israel as a whole (and all the Gentiles). Such universalism is in conflict with Paul's own preaching. *Plerōma* should therefore not be taken to mean the empirical Israel or the Gentile nations of Paul's day, but the number determined by God. *Plerōma* is therefore an eschatological concept, not a national one, just as in Galatians 4:4, no empirical *plerōma* is indicated but one determined by God. In the same way Revelation 6:11 speaks of the 'until the full tally' should be complete of all their brothers in Christ's service (cf. 4 Ezr 4:36), where it is said about the end, 'when the number of your equals (the just) will be full' (cf. also Apoc. Baruch 23:4,5). What the apostle says, amounts to this: he does not look at Israel's present state but points out to all, (including Gentiles), the possibilities that await Israel who should be awakened to envy. He maintains the connection between the salvation of the world and Israel: if Israel's offence (*pardptōma*) means the enrichment of the world, and if their failure (*hēttēma*) means the enrichment of the Gentiles, how much more their coming to full strength will mean, when the full total of the Jews have become believers. He indicates that this is the salvation which was promised to the Jews in which all generations will be blessed. Paul goes on to say to the Gentiles who have become Christians, that wrong conclusions should not be drawn from the fact that salvation has come to them and not to the Jews. While he is an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is always trying to make his own people jealous in order to see some of them saved. He asks the question: if their rejection has meant the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean? 'Nothing less than life from death'.

ΖΩΗ η ΝΕΚΡΩΝ is an expression which points to the end, the final consummation, the restoration of all things, when God will renew heaven and earth and free them from the power of death. When the full total of Israel has repented and become Christian the end will come and God's perfect salvation will be seen over the entire world (Ridderbos 1959:257).

Structurally it is interesting to note that verses 12 and 15 repeat
each other semantically, while verses 13 and 14 refer to Paul's ministry. This, in effect, constitutes a chiasm:

verse 12 Jewish attainment helps the Gentiles
15 Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles
13 Paul's apostleship to the Jews
14 Jewish attainment helps the Gentiles

(Louw 1979b:133).

What is said in verses 15 and 24 is very interesting and an important part of his argument. In the preceding verse Paul has spoken about the divine purpose with the hardening of Israel (v.11), and about the results of a possible change in Israel's unbelief and rejection (vv.12,15). Without any direct connection with what has been said above, the apostle begins to point out the reasons he has for this expectation by referring to the holy ancestry of the Jews. For this he uses two images: that of the dough which is consecrated and brought to the Lord (cf. Nm 15:17,21), by which all the dough in Israel becomes consecrated to God so that one can eat it to his glory and with the invocation of his blessing. The second image is about the root and the branches: if the root is consecrated, so (without doubt) are the branches. Undoubtedly one should think of Israel's origin as a people, the 'fathers' of Israel (cf. 9:14; 11:28) who were consecrated to God, especially Abraham (Ridderbos 1959:257). Because of this there is a special relationship between the Lord and the seed which is mentioned (cf. 9:7ff), the descendants of these fathers. They are holy (i.e. set apart by God and blessed with special blessings, cf. 9:4). This does not mean or imply that they will not be punished by God when they are disobedient, but they are the basis or the sign for the apostle to expect a better future for the unbelieving and rejected Israel by the grace of God. Paul now turns to the Christians who are Gentiles. If God has given to them to share in the salvation promised to Abraham and his descendants and not to the unbelieving Jews, they should not regard themselves superior to these Jews. Here the apostle uses the image of the tree and the branches. If some of the branches have been lopped off, and they, a wild olive, have been grafted in among them and have come to share the same root and sap as the olive, they should not make themselves superior to the branches. If they do so, they must remember that it is not they who sustain the root; the root sustains them. In the Old Testament the olive tree is a symbol of Israel (cf. Jer 11:16; Hos 14:7). What the Gentiles receive, they receive through the salvation which God had originated with Israel. It is Israel's holy origin from which they live and not vice versa.

Paul concludes this section with a brilliant argument: the Gentiles might say that branches were lopped off so that they may be grafted
in. They must remember however, that there was no merit from or on their side. They must be humble and take God into account. If he has not spared the natural branches, he will not do so with the Gentiles who have become Christians. They must live by and out of his grace or else they can also be lopped off. As regards Israel, they can be grafted in again. All the emphasis falls on God's sovereign power as regards the unbelieving Israel. He can give them a share in the blessings of the 'rest' of Israel again (cf. v.16). That this is not impossible for God is proved by what has happened to those Christians who were once Gentiles. If it was possible for God to cut or lopp off branches from the wild olive and graft them into the cultivated olive, 'how much readily will they, the natural branches, be grafted into their native stock!' The Christians from the Gentiles should be humble and live in dependence on God, while they expect great things from God as regards the salvation of the unbelieving Jews (Ridderbos 1959:26 and Schlier 1977:336).

G. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (Rm 11:25-32)

In verse 24 the apostle emphasizes the possibility of the grafting of the general into the native stock. He starts the new section with a litotes: ou γὰρ θέλω ἡμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν which he often uses to accentuate a special case (Wilckens 1978:252). With this emphatic beginning he says that he has a 'mystery' or a 'deep truth' (NEB) which he wants them to take into account. The 'mystery' can be seen as already revealed in God's work of salvation (cf. e.g. Eph 3:3-7; 1 Cor 2:7ff; Col 1:25) or as something already revealed to the apostle by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:51; Cranfield 1979:574; Ridderbos 1959:261).

The contents of the mystery consist of three statements about God's dealings with Israel:

a. that God has hardened only a part of Israel. Mention of this is made in verse 7ff. Mention has also been made of the 'remnant' who survives or remains steadfast through the grace of God.

b. the time of this hardening is determined or fixed by God until the full total of the Gentiles determined by God, have entered the kingdom of God (Wilckens 1978:254; Ridderbos 1959:262). The way in which God works with his people in which he 'makes known the full wealth of His splendour' (NEB) to others (9:23) does not mean the end of Israel as people of God. The hardening by God is qualified by an 'until' (Ridderbos 1959:272).

c. and so the whole of Israel will be saved. The question now is what is meant by the 'whole of Israel'. Some of the interpretations given are the following:
(i) all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles;
(ii) all the elect of the people of Israel;
(iii) the whole nation of Israel, including every individual;
(iv) the people of Israel as a whole, but not necessarily including every individual member.

Cranfield (1979:576), Zahn (1925:524), Lagrange (1950:285), Barrett (1957:223f), Käsemann (1980:300) and Schlier (1977:340) choose interpretation (iv) as the most likely one with reference to the use of 'all Israel' (LXX: ὅσοι Ἰσραήλ) in 1 Sm 7:5; 25:1; 1 Ki 12:1, 2 Chr 12:1; Dn 9:11). I feel, however, that much can be said for Ridderbos' interpretation when he says that with the 'until' and the saving of 'the whole of Israel' Paul meant to say that the present partial hardening of Israel does not cancel the ultimate saving of 'the whole of Israel'. With 'the whole of Israel' he meant the same people he mentioned in verse 12; their plērōma has the same implication as the plērōma of the Gentiles: the full total determined by God who have been saved from all sin and decay and in whom the promises of God to Israel are fulfilled.

The question can be asked about the relationship between 'the whole' plērōma and the empirical Israel. Paul, however, does not speak here in a universalistic way as if the whole of Israel, the empirical Israel, will be saved. We have here to do with a number or measure determined by God. Such a universalism will be in conflict with the main message of the letter: namely, that the righteous man, or the person who has been put into a right relationship by God with God, shall live by faith, and the whole argument of Romans 9-11, in which the love of God as well as his sovereign power as regards Israel is maintained (Ridderbos 1959:264).

Ridderbos, as already mentioned interprets 'the whole of Israel' as 'the full number or measure' determined by God (1959:264), and it is interesting to see how he comes to change his point of view regarding this expression. He himself describes how it happened in his contribution to the Exegetica-series, (Ridderbos 1955: cf. also Berkouwer 1963:139). He at first thought that Romans 11 taught a great religious change of Israel as a people at the end of time. Later, however, he came to the conclusion that 'the whole of Israel' consists of all the people in Israel who will repent and become Christians as a result of the preaching of the Gospel (the pleroma), who will represent the people as a whole. One should note that Ridderbos does not only speak quantitatively of 'the whole Israel', the number determined by God, but also, qualitatively, which makes it something different from the 'remnant-Israel' (1959:264). From verses 24 and 26b it is clear that the apostle expects from unbelieving Israel such a conversion that 'the whole of Israel', the
pleōrōma of Israel, as qualified above, will be saved.

After quoting from Isaiah 59:20,21, with words from Isaiah 27:9 in verse 27b where it is said that the deliverer will come from Zion, who shall remove wickedness from Jacob (that is, the covenant God will grant them when he takes away their sins) the apostle points out that although the Jews are treated as God's enemies for the Gentiles' sake, God's choice stands, and they, the Jews, are his friends for the sake of the patriarchs. For the gracious gifts of God and his calling are irrevocable. According to verses 28-32 there is a very close relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles in their relationship to God. Verse 32 forms the crown of Paul's argument in which this relationship between the salvation of the Gentiles and the Jews, their dependence on one another, forms the most important part of the contents of the 'mystery'. 'For in making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind' (NEB). This solemn statement leads to the doxology in which God is praised for his wisdom and his supreme power (vv.33-36).

H. CONCLUSIONS

1. At the end of this study one is aware of its inadequacy. There is always the possibility that one has emphasized the less important points to the detriment of the more important ones.

2. The special connection between the church and Israel has impressed one again. Lothar Steiger (1980) writes a 'Schutzrede für Israel, Rm 9-11' in which he says that the church and all the confessions have neglected the duty they have towards the unbelieving Jews because salvation came from Israel and is closely connected with what happens to the Jews. Their present (reconciliation) and their salvation (resurrection depends on what happens to the Jews (Steiger 1980:56)). On the one hand Israel is thus bound to the church of the Gentiles; the stream of grace must return from them to Israel, after it has first passed Israel by because of its unbelief and come to the Gentiles. But on the other hand, the church made up of the Gentiles is bound to Israel. For the life from the dead, the great future is not to dawn without the pleōrōma of Israel for all nations will be blessed by means of Abraham's seed. The holy root of Israel continues to support all, the holy leaven permeates all, and the gentiles are grafted into the olive tree of Israel (cf. Rm 11:24). There is recreation, but there is also continuity because Israel has always been the product of God's life-creating grace. There is a new covenant, but not without connection to, or, rather, with the maintaining of, what constituted the essential mystery of the old covenant. Thus, on the one hand, Paul is able to see the church of the Gentiles as endowed with all the privileges.
and blessings of Israel, and to see it occupy the place of unbelieving Israel. On the other hand, Paul upholds to the full the continuation of God's original redemptive intentions with Israel as the historical people of God. And all this is because of the gracious character of God's election and because of Christ, who is the seed of Abraham as well as the second Adam. He is the one in whom the whole church, Jews and Gentiles together, has become one body and one new man (Ridderbos 1975:360-1).

3. Concerning the question of predestination which apparently plays such a great part in Romans 9-11, it should be noted that it figures in a history of salvation context. What Paul attempts to explain in Romans 9 is the character of God's election of Israel and that of Israel's existence as people of God. It all rests on God's supreme grace and it is only the sharing in this grace which gives the guarantee for the inheritance of the salvation promised to Abraham. The basis of salvation lies in God's supreme power. He gives it to whom he wills. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to connect this supreme power of God with his predestination and to think that in Romans 9 everything is connected with predestination. Undoubtedly this supreme power is connected with God's preconceived plan as is proved in the well-known expression of verse 11. That is the meaning of ἡ κατ' εκλογὴν προθεσία which indicates that God's purpose with Israel is determined only by his own free election and his love for his people. And yet the apostle in verse 11 does not teach a 'before-time' determining, but rather the free character of God's determining (cf. Ridderbos 1959:227-31).

FOOTNOTE

1. For a further discussion of the relationship between Romans 9-11 and the rest of the letter, as well as of other questions about these chapters, cf. Kümmel 1977:5ff; Michel 1977:289ff and Wilckens 1978:181ff.

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