

teach that God has rejected Israel. A. A. van Ruler says. "I believe that the New Testament never says that the people of Israel ... is definitely rejected."²⁹ A recent influential commentator, C. E. B. Cranfield, writes in similar vein, rejecting the idea that Israel no longer has a place in God's plan: "But the assumption that the church has simply replaced Israel as the people of God is extremely common." He then quotes and rejects Barrett's position: "And I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of the replacement of Israel by the church."³⁰ Hendrikus Berkhof is equally clear and forthright.³¹ This new perception seems to have originated in a fresh exegesis of Romans, especially chap. 11.

Paul's Missionary Activity

It is therefore appropriate to present a sketch of the plot of Romans responsive to these striking new approaches. I take Paul's quotation from Hab 2:4 as a major clue to the understanding of Romans. There are distinct eschatological perspectives in Hab 2. The reference to the coming one of v3 is elaborated in Heb 10:37. Further, the striking Isaianic image of the earth full of the glory of the Lord is quoted by Habakkuk and set in hold contrast to the ugly features of world depravity and idolatry (2:14). It surely is not coincidence that Paul in completing the central "core" of Romans in 15:13 finds it appropriate to climax a series of Old Testament millennial passages with the citation from Isa 11:10. In the sentence just preceding, Isaiah gave the original of the millennial image which Habakkuk quoted and embellished: "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." This stunning parallel suggests that in Romans Paul is working within the eschatological outline suggested by Habakkuk and Isaiah. The life of the righteous man presented in Hab 2:4 fixes on Rom 15:12 as its pole-star. The Isaianic saying is the climactic parallel to the Hahakkuk statement.

The apostle's selection of two closely related Old Testament contexts from which to draw the opening and closing motifs for the entire core of the book is a stroke of literary finesse illustrative of the majesty of the style of Scripture. These two points, and the treatise lying between, are themselves enclosed in a wider and more comprehensive parenthesis. The beginning and the end of this wider enclosure are formed by the twin references to the obedience to the faith among all the Gentiles (1:4) and "the mystery ... made known to the nations for the obedience of faith" (16:26). The first reference is found in the passage where the application of Christ's redeeming work is outlined (1:5). The second is found in the magnificent combination of benediction and doxology at the end of the letter. The special eschatological motif suggested is that Paul's particular concern, the salvation of Gentiles is viewed in its widest extent. Both passages stress the fact that all nations are in view. This striking emphasis, with the eschatologically-oriented core of the epistle lying between, points to some special significance that the millennium may have in the completion