

# THE MYSTERY OF GOD IN EPH 1:3-14

## A Study of Paul's Teaching on the Mystery

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### Abstrak

Bagi Paulus, misteri erat kaitannya dengan rahasia karya penyelamatan Allah yang telah memilih dan mengangkat manusia menjadi putera-puteri-Nya. Rahasia kehendak Allah itu telah dinyatakan oleh dan dalam Kristus Yesus dengan wafat dan kebangkitan-Nya. Ef 1:3-14 melukiskan bahwa dalam Kristus, Allah telah memilih manusia sebelum dunia dijadikan; oleh Kristus, Allah telah mengangkat manusia menjadi anak-anak-Nya; sebab di dalam Kristus dan oleh darah-Nya, manusia beroleh penebusan, yakni pengampunan dosa. Semua itu terjadi sesuai dengan rencana yang dari semula telah ditetapkan Allah di dalam Kristus Yesus sebagai persiapan kegenapan waktu untuk mempersatukan di dalam-Nya segala sesuatu yang ada di surga dan di bumi. Di dalam Kristus Yesus itu pula kita yang percaya kepada-Nya dimeteraikan dengan Roh Kudus yang menjamin kita akan memperoleh penebusan dan menjadikan kita milik Allah.

**Key Words:** *mystery, secret, revelation, eschatology, salvation, redemption, sanctification, filiation*

### Introduction

The concept of  $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  in the New Testament, especially Paul's thought, has received a great deal of attention. The method of explaining Paul's teaching on the mystery can be classed in two ways. One way is synthetical, that is, into one unified whole the various ideas on the subject that are found scattered in his epistles. The other way is analytical, that is, instituting a careful exegesis of the various pericope where the apostle speaks of the mystery.

In this paper I want to show the concept of  $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  in general to enter into Paul's thought. Furthermore I like to study the mystery of God in Eph 1:3-14, because this pericope has a particular aspect: the God's plan of salvation is concentrated on Jesus Christ to adopt us as sonship through the Holy Spirit's work.

Therefore the main points of my observation will move on the following schema:

Etymology and terminology of the mystery

*The cultic concept*

*The metaphoric concept*

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*The Bible concept*

Paul's concept of the mystery

*The term μυστήριον is connected with the Christ revelation*

*The term μυστήριον is connected with the kerygma of Christ*

*The term μυστήριον is connected with the eschatology*

Mystery in Eph 1:3-14

*The structure of the pericope*

*Exegesis of the pericope*

### **Etymology and Terminology of the Mystery**

The Greek word in plural, μυστήρια is composed of the suffix -τήρια, denoting the place where an action occurs, plus the onomatopoeic verbal root μυσ-, "make an inarticulate sound with closed lips; keep one's mouth shut". In the singular, μυστήριον is derivation from μβειν "to close" (the mouth, lips)<sup>1</sup>. This has a similar Hebrew root, כִּסַּף, "to hide", yielding the noun סֵתֵר, "hidden things or secrets"<sup>2</sup>. It refers to the content of the cultic ceremony and the metaphorical use.

#### *The Cultic Concept*

Μυστήρια is the term for the many ancient mystery cults whose intensive development can be studied from the 7th cent. B.C. to the 4th A.D. Mysteries are cultic rites in which the destinies of a god are portrayed by sacred actions before a circle of devotees in such a way as to give them a part in the fate of the god. At the same time those who wish to take part in their celebration must undergo initiation. In all the mysteries the distinction between initiates and non-initiates finds expression not only in the ritual of the celebrations but also in the vow of silence laid on devotees. This is essential to all the mysteries, and is a feature implicit in the etymology<sup>3</sup>.

#### *The Metaphoric Concept*

The metaphoric use of μυστήριον begins with Plato. The teaching of the fellow philosopher is somewhat sarcastically described as μυστήριον because its hidden truth has to be sought out. Understanding a matter more deeply by talking about it is compared to a μυστήριον. Through this metaphoric use, the connotation of μυστήριον came to mean something more casual and arbitrary

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<sup>1</sup>G. BORNKAMM, "μυστήριον" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, IV, Grand Rapids 1995, 803.

<sup>2</sup>C.D.F. MOULE, "Mystery" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, III, Nashville 1962, 479.

<sup>3</sup>G. BORNKAMM, "μυστήριον", 803-808.

until it became purely secular. Eventually it came to mean more generally a secret of any sort, not necessarily religious<sup>4</sup>.

### *The Bible Concept*

In the Latin Bible, *sacramentum*, “an oath”, which had associations with initiatory rites, is occasionally used for μυστήριον. In the Hexapla translation the Hebrew equivalent is סֵפֶת ( “confidential speech or advice”, “secret”, “circle of confidants who are consulted”). Only where the sense is “secret” or “secret plan” is μυστήριον a possible rendering. The LXX and Q are constant in their rendering of the Aramaic סֵפֶת, plural סֵפֶתִין, which is said to be a Persian loan word meaning “a secret”<sup>5</sup>.

In the LXX, μυστήριον occurs only in texts from the Hellenistic era: Tob 12:7,11; Jdt 2:2; Wis 2:22; 6:22; 14:15,23; Sir 22:22; 27:16f,21; 2Macc 13:21 and Dan 2:18f,27-30,47. In some cases, there are the expressed reference to the mystery cults (Wis 14:15,23). There is also a secular sense for secrets which must not be divulged, e.g., the secret plans of a king (Tob 12:7,11; Jdt 2:2), secrets of war (2Macc 13:21), the secrets of friend (Sir 22:22; 27:16f,21). In Daniel, μυστήριον takes on the first time a sense of an eschatological secret, a concealed intimation of divinely ordained future events whose disclosure and interpretation is reserved for God alone (Dan 2:28,29,47) and for those inspired by his Spirit (Q.Dan 4:9)<sup>6</sup>.

In the Qumran texts one generally finds רִזְ (mostly in the plural), and occasionally סֵפֶת (usually singular), with the sense of “mystery”. The marvelous mysteries of God (1QH 4:27f; 1QpHab 7:8; 1QM 14:14), frequently qualified as mysteries of wisdom (1QH 9:23), of insight (1QH 13:13), of knowledge (1QS 4:6), of truth (1QH 9:18), refer to the created order (1QH 3:15-25), the preservation of Israel in the community of Qumran through the forgiveness of sins (CD 3:18f), as well as the last days<sup>7</sup>.

Apocalyptic usage discloses clear connections with that of the mystery cults and Gnosticism. There is the same demand for silence. The profound and innumerable mysteries of God are viewed as existing in heaven (1Enoch 106:9); they are the hidden, transcendent basis for all that is and occurs and of that which

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<sup>4</sup>H. KRÄMER, “μυστήριον σ ο υ σ τ ῆ ρ , mystery, mystery, secret”, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids 1991, 447. Josephus uses μυστήριον 7 times, 6 of which are in the cultic sense and another is the metaphoric. In *De Bello Judaico* (B.J. 1,470) he refers metaphorically to the life of the scheming Antipatros as ἄρρητος μυστήριον, “an unspeakable, hidden (and therefore ritual) consummation of evil”. Philo, in 9 of 14 instances, uses μυστήριον metaphorically for the “mysteries” of God, which primarily have as their content his authorship of the universe and his effective power and virtues. God considers the souls of the godly worthy of the knowledge of these μυστήρια..

<sup>5</sup>C.F.D. MOULE, “Mystery”, 479; Cfr. G. BORNKAMM, “μυστήριον”, 814.

<sup>6</sup>G. BORNKAMM, “μυστήριον”, 813-815.

<sup>7</sup>H. KRÄMER, “μυστήριον σ ο υ σ τ ῆ ρ , 447.

will be revealed at the end of time (1Enoch 103:2f; 38:3; 83:7). The mysteries in apocalyptic are orientated to an eschatological cosmic revelation<sup>8</sup>.

In the Gospels the term μυστήριον occurs only in the obscure sayings of Jesus about the purpose of parables which the Synoptists interpose between the parable of the Sower and its interpretation. μυστήριον is found only in Mk 4:11 and parallels (Mt 13:11; Lk 8:10) in the expression μυστήριον τοῦ βασιλείου τοῦ θεοῦ, “the mystery of the kingdom of God”<sup>9</sup>. The sayings use μυστήριον to describe the experience of the breaking in of God’s rule in the words and works of Jesus. It is basically still hidden, to be revealed in all its glory only in the end times, but is made accessible already now to Jesus’ disciples and can be experienced and comprehended by them in faith, while to those who stand on the outside it remains a puzzle and therefore hidden<sup>10</sup>. This view is confirmed by the fact that the phrase μυστήριον τοῦ βασιλείου τοῦ θεοῦ had long been current in apocalyptic usage to indicate the counsel of God which is concealed from human eyes, which disciples knew as the mysteries of the kingdom; this means that their eyes are opened to the dawn of the Messianic time (Mt 13:16f). This perception is not the result of their own perspicacity or a reward for their own achievement. It is the gift of God’s free and sovereign grace. The μυστήριον τοῦ βασιλείου τοῦ θεοῦ which is revealed to the disciples is thus Jesus himself as Messiah<sup>11</sup>.

Rev 10:7 speaks of the eschatological realization of the “μυστήριον of God”; God has announced it to the prophets (cfr. Am 3:7). In Rev 1:20 μυστήριον refers to the hidden meaning of the seven stars and seven lamps, which are immediately identified as the seven angels of the churches and the churches themselves. The “μυστήριον of the woman and the beast” in Rev 17:7 is not so much a veiled reference to Rome (Rev 17:9,18) as it is a reference to the eschatological event alluded to in Rev 17:8, in which it is said that the beast “once was, now is not, and is coming again”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>G. BORNKAMM, “μυστήριον”, 816-817. Rabbinic Judaism increasingly expunged and came to have a strong contempt for the secret doctrines of apocalyptic. Among secret doctrines are the exposition of the laws of incest and theosophical speculation on cosmogonic and apocalyptic events. The mysteries are the grounds of the Torah from which God gave the detailed provisions. Cosmological and theosophical insights are promised to who “occupies himself with the Torah for its own sake”: “The mysteries of the Torah will be revealed to him” (Aboth 6:2).

<sup>9</sup>R.E. BROWN, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (1)”, *Biblica* 39 (1958) 427-431.

<sup>10</sup>H. KRÄMER, “μυστήριον σὺς τὸ ἄκρῳ”, 447.

<sup>11</sup>See BORNKAMM, “μυστήριον”, 817-819; R. PENNA, *Il Mysterion Paolino. Traietoria e Costituzione*, Brescia 1978, 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>R.E. BROWN, “The Semitic Background, of the NT Mysterion (1)”, 431-434; H. KRÄMER, “μυστήριον σὺς τὸ ἄκρῳ”, 449 and R. PENNA, *Il Mysterion Paolino*, 15.

The μυστηριον in Paul's epistles will be described in the following investigation. We will study Paul's teaching on the mystery in general from his epistles in order to enter into the special investigation in Eph 1:3-14.

### Paul's Concept of the Mystery

#### *The Term μυστηριον is Connected with the Christ Revelation*

The mystery is not itself revelation. The mystery is the object of revelation. Hence μυστηριον is mostly used with terms for revelation: ὑποκαλυπτεις (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:3); ὑποκαλυπτειν (1Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5); γνωρίζειν (Rom 16:26; Eph 1:9; 3:3,5; Col 1:27); φανεροῦν (Rom 16:26; Col 1:26). This terminological data themselves show that proclamation does not merely give information about the effected revelation of the μυστηριον of God but itself belongs to the event of the μυστηριον and the occurrence of revelation<sup>13</sup>.

In Col 1:26 μυστηριον stands in the context of the whole saving activity of God directed toward the entire world, "hidden for eons and generations" as the plan of salvation, but now revealed to Christians (τοῖς ἁγίοις) and realized through their proclamation of Christ among the nations. The μυστηριον is therefore the Christ proclaimed among the nations (Col 1:27), which is the ground and content of the present hope that the glory that is being revealed will be perfected (Col 3:4). In 1Tim 3:16f the "μυστηριον of a holy life" is the Christ-event, as it is described in the following hymn from the cosmic perspective of the incarnation and exaltation and its proclamation<sup>14</sup>.

#### *The Term μυστηριον is Connected with the Kerygma of Christ*

The revelation of the μυστηριον takes place in the apostolic preaching: καταγγελλειν (1Cor 2:1); λαλεῖν (1Cor 2:7; Col 4:3); εὐαγγελισασθαι (Eph 3:8); φωτίσαι (Eph 3:9); φανεροῦν (Col 4:4); γνωρίζειν τὸ μυστηριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (Eph 6:19). The apostles are ὁκνοῦν μοι μυστηριῶν θεοῦ (1Cor 4:1)<sup>15</sup>.

In 1Cor 2:1 Paul designates his proclamation of the crucified Christ (1Cor 1:23; 2:2) the μυστηριον τοῦ θεοῦ. As mystery of God the history of the crucifixion and glorification of Jesus is removed from the grasp of worldly wisdom and characterised as a history which is prepared and fulfilled in the sphere of God. In 1Cor 2:7, the placement of γινώσκουσι between σοφίαν and the attributive participle τὸν ὑποκαλυπτομένην clearly indicates that the preposition is attributive to σοφίαν and therefore defines σοφίαν as "a hidden wisdom of

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<sup>13</sup>L. CERFAUX, *Cristo nella teologia di san Paolo*, Roma 1979, 345-348; Cfr. G. BORNKAMM, "μυστηριον", 820-821 and R. PENNA, *Il Mysterion Paolino*, 27-38.

<sup>14</sup>See R.E. BROWN, "The Semitic Background of the NT Mysterion (2)" *Biblica* 40 (1959) 70-74 and H. KRÄMER, "μυστηριον σὺς τ", 448.

<sup>15</sup>G. BORNKAMM, "μυστηριον", 821.

God”<sup>16</sup>, which for its part is the divine will to save, fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ (1Cor 1:24). In 1Cor 2:8, the ἄβρῖος τῆς δόξης is included also in the reference of μυστήριον<sup>17</sup>.

*The Term μυστήριον is Connected with the Eschatology*

The term μυστήριον has an eschatological sense<sup>18</sup>. In Rom 11:25f the μυστήριον refers to God’s saving activity toward Israel, and all Israel will be saved at the parousia, after the acceptance of the Gentiles. In 1Cor 15:51 Paul uses μυστήριον in connection with the death-life theme for the content of a statement about the transformation of Christians who are still living at the time of the parousia. In 2Thess 2:3f the successive phases of the last events preceding the parousia are revealed: apostasy and the manifestation of Antichrist. The time of apostasy is mysteriously described in 2Thess 2:7<sup>19</sup>.

In Ephesians, the μυστήριον lacks the eschatological element. In Eph 1:9 the μυστήριον is the realization of God’s creative and saving will on a cosmic scale in the bringing together of all things in Christ, which is then elaborated in Eph. chap.3. In Eph 3:3f the insight, granted by God, into the mystery of Christ, as in Col 1:26f, refers to the incorporation of Gentiles into the body of Christ, the Church (Eph 3:6). In Eph 5:31 the μυστήριον ecclesiologically refers to the bond between Christ and the Church<sup>20</sup>.

In Ephesians the μυστήριον is, in particular, that aspect of God’s evangelic plan which consists of the unification of the universe, including Jew and Gentile. In Eph 1:3-14 Paul shows us of the plan of God to be fulfilled in Jesus, and to be brought to its perfect consummation by the Holy Spirit. The plan of God is to sum up all things in Jesus, to make Jesus the Center of all things, of things in heaven and things in earth. So the plan of our salvation is also centred in Jesus. Our vocation, our election, our sanctification and future glorification, all were planned and decided upon by God dependently on Jesus through his passion, death and resurrection. Through his death, He atoned for our sins, and through his resurrection, He sanctified us, made us the adopted sonship and opened for us the

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<sup>16</sup>The μυστήριον, i.e., the mysterious wisdom of God, is prepared before the world was (1Cor 2:7), concealed from the aeons (1Cor 2:8; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26; Rom 16:25) and hidden in God, the Creator of all things (Eph 3:9).

<sup>17</sup>See KRÄMER, “μυστήριον οὐστ̄”, 448; R.E. BROWN, “The Semitic Background of the NT Mysterion (1)”, 436-446 and R. PENNA, *Il Mysterion Paolino*, 39-45.

<sup>18</sup>R. PENNA, *Il Mysterion Paolino*, 46-49.

<sup>19</sup>See R.E. BROWN, “The Semitic Background of the NT Mysterion (1)”, 434-436, 446-448 and G. BORNKAMM, “μυστήριον”, 822-823; Cfr. L. CERFAUX, *Cristo nella teologia di san Paolo*, 367-370.

<sup>20</sup>See R.E. BROWN, “The Semitic Background of the NT Mysterion (2)”, 74-84 and H. KRÄMER, “μυστήριον οὐστ̄”, 448.

gates of heaven. This work of our sanctification and divine filiation is done through the Holy Spirit<sup>21</sup>.

### **Mystery in Eph 1:3-14**

#### *The Structure of the Pericope*

There are many divisions proposed of Eph 1:3-14 with an attention of the three verbal affirmations (γξελεξεατο “chose” - γχαρ.τωσεν “favored” - γπερ.σσευσεν “lavished”) or the three aorist participles (ελλογZσας “blessed” - προσρ.σας “predestined” - γνωρ.σας “made known”) or other points of orientation (the repetition “to the praise of his glory”; the position of γν ΧριστT - γν T - γν αλτφ; the trinitarian pattern)<sup>22</sup>. Here I would like to distinguish a thematic division of the material. According to J.T. Trinidad there are three main ideas:

“The first, God infinitely perfect wanted to exercise His bounty on His creatures. In this He wanted that both his δ ξα, the glorious showing forth of His divine Nature capable of producing such a creation, and His bounty, χςρις, be praised. The second, as the chief Being, the one who could praise Him adequately, He selected Jesus. Jesus was to be Head and Centre of the whole creation. He was to sum up everything in Himself. All the blessings of God will be summed up in Jesus; and all the praises of the creatures will be represented in Jesus. As God-Man, Jesus is the real Mediator who unites the Creator and the creation in Himself. Our blessing, therefore, consists in our having been elected in, and incorporated into, Jesus. The third, the work of our actual incorporation in Jesus is done by the Holy Ghost<sup>23</sup>.”

It's based on this theme that I would like to divide the pericope into three parts: the plan of God (v.3 eulogy, v.4 election); the Christ's concentric circles (vv.5-6 adoption as sonship, vv.7-8 redemption by his blood, vv.9-10 knowledge of the mystery); and the intervention of the Holy Spirit's work in the salvation

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<sup>21</sup>J.T. TRINIDAD, “The Mystery Hidden in God. A Study of Eph 1:3-14”, *Biblica* 31, Roma 1950, 1-2.

<sup>22</sup>Without having recourse to the hypothesis of a hymn (v.3), the majority of commentators divide Eph 1:3-14 into three parts: the intention of God from all eternity (4-6), its enactment in time (7-12), and its especial application to the readers (13-14). T. INNITZER, “Der Hymnus in Eph 1:3-14”, *Zeitschrift für catholische Theologie* 28, 1904, 612-621; attributed each part to a trinitarian structure: the election to the Father (4-6), the redemption to the Son (7-12), and our sanctification to the Holy Ghost (13-14); H. VON SODEN (*Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon, Pastoralbriefe*, Leipzig 1893, 106) modifies in the following form: the plan of God (4-6), its enactment in time (7-10), and its application to the faithful (11-14): first the election of the Jewish-Christians (11-12) and through them the election of the rest of the faithful (13-14); Cfr. A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, USA 1990, 12-15.

<sup>23</sup>J.T. TRINIDAD, “The Mystery Hidden in God”, 4.

(vv.11-12 salvation of the apostles, vv.13-14 salvation of the rest in the faithful). These parts can be described in the following argumentations<sup>24</sup>:

The first part: The eulogy proper (“blessed is God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” v.3) stands as the central theme. It is connected with ελλογειν extolling God’s blessing on us in Christ, which is our election by God in Christ before the foundation of the world (v.4).

The second part: Our election is defined more precisely as a vocation to sonship (v.5). Our sonship is mediated through Jesus Christ. He is named “the Beloved” (v.6) because in Him God poured out all His love and through Him included us in that love. By his blood we have redemption and forgiveness of sins (v.7) according to the riches of his grace. In this occasion the grace is described in a relative clause as that which he richly lavished upon us in all “wisdom and insight” (v.8). God’s abundant grace, granted to us “in wisdom and insight”, has revealed itself in God who has made known to us the mystery of his will (vv.9-10).

The third part: This part corresponds in a sense to vv.7-8, which likewise lay stress on Christ, the mediator of salvation and intends to bring us (apostles vv.11-12 and readers vv.13-14) to the level of the recipients of salvation. There are two steps, indicated by the two participles ἄκοβσαντες and πιστεβσαντες, but these lead us to the main statement “you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”, by which is meant the gracious saving event. The Holy Spirit is described in a relative clause as the “the guarantee of our inheritance”.

#### *Exegesis of the Pericope*

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed (ελλογητ ζ̄) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly in Christ (γν Χριστφ)*

According to the analogy of verbals in -τος, it means properly, not “on whom blessing is pronounced”, but “worthy of blessing”. In the NT (almost always in the LXX) it is used exclusively of God<sup>25</sup>. God is praised by the Christian community following old Jewish tradition of honouring God in short eulogies introduced by 𐤀𐤎𐤁𐤏𐤃 (LXX usually ελλογητ ζ̄). In Israel this is the response to God’s beneficent action, often experienced as miraculous. C. Westermann has shown that in the OT the earliest form of blessing (“berakah”) occurred when an individual responded simply to an act of God’s deliverance or provision (Gen 14:20;24:27), that later it became associated with the cult and was used in Israel’s corpored worship (1Kgs 8:15,56), and that a further stage of development is evidenced by the use of the “berakah” to conclude the books of the Psalter (Pss 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48)<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup>Cfr. R. SCHNACKENBURGH, *The Epistle to the Ephesians. A Commentary*, Edinburgh 1991, 47-49.

<sup>25</sup>T.K. ABBOTT, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, Edinburgh 1979, 3.

<sup>26</sup>C. WESTERMANN, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, London 1966, 87-89. Such



Though anchored firmly in Jewish worship, the liturgical form used by the author of Ephesians has a specifically Christian flavor in that the God of Israel, to whom praise is ascribed, is now known as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. This formulation appears to have been a fixed pattern for Christian eulogies, since this is also the way the predicate is phrased in the other two major eulogies in the NT (2Cor 1:3-4 and 1Pet 1:3-12)<sup>27</sup>.

God’s fatherly love for Jesus is the source of all our blessing. Since we share the blessing by our incorporation into Jesus, the Father of Jesus is also our Father; and the fatherly love which prompted God to sum up all his blessing in Jesus, prompted him also to bless us through, and in, Jesus. So that the Fatherhood of God should be dear to us also, as it extends to us through Jesus<sup>28</sup>.

The blessing consists of God’s saving activity in Christ and this fullness of divine blessing can be described as “spiritual”, not because it belongs to a person’s inner, hidden life but because it is bound up with the Holy Spirit. This sense of “spiritual”, as resulting from the presence and work of the Spirit, is to be found in Eph 1:13,14 and 5:19, which indicate that the present appropriation of the blessing of the inheritance occurs through participation in the Spirit<sup>29</sup>.

The expression *γν τοις γπουραν .οις* (“in the heavenly”) is exclusive to Ephesians where it appears five times (Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12)<sup>30</sup>. In the present context it has a spiritual sense which is conveyed by the local imagery: the area and effectiveness of God’s activity or of that of the ungodly powers. In Eph 1:3 the expression does not confine itself to indicating the place of God’s blessing or the treasury of his blessing, but refers to the whole course of events that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ<sup>31</sup>.

All our blessings are summed up in Christ Jesus. According to Deissmann (*Die neutestamentliche Formel “In Christo Jesu”*. Marburg 1892) the formula “in Christ” means a local presence in the mystical body. “In Christo” always means a union, a dependence of some sort upon Christ. We depend on him as the efficient cause of our sanctification. Our dependence consists in our very union with Jesus. In all these cases “in Christo” implies our solidarity with Jesus<sup>32</sup>.

*<sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.*

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eulogies remained dominant in Jewish worship and can be found in the Qumran literature (1QS 11:15; 1QH 5:20; 11:27,29,32,33; 16:8), in Zechariah’s prayer of Lk 1:68-75, and in rabbinic Judaism where they were the most characteristic formulae for prayer.

<sup>27</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 11.

<sup>28</sup>J.T. TRINIDAD, “The Mystery Hidden in God”, 4-5.

<sup>29</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 19-20.

<sup>30</sup>The comparison of the five passages where the phrase occurs in this epistle sufficiently indicates that it refers to a place. In Eph 1:20 Christ after his passion, death and resurrection, was seated by the Father on his right and in heaven (Cfr. Eph 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). In Eph 1:3 reminds us of our Lord’s prayer: “Our Father who art in heaven...”.

<sup>31</sup>R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 51.

<sup>32</sup>J.T. TRINIDAD, “The Mystery Hidden in God”, 7-10.

5α2φς (“even as”) expressing that the blessing was in harmony with what follows. The blessing realised the election. The God’s choice has a familiar idea in the OT. God had chosen Abraham so that in him the nations of the earth would be blessed, and Israel’s election was not for her own self-indulgence but for the blessing of the nations. Christian believers also had this consciousness of being chosen to be the people of God. The element of γν αλτρφ (“in him”, “in Christ”) signaled the sense of belonging to Christ. Our election is connected with the thought that we are chosen “in Christ”<sup>33</sup>. We, therefore, being incorporated in Christ appropriate the holiness and immaculateness of Christ. This is a goal of the God’s choice of his people: to be holy and blameless in love. They should exhibit a particular quality of life. At the same time the God’s choice of his people in Christ have taken place “before the foundation of the world”<sup>34</sup>. It means that the election of ours took place in eternal relation to Christ. It is probably as a reference to God’s choice from the beginning of time<sup>35</sup>.

In this part, therefore, we have briefly described God’s heavenly blessing: what it is in us, charity; what it makes us, holy and blameless; and how we acquire it: through our union in Jesus Christ.

*<sup>5</sup> He has predestined us for adoption as sonship through Jesus Christ according to the pleasure of his will <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of his grace which he bestowed on us in the Beloved*

Αποορ.:σας (“predestined”) gives the reason of the election. The divine decision which makes sonship is the goal of who are elected. The term υ4οθεσ.:α (“adoption as sonship”) emphasizes that by God’s free predestining choice he adopts believers, taking them into his family and intimate fellowship, establishing them as his children and heirs. It stresses that this privileged relationship of knowing God as Father is “through the agency of Christ” (διτϑ ζιησου Χριστου) as God’s Son<sup>36</sup>. Sonship is a benefit of the salvation of the end-time and it comes to those included in the Son through whom that salvation has been inaugurated.

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<sup>33</sup>The semantic field “election”, “predestination” is also to be found in Paul, especially Rom 8:28c-9; 9:11; 1Cor 2:7, but never connected with the thought that we are chosen and predestined “in Christ”.

<sup>34</sup>In the NT the phrase “before the foundation of the world” is used of God’s love for Christ (Joh 17:24) and his purpose for Christ (1Pet 1:20); Cfr. also 2 Thess 2:13 is probably a reference to God’s choice from the beginning of times. In 2 Tim 1:9 grace is said to have been given to believers before eternal times.

<sup>35</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 22-24; Cfr. J.T. TRINIDAD, “The Mystery Hidden in God”, 5-7.

<sup>36</sup>T.K. ABBOTT (*The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 8-9) says that the words ε4ς υ4οθεσ.:αν διτϑ ζιησου Χριστου belong closely together, “unto adoption through Jesus Christ unto Him as His sons”. Christ is υ4εξ γνΖσιος, Son by His nature; we are sons only by adoption through Him; Cfr. Gal 4:5 “God sent forth His Son... that we might receive the adoption of sons”; Gal 3:26 “You are sons of God, through faith, in

Ωλδοκ.:α (“good pleasure”)<sup>37</sup> correspond to the Hebrew אלהים ורצונו and highlights God’s will as his good pleasure of favor, while the Hebrew אלהים ורצונו is translated by LXX as θελημα (“will”), and in this context can be seen as stressing God’s will as his active resolve, his redemptive purpose. It serves the function of reemphasizing that Christian existence as sonship not only has God as its goal but has him as its source, for it is grounded in him and is in accordance with his sovereign good pleasure and gracious resolution to redeem men and women. This redemption, which originated with God, has his own glorification as its end. The predestination, which is the product of God’s grace, resounds to the praise of the glory of that grace. γν τφ ΟγαπημῆνΤ (“in the Beloved”)<sup>38</sup> expresses how this grace has come to believers and continues the idea already found in “in Christ” (1:3), “in him” (1:4) and “through Jesus Christ” (1:5)<sup>39</sup>.

*<sup>7</sup> in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight*

Our redemption in Jesus Christ is described within the framework of divine plan of salvation. Ων Τ (“in whom”) stress on Jesus Christ as a Mediator of salvation. He has not only brought us redemption in a single historical event, but he remains the continuing source of our redemption at present. This redemption is a “deliverance, liberation” through the blood of Christ. It means that God’s deliverance of his people has taken place in Christ’s history, in his sacrificial death. The forgiveness of sins is in apposition to “redemption through his blood”<sup>40</sup> and so

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Christ Jesus”; also Heb 2:10f; Rom 8:15,23; 9:4. A.T. LINCOLN (Ephesians, 25) says that the term of “adoption as sonship” is taken from Greco-Roman law where it referred to the adoption as sons of those who were not so by birth. The word can be found in second century B.C.E. inscriptions and in the first century B.C.E. writings of Diodorus Siculus and Nicolaus Damascenus. A well-to-do but childless adult who wanted an heir would adopt a male, usually at an age other and than in infancy and frequently a slave, to be his son.

<sup>37</sup>According to Jerome the word ελδοκ.:α was coined by the LXX “rebus novis nova verba fingentes”. It means either “good pleasure, purpose”, ελ δοκε.:ν “as it seems good to”; or “good will” according as the satisfaction is conceived as in the action, or as felt towards a person.

<sup>38</sup>J.A. ROBBINSON, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, London 1904, 229-233: believes that “the Beloved” is a messianic title current among the Jews during the first century C.E. though neither can offer any hard evidence for its pre-Christian usage in such a way. In the LXX it was used of Israel where it translates the hypocoristic or “pet name” (Deut 32:15; 33:5,26; Isa 44:2), and more generally designates Israel as God’s beloved people (Deut 33:12; Isa 5:1,7; Jer 11:15; 12:7).

<sup>39</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 25-27.

<sup>40</sup>The term “redemption” is a rare word in non-biblical Greek and appears only once in the LXX, in Dan 4:34, yet it occurs ten times in the NT, seven of these in the Pauline corpus. The Pauline concept of redemption has its root in the OT, where in particular the divine act of deliverance from Egypt was often described in terms of redemption. The “redemption through his blood” is found in Col 1:20 “through the blood of his cross”.

depicts the primary way in which believers experience their liberation at present. At the same time this experience is framed by the mention of grace. God's lavish grace not only provides redemption but also supplies, along with this, all necessary wisdom and insight to understand and live in the light of what he has done in Christ and its implications of the mystery of God's will<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> *has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good purpose which he had previously made in him*

The God's plan of salvation, in which our redemption included, is now named "the mystery of his will" and a new reason for praising God exists in that he has "made known" (γνωρ.:σας) this mystery to us. This is a clear link that the wisdom and insight, believers have been given, have to do in large part with the ability to understand the mystery of God's will and this has been made possible from God's side because he has chosen to make it known. Paul uses μυστηριον in a variety of ways<sup>42</sup>. In Colossians the use of μυστηριον to refer to the heart of Paul's message, God's activity in Christ, becomes constant and it is this reference to the eschatological fulfillment of God's plan of salvation in Christ that has influenced the way the writer to the Ephesians speaks of "mystery" (Eph 1:9,10; 3:3,4,9; 5:32 and 6:19)<sup>43</sup>.

The "good purpose which he had previously made in him" reaffirms God's activity of disclosing the mystery of his will what v.5 has asserted of his activity of predestinating believers to adoption as sonship, namely, that such activities are in line with God's sovereign and eternal purpose. 1Ξλημα ("will") from the previous clause in v.9 and ελδοκ.:α ("good pleasure") in this expression repeat the terminology of v.5, while προΞθετο ("had previously made") further reinforces the nation of God's plan or purpose<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *as a plan for the fullness of the times to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him*

The purpose of God to make known the mystery of his will embraces history and its ordering. In the Greek world ο4κονομ.:α ("plan, administration")<sup>45</sup> was regularly used for God's ordering and administration of the universe. In patristic writings ο4κονομ.:α was used to refer to the divine plan or economy of salvation

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<sup>41</sup>See R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 56-57 and A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 27-29.

<sup>42</sup>See no.2 of this paper: Paul's concept of mystery.

<sup>43</sup>Eph 1:9,10; 3:3,4,9 and 5:32 all unfold different aspects of the one mystery of what God has done in Christ. Eph 6:19 has a similar aspect with Eph 1:10b.

<sup>44</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 31.

<sup>45</sup>ο4κονομ.:α can refer to (1) the act of administering, (2) that which is administered, an arrangement or plan, and (3) the office or role of an administrator, a person's stewardship.

and had close associations with covenant terminology<sup>46</sup>. In the Pauline corpus οἰκονομία is frequently used in close connection with μυστήριον (cfr. 1Cor 4:1; Col 1:25-27; Eph 3:2-4:9). In Eph 1:10 οἰκονομία must be not to read as patristic plan of salvation sense and to stay with the active meaning of administration or ordering, but as God's master plan and simply synonymous with μυστήριον<sup>47</sup>.

This God's plan is oriented to the fullness of the times. ἡλικία, in plural, refers to periods of time and the whole expression of "the fullness of the times" which refers to the view of a sequence of periods of time under God's direction. "The fullness" in particular reflects the notion that this sequence of time will come to its climax, to its full measure. This is completely connected to the Christian eschatological terminology, in which God's mystery in Christ is revealed, realised and developed<sup>48</sup>.

Finally in what does the mystery of the divine will consist? This is impressively formulated in an explanatory infinitive clause: "to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him".

The mystery which has been disclosed to believers in accordance with God's purpose for history is his summing up of all things in Christ. The verb ἑνακεφαλαιῶσθαι is derived from κεφαλαιον, not from κεφαλῆ ("head"). κεφαλαιον refers to the sum or summary, and ἑνακεφαλαιῶσθαι means "to sum up" or "to summarize"<sup>49</sup>. The concept of "summing up" involves recapitulation and it is likely that this is something of the force of the prefix ἑνα-, indicating a restoration of harmony with Christ as the point of reintegration. The summing up of all things, things in heaven<sup>50</sup> and things on earth in Christ<sup>51</sup> means

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<sup>46</sup>See J. REUMANN, "Oikonomia = Covenant: Terms for Heilsgeschichte in Early Christian Usage", *NT 3* (1959) 282-292.

<sup>47</sup>See W. TOOLEY, "Stewards of God. An Examination of the Terms OIKONOMOS and OIKONOMIA in the New Testament", *SJT (Scottish Journal of Theology)* 19 (1966) 81.

<sup>48</sup>See R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 59 and A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 32; Cfr. LXX Dan 2:21; 4:37; Tob 14:5; 4Ezra 4:37; 2Apoc. Bar 40:3; 1QS 4:18; 1QM 14:14; 1QpHab 7:2,13; Mk 1:15; Joh 7:8; Act 1:7; Gal 4:4; 1Thess 5:1; 1Tim 6:15). In Gal 4:4 Paul talks of the "fullness of time" when God sent his Son; but Paul is contrasting the time before Christ (under the Law) with the time fulfilled with Christ (the time of freedom).

<sup>49</sup>The sense of "to sum up" is found also in Rom 13:9 where love is thought of as the comprehensive command which integrates the others, bringing them together under one focal point.

<sup>50</sup>A.T. LINCOLN (*Ephesians*, 34) says: The "things in heaven" include the spiritual force, both good and evil, which compete for the allegiance of humanity, and their mention here particularly emphasizes the point, which will be made explicitly in Eph 1:21,22, that no hostile heavenly power can thwart God's purpose in Christ.

<sup>51</sup>The divine purpose is to sum up all things γυν Χριστῷ. The γυν αὐτῷ ("in him") at the end of the verse repeats this thought. This thought could be taken in a general instrumental sense as "by means of the Christ event", or it could be that, as with the use of

the unifying of the cosmos. One thing is clear from Eph 1:10: the unification of the universe<sup>52</sup> in Christ, the restoration of the divine rule of the universe has already taken place. Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the universe, in whom he restores the harmony of the cosmos.

There are four new ideas in this part. The first, divine grace which, as has been said in the preceding part, makes us holy, without blemish, the sonship, now adds two new aspects: 1) it liberates us from sin; 2) it is wisdom and prudence. It illumines our intellect and guides our will. As wisdom it helps us to understand the purpose of the divine will; as prudence it helps us to lead a sinless life. The second, our sanctification is realized by way of redemption. We are freed from the slavery of sin. The third, this redemption is brought about by the death of Jesus Christ. The fourth, the redemption of the human race is only a part of God's economy. His full plan is to make Christ the centre of all things: to sum up in him all things. He epitomizes in his person the entire creation.

*<sup>11</sup> in whom we also appointed what is allotted to us predetermined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things, according to the counsel of his will <sup>12</sup> that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who have already hoped in Christ*

The cognate noun κληρος, means properly “a lot”, like the English “lot”, “a portion allotted” or “portion” generally understood. The verb κληρῶ means “to choose or appoint by lot”, and hence the passive has the force of “to be appointed by lot”<sup>53</sup>. In Eph 1:11 κληρῶ should be rendered “we have been chosen as God’s portion”, i.e., assigned by God himself as his own lot. The goal of this God’s purpose in choosing is that “we” might exist for the praise of his glory. Further, who have to exist for the praise is described as “we” who have already hoped in Christ. γν τφ Χριστφ (“in Christ”) denotes the object of θμας (“we”) who have hoped. There are two opinions about θμας. The first, it is the Jewish Christians, who have first in time hoped in Messiah before the Gentiles<sup>54</sup>. The second, it is all

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this phrase or its equivalent in Eph 1:3,4,5, the more specific notion of this representation: Christ sums up the cosmos.

<sup>52</sup>T.K. ABBOTT (*The Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 19) says: τφ πςντα (“all things”) shows that it is not the uniting of things in heaven with things on earth that is expressed. These are named in order to express the greatest universality.

<sup>53</sup>See T.K. ABBOTT, *The Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 19. In the papyri the passive of κληρῶ can simply mean “to be destined, chosen”. The cognate noun κληρος is used in Col 1:12 where God is said to have qualified believers for a share in the lot of the holy ones in light. In the LXX κληρος was employed in the context of division of the land by lot for inheritance (Num 26:55,56), for the individual Israelite’s lot or portion in general (Prov 1:14; Wis 2:9; 5:5) and for Israel as God’s lot or portion (Deut 9:29; 32:8,9). This notion is a frequent one in Qumran (1QS 4:26; 11:7; 1QH 3:22).

<sup>54</sup>J.A. ROBINSON, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, 34-35 and T.K. ABBOTT,

Christians who have hoped in Christ (Jewish and Gentile believers)<sup>55</sup>. J.T. Trinidad indicated more specially *Θμας* to the apostles, who were all of the Jewish race. He says:

The mystery may be considered under two aspects: in general and in its enactment. In general: the mystery is planned in Jesus (vv.9-10), to be extended to all alike (vv.4-7). In its enactment: the apostles were first elected (vv.11-12), and through them the other faithful (vv.13-14). This explanation is recommended by the following reasons:

1) Speaking of God's election, St. Paul makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (cfr. vv.4.5.6.8).

2) The verb *γκληροφθημεν* is perhaps better understood of the apostles. *Ἐληρ ὠ* originally meant "to chose by lot", the passive "to be chosen by lot". But since with God nothing happens fortuitously, the verb when used of God can mean "to choose for his heritage, for himself". The apostles were specially chosen for, and intimately connected with the propagation of the Gospel, with the carrying out of the plan of God.

3) Verse 13 seems to favour this restriction of "we" to the apostles: We preached, "you believed in the preaching".

4) The phrase "that we might exist for the praise of his glory" is better understood of the apostles. The apostles contribute positively to the unfolding of the plan of God. The apostles make effective the redemption of Christ (cfr. Rom 10:14; 1Cor 3:9; Col 1:24)<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *in whom you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation in which you also, when you came to faith, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit* <sup>14</sup> *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the God's redemption of his possession to the praise of his glory.*

Literally the Greek *γν τ κα. Ἐμεις* should be translated "in him you also..." and be completed by "were sealed". The distinction between "we" in v.12 and "you" in v.13<sup>57</sup> indicates to the first-and second-generation believers. The "you" in v.13 marks the point at which the letter's recipients are addressed and explicitly drawn into the blessing offered by believers in general as they are reminded of their reception of the gospel. They, also, the recipients of the letter, have achieved a part in Christ's act of salvation. In this verse to make the readers aware of their own experience of salvation, the author gives a brief description of their route into the Christian community: they have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and have come to faith. This formulation takes up the terminology of the

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*The Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 21. There is the distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

<sup>55</sup>R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 63-64.

<sup>56</sup>J.T. TRINIDAD, "The Mystery Hidden in God", 22-23.

<sup>57</sup>Who interprets "we" in v.12 as Jewish Christians takes "you" in v.14 as a contrasting reference to Gentile Christians.

early Christian mission in regard to “hearing the word” (cfr. Rom 10:14-17; Acts 2:37; 13:7,44; 19:10) and the message is designated as “the word of truth”<sup>58</sup>, a term which continues Paul’s emphasis on his apostolic gospel as truth (e.g., Gal 2:5,14; 5:7; 2Cor 4:2; 6:7; Col 1:5). “Word of truth” focuses on the apostolic gospel as revealing the reality of God’s saving purpose and humanity’s place in it, as providing access to the truth, and as having truth as its content (cfr. Eph 4:14,15,21)<sup>59</sup>.

As regards acceptance of the Christian gospel, believing can be seen to be the vital link between hearing the word and receiving the Spirit. When they believed, the readers of this epistle were sealed with the Spirit. The term “sealing”<sup>60</sup> is a reference to the actual reception of the Spirit on the part of the readers. The believers’ reception of the Spirit is the sign that they belong to God in a special sense and have been stamped with the character of their owner. This Spirit is called “the Holy Spirit of promise”. The author is concerned with the “promise” because it belongs to the mystery of Christ which is now revealed that the heathen are made partakers of the promise in Christ<sup>61</sup>.

The Spirit is bestowed upon us as a “guarantee” which allows us to expect God’s full “payment”<sup>62</sup> of our inheritance, the riches of his glory. In the context of 2Cor 5:5 the complete inheritance guaranteed for the believer by his or her present experience of the Spirit is the spiritual resurrection of the body. The use of the metaphor by the author to the Ephesians indicates a maintenance of the Pauline


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<sup>58</sup>In Col 1:5 the gospel is called “the word of truth”. In Paul the gospel can also be called “word of the Lord” (1Thess 1:8; 2Thess 3:1), “word of God” (1Thess 2:13; 1Cor 14:36), “word of Christ” (Col 3:16), “word of life” (Phil 2:16), or “word of reconciliation” (2Cor 5:19).

<sup>59</sup>See R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 64-65 and A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 38.

<sup>60</sup>The seal-motif was used in various ways in antiquity: the Christian use follows the OT and Judaism, be it in Ezek 9:4-6 where the Tau on the forehead is a sign of election, belonging and protection (Cfr. Rev 7:2-8; 9:4; 4 Ezra 6:5), or in the significance of circumcision as “seal” which Paul has taken over in Rom 4:11. Baptism, according to Col 2:11 is a “circumcision of Christ”. Hence some writers argue that the “sealing” in Eph 1:13 is also a reference to the readers’ baptism. But T.K. ABBOTT (*The Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 22) and R. SCHNACKENBURG (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 65) say that it is no reason to suppose such a reference to Eph 1:13 and the noun “seal” has no symbolic value for Baptism in the NT.

<sup>61</sup>R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 65.

<sup>62</sup>Υποβαθρον is a loan word from the Hebrew  (Cfr. Gen 38:17-20 where it occurs three times and is usually translated as a “pledge”), and in Hellenistic Greek became the ordinary commercial term for a down payment or first installment. Paul uses the term as a metaphor to show that God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (2Cor 1:22; 5:5) just as in Rom 8:23 he describes the Spirit of our future complete redemption. In a down payment, that which is given is part of a greater whole, is of the same kind as that whole, and functions as a guarantee that the whole payment will be forthcoming.



“already/not yet” eschatological tension. The Spirit is seen as the power of the age to come given ahead of time in history, but as still only the beginning and guarantee of the full salvation of the age which is yet to come. In Eph 1:14 it is the notion of “inheritance” which conveys the completion of salvation in the future. The author confirms the aspect of eschatology by the statement “for the redemption of the possession”. The “redemption” has in his view already taken place through the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7) and yet can be seen by the individuals redeemed as still to be expected. While in Eph 1:7 the “redemption” was treated as a present possession of believers, here in Eph 1:14 (also Eph 4:30) it has a future reference<sup>63</sup>.

In this part we see that in the carrying out of God’s plan, new factors come in: 1) the ministry of the apostles; 2) the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This intervention is in putting into effect the redemption of the elect by the infusion of sanctifying grace and the divine indwelling, and in reassuring the elect of the inheritance, seen of the glory of heaven.

### Conclusion

The study of Eph 1:3-14 give us a most comprehensive view of the mystery. We see how the plan of God in the mystery, is truly the glorious manifestation of his bounty and power. All things are summed up in Jesus. All things find the reason for their existence in Jesus. Jesus is the Centre of the whole creation.

The actual carrying out of this plan is: (1) The passion of Jesus that has redeemed us from the slavery of sin. (2) The preaching of the apostles that has brought us faith. (3) The active intervention of the Holy Spirit that infuses into us sanctifying grace and reassures us of our heavenly inheritance. (4) The grace infused into our soul, frees us from the slavery of sin; causes us to be holy and without blemish, for it implants charity into our hearts; makes us the sonship with a right to the heavenly inheritance; illumines our intellect and guides our will.

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<sup>63</sup>A.T. LINCOLN, *Ephesians*, 40-42.

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