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**The Jewish and Hellenistic Influences
on Paul:
A Case Study of Mysterion**

by

Christopher Gary Fraser

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of Religious
Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor**

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This study examines how the word mysterion (“mystery”) in the Apostle Paul’s writings was influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic sources. The word mysterion occurs eight times, twice in Romans (11:25 and 16:25), and six times in 1 Corinthians (2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; and 15:51). This study is divided into two parts. The first section (Part I) uses an historical methodology to focus on the origin and development of the word mysterion. This section will look not only at the use of the word mysterion within the mystery cults, but also at the way it developed in other areas. By examining these different areas, it will demonstrate not only similarities between the areas’ uses of the word mysterion but also the unique characteristics that developed in their use of the word.

The second section (Part II) will consist of an exegesis of certain verses in Romans and 1 Corinthians. The main intent of Part II is to examine the word mysterion as it occurs within Romans and 1 Corinthians, to see how the “mystery verses” relate to each other and how the use of mysterion was influenced by Jewish and Hellenistic sources. Each chapter in this section is divided into four parts. The first section will examine the authenticity of some of the “mystery verses.” The second section will examine certain words and phrases that surround the word mysterion to help determine Paul’s meaning. The third section uses the analysis of the second section to determine the Jewish and/or Hellenistic influences on the mysterion. The last section demonstrates the connections and links between the “mystery verses.”

The study comes to the conclusion that the mysterion was influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic sources. Paul was a complex person who was influenced by different factors. Therefore, Paul’s use of mysterion was not influenced by just one factor, but rather

by several. Moreover, during the research for this thesis, an unexpected discovery was made that mysterion is being hierarchically. The meaning of mysterion is hierarchical because the mystery was first hidden in God, and then was revealed to apostles and prophets through the Spirit. These apostles and prophets then shared these revelations with other mature Christians. Conversely, the apostles and prophets did not usually share the mysteria to the "infants" of the Christian community (the second mature) because of their lack of maturity.

Dedicated to my parents

Gary and Patricia Fraser

and to my brother

Derek Fraser

(who has beaten the academic odds)

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I am grateful to Dr. Dorothy Sly, Dr. Edward Crowley and Dr. Stephen Bertman (the members of my thesis committee) and Dr. J. Norman King (chair) for their guidance throughout my thesis journey, and their helpful advice and comments on the development on this thesis and my academic career. I would also like to thank Mr. E. B. Landale who opened the door when I was in Grade 11 to the curious and astonishing world of ancient history. Another teacher I would also like to thank is Ken Stewart, who inspired me to continue to pursue a meaningful career in teaching. I would as well like to thank Gloria at "Your Secretary" for taking the time and having the patience to type this thesis. And finally, I would like to thank my best friend, Marty Sanders, whose comments and encouragements gave me the strength to continue and complete this work.

List of Diagrams

	Page
1. The Process of the <u>Mysterion</u> within the Qumran Community	71
2. The Symmetrical Structure of 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16	107 - 108
3. The Hierarchical Structure of Paul's <u>Mysterion</u>	144
4. The Basic Structure of a Prophetic Oracle Compared to 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55	177
5. The Symmetrical Structure of 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55	178
6. Comparison Between the Present Body and the Resurrected Body in 1 Corinthian 15	183

List of Abbreviations

- 1 QH = The Dead Sea Scrolls -- The Thanksgiving Hymns
- 1 QM = The Dead Sea Scrolls -- The War Scroll
- 1 QS = The Dead Sea Scrolls -- The Community Rule
- CD = The Dead Sea Scrolls -- The Damascus Document

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	iv
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
List of Diagrams	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Part I	9
Chapter 1:	
A Brief Examination into the Life and Character of Paul	10
Chapter 2:	
A Survey of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> In Ancient Greek Literature	24
I Etymology	25
II Mystery Religions	27
III Plato	34
IV Magic	36
V Secular Use	37
VI Conclusion	37
Chapter 3:	
A Survey of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> and its Hebrew and Aramaic Equivalents within Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and Philo	45

I	Apocalyptic Literature	
A)	Daniel	55
B)	Sirach	60
C)	1 Enoch	61
D)	The Qumran Community	68
E)	Wisdom	77
II	Philo	81
III	Conclusion	86
Part II		97
	Introduction	98
Chapter 4:		
	Paul's Use of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7	101
I	Introduction	102
II	Authenticity	
A)	The Verse 2:1 Debate	102
B)	The proposed interloper of 1 Corinthians 2:7	103
III	Structure, Words and Phrases in 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16	
A)	Structure	106
B)	Words and Phrases	108
	a) <u>tois teleiois</u>	109
	b) <u>tōn archontōn tou aiōnos</u>	111
	c) <u>pneuma</u>	112

d) <u>mysterion</u>	114
IV Jewish and Hellenistic Influences	115
A) <u>tois teleiois</u>	116
B) <u>tōn archontōn tou aiōnos</u>	118
C) <u>ton kurion tēs doxēs</u>	119
D) 1 Corinthians 2:9	119
E) <u>pneuma</u>	120
V Conclusion	122
Chapter 5:	
Paul's Use of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> in 1 Corinthians 4:1	129
I Introduction	129
II Words and Phrases	
A) <u>houtōs hēmas logizesthō anthrōpos</u>	130
B) <u>hupēretas</u>	132
C) <u>oikonomous</u>	133
D) <u>hupo anthropinēs hēmeras</u>	134
E) <u>mysterion</u>	135
III Jewish and Hellenistic Influences	
A) <u>hupēretas</u> and <u>oikonomos</u>	138
B) <u>phōtisei ta krupta tou skotous</u>	141
IV <u>Mysterion</u> Analysis	143
Chapter 6:	

Paul's Use of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> in 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2	150
I Introduction	151
II Authenticity	151
III Words and Phrases	
A) <u>chalkos</u>	154
B) <u>kumbalon alazon</u>	156
C) <u>mysterion</u>	160
IV Jewish and Hellenistic Influences	
A) <u>Ean tais glōssais tōn anthrōpōn lalō kai tōn aggelōn</u>	163
V <u>Mysterion</u> Analysis	166
Chapter 7:	
Paul's Use of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> in 1 Corinthians 15:51	175
I Introduction	176
II Words and Phrases	
A) <u>idou</u>	176
B) <u>pantes ou koimēs ou koimēthēsometha, pantes de</u> <u>allagēsometha</u>	179
C) <u>salpigni</u>	180
D) <u>aphthartoi</u> and <u>phtharton</u>	183
E) <u>mysterion</u>	184
III Jewish and Hellenistic Influences	
A) <u>idou</u>	186

B) <u>salpigni</u>	187
C) <u>aphthartoi</u> and <u>phtharton</u>	188
D) 1 Corinthians 15: 54-55	190
IV <u>Mysterion</u> Analysis	190
Chapter 8:	
Paul's Use of the Word <u>Mysterion</u> in Romans 11:25	198
I Introduction	199
II Words and Phrases	
A) <u>hoti pōrōsis apo merous tōi Israēl</u>	199
B) <u>to plērōma tōn ethnōn</u>	200
C) <u>pas Israēl sōthēsetai</u>	202
D) <u>mysterion</u>	204
III Jewish and Hellenistic Influences	
A) <u>hoti pōrōsis apo merous tōi Israel</u>	206
B) <u>pas Israēl sōthēsetai</u>	208
C) Romans 11: 26-27	209
IV <u>Mysterion</u> Analysis	209
Conclusion	217
Where Do We Go From Here?	219
Appendix	
Romans 16: 25-26	223
I Authenticity	224

A) Position	225
B) Structure	227
C) Language and Style	228
D) Conclusion	230
II Romans as a Whole	231
Bibliography	243
Vita Auctoris	262

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the word mysterion as it is found within Romans and 1 Corinthians. The word mysterion is a Greek word which means "mystery." The word mysterion occurs twenty-two times within the letters traditionally attributed to Paul: eight times within Romans and 1 Corinthians; and fourteen times within four of the deuterio-Pauline letters (2 Thessalonians; Colossians; Ephesians; and 1 Timothy). The first occurrence of the word mysterion, as found within 1 Corinthians¹ states, "When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:1 - NRSV). Shortly after this verse, Paul uses the word again when he states, "But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden (sophian en mysteriōi tēn apokekrummenēn), which God decreed before the ages for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7 - NRSV²). The next occurrence is in 1 Corinthians 4:1, "Think of us in this

way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries (NRSV)." Later on in the "Love Chapter" of 1 Corinthians the fourth occurrence of the word mysterion is found, "And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2 - NRSV). The fifth occurrence of the word mysterion is found in 1 Corinthians 14:2, "For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit (NRSV)." The last occurrence of the word mysterion that is found in 1 Corinthians is, "Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51 - NRSV). The first occurrence of the word mysterion, as it is found in Romans³ states, "So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25 - NRSV). The eighth and final occurrence of the word mysterion that is found within 1 Corinthians and Romans is placed within the Final Doxology of Romans, "Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ..." (Romans 16:25).

The reason for exploring this thesis topic about mysterion as found within 1 Corinthians and Romans is to discover more about the nature and character of Paul. Was Paul strictly a Jew? Was Paul strictly a person in tune with the Hellenistic world? Or was Paul a combination of both worlds? This thesis will examine how Paul uses the term

mysterion in light of both the Hellenic/Hellenistic concept of the term mysterion and the Jewish concept of the term mysterion. Paul's use of this term will help to reveal whether Paul was strictly a Jew, a person of the Hellenistic world, or both. This thesis will take the position that Paul was both.

In the past scholars have been mindful of the presence of these two influences (the Jewish and Hellenistic) as they pertain to Paul's life. But what has been lacking is a detailed exploration of the influences that the Jewish and Hellenistic world had on the development of Paul's language, one which examines not only the word mysterion as it is found within 1 Corinthians and Romans, but at the same time pulls together all of the theories of whether the word is used strictly in the Jewish sense of the term, or as a Hellenistic influence, or both.

But why choose the word mysterion? There are many other words that Paul uses more frequently that could serve the purposes of research. Why focus on the nature of Paul and only examine the word mysterion? What is so special about the term mysterion?

In response to these questions one must turn to the etymology of the word mysterion. What is the origin of the word mysterion? The word mysterion had its beginnings within the Hellenic mystery cults. But when Paul uses the term "mystery" he does not use it as if he was describing the mystery cults. Or does he? Even though there is no direct correlation between Paul's use of mysterion and the mystery cults (Paul does not use the term mysterion to describe the mystery cults), is it not possible for there to be an indirect influence? Could Paul have (with the help of other words) been giving parallel

meanings to his readers? The mystery cults were very prominent within Rome, Corinth and Ephesus. Why wouldn't Paul write about them, in some way or another?

But the Hellenic/Hellenistic influence is not just limited to the area of the mystery cults. Over time the word mysterion developed and was adapted to other areas of Hellenistic society. Does not the possibility exist that Paul could have been using the word mysterion in the same way as these other areas have been using the term mysterion? Even within Jewish literature (to be more specific - Jewish Apocalyptic Literature) there is an adoption of the word mysterion. But what is Jewish Apocalyptic Literature? And why did the term mysterion develop within this type of literature? Did the writers of the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature always use the term mysterion in the same context and with the same meaning? Or does the concept of "mystery" develop over time as well? And how did this development influence Paul and his use of the word mysterion?

Paul's use of the term mysterion is varied. It is a word that does not occur often within his letters. The context and the topics that surround the word mysterion are also varied. If the context of the word mysterion is varied, does this also suggest that the meaning of the word mysterion for Paul is also varied? Is there a pattern within the mysterion of Paul? Is each reference to the word mysterion distinct and unique? Or are there common threads and patterns which link them together?

Therefore, the intent of this thesis is not to look just at the influences of the concept of mystery on Paul, but also to discover links that may be present within the various "mystery verses." It is from these links that one can not only get a better understanding of the concept of mysterion, but also, one can get a better understanding of the nature

and beliefs of Paul.

The methodology that this thesis will take is one that will incorporate an historical approach. What is meant by the term "historical approach?" The methodology of the history of religion asks the questions, "What changes have occurred within the group?" and "What caused these changes?" For the purpose of this thesis, the question may be rephrased as, "How has mysterion changed for these groups?" - the "groups" being the different areas and literary works which used the word mysterion (i.e., the mystery cults, philosophy, Enoch, Philo, the Qumran community). Basically, "What did the word mysterion mean to these groups?"

The first half of this thesis will focus on the historical methodology. Chapter 1 will focus upon a brief description of Paul and the importance that the mystery cults and Hellenistic life had upon the people to whom Paul wrote. What is important within this chapter is not only to help set the foundation for this thesis by introducing Paul to the reader, but also to introduce the idea that the concept and the meaning of the word mysterion was not foreign to the people to whom Paul was writing.

The second chapter will examine the origins of the word mysterion. It will also examine how the word mysterion functioned within the mystery cults. After this idea has been established, the chapter will take a look at the development of the term mysterion within other areas that had adopted the word. This examination of mysterion in other areas within the Hellenistic world is in no way meant to serve as a complete examination of all of the references or of all of the areas. Rather it is a concise survey of some of the areas of that world in order to establish the idea that there was in fact a development in

the word mysterion from its cultic roots into its adoption by other groups.

Like the two previous chapters, chapter 3 will apply an historical methodology and explore (by way of a general outline) the meaning and function that the word mysterion had on the writers of the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature. After the general characteristics of the mystery have been discussed, a chronological examination of some of the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature⁴ will commence. The chronological examination of some of the literature will help not only to establish the idea of a development in the concept of the mysterion, but also to demonstrate the unique characteristics that had developed between each of the literary words and their use of mysterion. Though there are general characteristics which demonstrate similarities, there are some ways in which the use of mysterion is unique for each of the literary works.

The second part of this thesis will elaborate more on the methodology of the exegesis. Each verse (1 Corinthian 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Romans 11:25) will be investigated by taking a look at the vocabulary and structure of the verses that surround the word mysterion: how does this verse fit into the context of the surrounding verses; and/or are there any structural or rhetorical methodologies used in these verses to suggest an influence, either Jewish or Hellenistic; and in some cases, was the verse actually written by Paul, or was it written by an interloper? After this is completed within each chapter, an examination of any common threads between any previously existing "mystery verse" chapters will be made and elaborated upon.

The conclusion will pull together all of these common threads that have been drawn upon within the chapters to demonstrate that both the Jewish and Hellenistic influences

had an impact upon Paul, and that Paul rejected neither his Jewish nor Hellenistic background; both were a factor in the development of his thinking and language.

This thesis will end with an Appendix. The purpose of the Appendix (Romans 16: 25-27) is to add support to the Conclusion. The Appendix, like the other chapters on the "mystery verses," will be an exegesis. Hence, it will add support by demonstrating links between Romans 16: 25-27 and the other "mystery verses," but also by still concentrating on the idea that the mysterion is influenced by the Jewish and Hellenistic concepts of the word mysterion.

Endnotes

¹ Scholars date 1 Corinthians to have been written sometime around 50-55 C.E. and it is believed to be the second extant epistle written by Paul (these details will be explained later on in the thesis in more detail).

² The New American Bible translates verse 2:7 by using the word "mysterious" - "Rather we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory."

³ Romans is dated by scholars to around 55-60 C.E., and is believed to be one of the last epistles of Paul (these details will be explained later on in the thesis in more detail).

⁴ This thesis will only look at those works which use the word mysterion, but also fit within a time frame of before and during the life of Paul. Baruch and 2 Esdras both do use the word mysterion, but general scholarship place these works after the life of Paul: Baruch (after 70 C.E.) and 2 Esdras (from first to third century C.E.).

Part I

Chapter 1:

A Brief Examination Into the Life and Character of Paul

Who was Paul? Where did he come from? What are some of the important factors that may have influenced Paul because of where he was born and lived? What did Paul do for a living? What was his occupation? How and why did Paul become a Christian? These are questions that must be raised in order to get a glimpse into the nature and the writing of Paul. For this thesis we will focus on the word mysterion (mystery). It is not enough to say that Paul used the word mysterion. The question that must be asked is why did Paul use this word? Was it because of Paul's background and upbringing? Was it because Paul was using a vocabulary that his readers would understand? And, was Paul

using the word because of the surroundings and landscape of the cities in which his congregants lived? This is the main intent of this thesis, how and why does Paul use the word mysterion?

When one takes a look at the life of Paul, it is dangerous for a scholar to limit Paul to one specific category or to one overall influence. When scholars limit literature to a particular boundary or category, they are placing potential blinders upon themselves and their audience. The main issue to remember when studying a particular subject (particularly within Classical Civilization and New Testament Studies) is that we are limited by our sources. The modern world does not have all of the ancient literature and references to certain subjects (in this case, the word mysterion). Indeed, it is quite possible that modern scholars do not have all the letters that were written by Paul. Therefore, to make the claim that Paul was influenced by only one particular idea, belief or philosophy is incautious.

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "category" is defined as,

1: one of the most abstract and universal terms, concepts, or notions: **a** in Aristotle (1): one of the major forms of predication; (2): one of the most ultimate modes of being (as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, possession, action, affection); **b** in Kant: one of the pure a priori forms of understanding [the ~ of quantity (unity, plurality, universality)] [the ~ of quality (relation, negation, limitation)] ... **c** in post-Kantian philosophy: any major fundamental conception or general class of concepts¹

The third definition (c) is important for this thesis. This thesis will set out to show that the word mysterion is not limited to one particular meaning, category or influence,

but rather mysterion is used by Paul in many different ways and is influenced by many different religious beliefs. It would be incorrect to place the "mystery verses" into categories and have several of the verses that contained the word mysterion be considered strictly Jewish, and other verses only demonstrate a Hellenistic influence, or a couple of verses show a collaboration of the two.

But the main intent of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the life and character of Paul, by taking a look at some of the questions stated at the beginning of this chapter. This chapter will focus on the questions of who was Paul, and why did he write the way he did? Was it because of his background and/or because of the congregation? Though these questions are quite broad, and a book might be written on any one of these topics, this chapter will focus on these questions in light of the word mysterion.

Paul was a complex man. The Biblical text states the he was a Jew (Philippians 3:5), a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25), and later on a minister to the Gentiles (Romans 15:16, Galatians 1:16).² In taking a look at this brief description of Paul, one can see that Paul was not just a Jew or a Greek. Nowhere within the undisputed letters of Paul do we find any reference to Paul's rejecting his Jewish and/or his Hellenistic background.³ Therefore, the question arises, if Paul consciously accepted both his Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds, why limit his use of the word mysterion to one set boundary?

Paul travelled and made several missionary journeys, even ministering to the

people from prison (Philippians 1:7, 13-17), and if Luke reflects historical accuracy on this point, Paul also addressed the Athenians at the Areopagus (Acts 17: 22-32). Paul's audience was not just Jews, but also Gentiles. Within the crowds of people that Paul addressed, prevailing concepts and ideas would also be different. Since, as we will discover, mysterion was a word that was an international concept that was engraved within the cultural milieu, each person would have had a different concept of the word mysterion.⁴

According to Acts 21:39, Paul viewed himself as a person from Tarsus: "I am a Jew, from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city ...". Tarsus was a city known for being a cult-centre of Isis and the centre of Stoicism within the ancient world.

Archaeological excavations in Tarsus have uncovered many different artistic renderings of Isis. Some of these artifacts include a figure (either Isis, or a priestess within the order) with sistrum and wearing a high-peaked headdress, and several pieces of pottery which exhibit an Isis palmette symbol. Finally, archaeologists have uncovered several examples of Isis represented as the figure of Fortune and/or Victory.⁵

In addition, wherever Paul travelled there was usually a temple dedicated to Isis. In Philippi (Philippians 1:1), the woodland deity Silvanus was worshipped alongside of Isis. In Cenchreae (Romans 16:1), Isis was equated with Aphrodite, Poseidon and Asclepius, and in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32, 16:8) she was Isis-Artemis. At Corinth, there were two temples dedicated to Isis, where she was worshipped as an "Egyptian" and as "Pelagian (Marine)."⁶

The worship of Isis was a predominant cult within the ancient world. It is highly

probable that whenever Paul stopped in a city to preach, the cult of Isis had already been established. Many of the places included: Samos, Chios, Cnidus, Crete, Antioch, Cyprus. Deissmann believes that, "The roads on which Paul the missionary travelled were also trodden by the emissaries of Isis and Serapis, of the God of the Jews, ...[and] the Great Mother of Phrygia"⁷ From what has already been stated above, it is unlikely that Paul would not have noticed or would have ignored the predominance of this cult. Paul does seem to be describing some of the religious practices of the mystery religions within Romans 1: 8-32. Some have suggested that verses 22-23 are actually a reference to Egyptian cults.⁸ "Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being, or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles"(Romans 1: 22-23, NRSV).

Tarsus was also known as a centre for Stoicism. Though Paul does not believe in the ideals of the Stoa, it is his use of language, the Stoic language, that is important. The key to Paul's use of Stoic language is not that Paul is using Stoic language within his own thought process and ideas; rather, Paul uses it because it was the Corinthians who were influenced by the Stoic philosophy. Therefore, Paul is writing in such a manner to counteract the beliefs of the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul raises the question about his freedom. Paul argues against the basic virtue of Stoicism that a person has a "freedom from irrational passions: freedom to choose or reject those things which are in his power; freedom to live the life according to nature and pursue virtue."⁹ The gods of Stoicism were believed to exist within nature, and since there was a connection between the divine and nature (consequently, what was natural was considered to be virtuous) -

the Stoics considered themselves free. Paul suggests an alternative definition for freedom in 9:19. Paul does believe believers are united with God (1 Cor 6:17), but Paul differs from Stoicism by stating that the believers are not free. They are connected to God by a price. And their bodies are temples that are subjected to sins (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).¹⁰

Paul could have been writing to people who had underlying Stoic beliefs and ideals, and the important thing to remember is that Paul's expression was shaped not only by his education, his early background and his conversion, but also by the audience he was addressing.¹¹ Paul had to find ways that could express his ideals and concepts, so that all those who heard him might be able to understand him.

Paul was a speaker who used terms, metaphors and philosophical terminology, in order to help express his ideas, so that the audience that he was addressing might be able to understand. For example (if Luke is historically accurate on this point), when Paul was in Athens, he used as an example a Greek statue that had the inscription "To an unknown god" (Acts 17:23). In 1 Corinthians 9:25, Paul uses the metaphor of the athletes winning the perishable wreath (phtharton stephanon).¹² This metaphor was meant for the Corinthians who would have witnessed or would have been quite familiar with the prizes of the Isthmian games.

Indirect evidence suggests that Paul had at least a smattering of knowledge about Epicurean and Stoic ideas. For example (if Luke is historically accurate on this matter), Acts 17:18 states, "Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbling (spermologos) want to say?" Here is an occasion where Paul is talking to philosophers and is trying to get his ideas across to them. The word "babbling"

may seem to be a harsh translation. The New Jerusalem Bible translates the question as "What can this parrot mean?" The word spermologos is literally, "a crow that picks up seeds, rocks."¹³ But metaphorically it was used to describe "one who has quotations and bites of philosophical ideas that he has heard here and there."¹⁴

This is what Paul does when he uses the word mysterion. Paul has picked up upon many different interpretations of the word mysterion, and he is using the word in a way that his audience might also understand. Mysterion is not something that is fixed to one particular influence; rather, it is something that encompasses many beliefs, influences and meanings. It is something that cannot be placed in a category and locked away in a cabinet; rather, it is something that is broad and has a wide range of possibilities.

One area (similar to Greek sources) that seems to go unnoticed is the story of Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi (Acts 16: 16-40). Acts 16: 16-40 belongs to the "we" passages where the story is told in the first person plural. It was once believed that the "we" included the author of Luke-Acts. But within present Pauline studies it is generally believed that the author of Luke-Acts obtained the accounts/the sources from possibly Paul's fellow workers, or more than likely it was some piece of literature that was present during the time that Acts was written.¹⁵ Both Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the city, because they had healed a girl with the spirit of divination. They were flogged and chained. While Paul and Silas were singing and praying, "There was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened" (verse 26).

This story is quite similar to Euripides' Bacchae. Both Paul and Dionysus have

come from foreign lands to spread the worship of their God (lines 463-465). Both have been charged with accusations of disturbing the city (lines 215-225, 233-248). And both have been saved by an earthquake that has freed them from their shackles.

He seemed to think that he was chaining me but never once so much as touched my hands. He fed on his desires. Inside the stable he intended as my jail ... But at that moment Bacchus came, shook the palace and touched his mother's grave with tongues of fire.

Euripides, The Bacchae, 616-624.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

Acts 16: 25-26

Dionysus, on another occasion, also freed the women that were worshipping him from prison,

The chains on their legs snapped apart by themselves. Untouched by any human hand, the doors swung wide, opening of their own accord.

Euripides, The Bacchae, 447-449

One cannot forget the point that Paul rejected neither his Jewish nor Hellenistic background. Paul still remained a part of both. As we have seen above, Paul does use Hellenistic influences in his writing. But he also uses Jewish influences as well.

Paul was a Pharisee who at one point within his life had such a particular zeal for the traditions of Judaism, that he advanced beyond any other person of the same age as

his (Galatians 1:14). So, therefore, it is not surprising that Paul would have occasionally used a rabbinic methodology when he examined scripture (1 Corinthians 10: 1-5).¹⁶

Paul also uses themes that were characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic literature (see chapter 3): God revealed the sins of the wicked (Romans 1:18); the judgement of God (1 Corinthians 4: 4-5; 5:13; 11:33; Romans 2:16; the coming of a new era (1 Corinthians 1:8: 5:5; Romans 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:2).¹⁷

In Romans 1: 18-32, Paul talks about God's wrath against the pagans. Paul states in verse 19, "that what can be known about God is manifested to them." Paul establishes a "natural theology", one in which a person is able to know about God through one's own mind by looking at creation. Paul believes that people could come to the realization about God by just looking at things in creation which they themselves did not create.

Paul's theology on this point is not based strictly on Jewish teaching, or on Hellenistic philosophy. Rather, Paul is a part of the two. Paul's argument follows that of Hellenistic Judaism.

For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a
corresponding perception of their Creator.

Wisdom 1 3:4 (NRSV)¹⁸

Joseph A. Fitzmyer suggests that Paul's idea parallels three different areas: the Jewish tradition regarding knowing God fully (Exodus 33:20; Deuteronomy 4:12; Sirach 43:31; Philo, De Somn 1:11, 65-66. Josephus, Jewish Wars 7.8.7 S346); the Hellenistic Jewish tradition regarding God being made known within Creation (Wisdom 12-15); and the Hellenistic philosophy regarding the existence of God (Timaeus 28A-30C, 32A-35A; Ps-

Aristotle, *De Mundo* 6.397b-398b; Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1.29.70).¹⁹ But Ernst Käsemann warns against the idea of borrowings and parallels. Käsemann poses the idea of what Paul adapted and did not adapt. Käsemann compares and contrasts many of these ancient references to suggest the idea that though there are similarities, there are also differences to take into account.²⁰ What Paul in fact does is "reduces Hellenistic motifs to a minimum, characterizes God's deity, as a power that encounters us, concentrates it in lordships, and perceives human guilt, not in ignorance, but in revolt against the known Lord. An interpretation is thus demanded which radicalizes the trend found in Philo."²¹ So what is important is not the degree to which Paul uses other writers and philosophies. What is important is the fact that Paul does use a variety of philosophies and sources that are both Hellenistic and Jewish.

If Paul was totally influenced by the mystery religion, Paul's theology would not have a Jewish basis and background.²² If Paul did accept the individualist ideology of the mystery religions, Paul would likewise have rejected the idea of the "body of Christ."²³

Käsemann believes that Paul placed a boundary between himself and his Jewish past. Paul no longer observed the path of a devout Jew or followed the strict rules of the law. Rather, he followed the path of "righteousness as doing God's will and salvation"²⁴ (see Romans 10: 2-4 NRSV).

Yet nowhere within the New Testament can one find a book that is strictly part of a Hellenistic Gentile Christianity. All the documents found are the result of a Jewish-Gentile mixture. Therefore, it is hard to believe that scholars should try to make rigid distinctions within the letters of the Bible.²⁵ This same fact should also be applied to the

word mysterion. One should not limit and make rigid distinctions to the influences of this word.

It is quite natural that a new religion would want to appeal to the hoi polloi by showing that it had adopted some basic elements that were common to the times. But these same elements that were assimilated into Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity would now be regarded as "native possession" and "sacred" and must now be protected.²⁶ Raymond E. Brown does accept the fact that mysterion is a Greek word, but he believes that Paul has enough background material within the literature of Judaism that Paul does not need to venture into Greek sources.²⁷ I disagree with Brown when he claims that mysterion reflects strictly a Jewish influence on Paul.

Samuel Sandmel believes that Paul's mystery religion was not a new concept, but rather, "a new form of a familiar need and goal. He was touching, not a different salvation, but a newer version, and as he insisted, the only form of salvation; not a strange or recondite religious goal, but what he considered to be the sure and sole means of achieving the commonly recognized goal of religion."²⁸ Sandmel is correct in stating that it was a "newer version." It was one that did not encompass just Judaism or strictly Hellenism but a mixture of the two.

Endnotes

Chapter 1: Introduction

¹Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, ed. by Philip Babcock Gove and the Merriam-Webster Editorial Staff, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc.), p. 352.

²There is some debate as to the historical accuracy and acceptability of Acts. One must not forget that the Book of Acts is only secondary to the letters of Paul, but it is this connection that is important. It is Acts that helps form the setting for the life of Paul, and it is Acts that helps set the stage for Paul's missionary work within his letters. "We only realize the significance of Acts as a historical source if we make a consistent attempt to eliminate the information it contains from our knowledge of earliest Christianity. For all his tendentious distortions, Luke's contribution to the historical understanding of Paul is essentially greater than many scholars want to suppose today." (Martin Hengel, Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], p. 38.) Colin J. Hemer makes the conclusion that the methodology of Acts is quite similar to that of Hellenistic history. "It is not that we have particular literary parallels which demand such comparisons, but rather, there is a common world of traditions and conventions which the author of Acts seems to share with other ancient writers of allegedly historical narratives." (Colin J. Hemer, The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History, ed. by Conrad H. Gempf, [Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990], p. 411.)

³This thesis will only be concentrating on the undisputed letters of Paul: Romans; I and II Corinthians; Galatians; Philippians and 1 Thessalonians.

⁴Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin suggests the idea that when a word is spoken it is not an exchange between two people (the speaker and the listener) but between three people or peoples. "The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener also has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights," M. M. Bakhtin, Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Carly Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 121-122.

⁵R. E. Witt, Isis in the Graeco-Roman World, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 256-257.

⁶Ibid., pp. 259-260, 267. See Pausanias, Descriptions of Greece, II, 4. 4: "The Acrocorinthus is a mountain peak above the city ... As you go up this Acrocorinthus you see two precincts of Isis, one of Isis surnamed Pelagian (Marine) and the other of Egyptian Isis"

⁷Adolf Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, trans. by William E. Wilson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 227.

⁸Emile Bradford, Paul the Traveler, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company Inc., 1974), p. 95.

⁹Terence Paige, "Stoicism, Elogtheria and Community at Corinth" in Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honour of Ralph P. Martin, ed. by Michael J. W. Wilkins and Terence Paige, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, Vol. 87 (Sheffield, England: JSDT Press, 1992), pp. 190-191.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹²Sherman E. Johnson, "Paul in Athens", Lexington Theological Quarterly, XVII (July, 1982), p. 39 and Oscar Broneer, "Paul and the Pagan Cults at Isthmia" Harvard Theological Review, 64 (1971), p. 186.

¹³Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 645.

¹⁴Johnson, "Paul in Athens," p. 40.

¹⁵Johannes Munck, The Anchor Bible: The Acts of the Apostles, revised edition, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), p. XLIII.

¹⁶C. K. Barrett suggests the possibility that Paul was using an already existing Exodus midrash. C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 220. Conzelmann suggest that this methodology was part of the Jewish haggadic tradition. Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. MacRae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 167. Paul's use of connecting the Red Sea and the Manna with Baptism and the Lord's Supper should not be connected with the ceremonies and characteristics of the mystery cults. Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), pp. 20-22.

¹⁷Leander E. Keck, Paul and His Letters, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 10.

¹⁸C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, (London: A and C Black, 1991), pp. 35-36.

¹⁹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 279.

²⁰Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1980), pp. 38-41.

²¹Ibid., p. 41.

²²W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology, (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1948), p. 89.

²³Ibid., p. 90.

²⁴Ernst Käsemann, New Testament Questions of Today, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1969), p. 184.

²⁵Howard Marshall, "Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some Critical Comments," New Testament Studies, XIX (January, 1973), pp. 283-284.

²⁶Moses Hadas, Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 196-197.

²⁷Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XX (October, 1958), p. 427.

²⁸Samuel Sandmel, A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1974), pp. 99-100.

Chapter 2:

A Survey of the Word Mysterion In Ancient Greek Literature

Within the English language we have the word "church." It comes from the Greek word kuriakos (to belong to a lord or master). Over time the word "church" has acquired a few new meanings: the building itself; a particular sect (e.g., the Church of England); the congregation; the true followers; the religious authority.¹ In a similar way over the course of time new meanings developed around the ancient word mysterion.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the development of the word mysterion from its beginnings in the mystery cults to its progression into philosophy, magic, and secular use. Though these areas are not all of the areas where the word mysterion may be found, the purpose of this survey is to give an adequate account and demonstrate the development of mysterion in these areas.

This chapter will first look at the etymology of the word mysterion. The chapter will then continue to look at the word mysterion as it is found within and in reference to the mystery religions. The last three sections will examine mysterion's movement into other areas of literature and culture as part of mysterion's cultural milieu.²

I ETYMOLOGY

Several ancient writers believed that the origin of the word mysterion may be traced back to a legendary person named Myus of Attica. Others created the word mythêria in order to explain the origins of mysterion.³

The Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria, writing in the second and early third century C. E., believed that the word mysterion was derived from the word mysos:

Now it seems to me that the terms "orgy" and "mystery" must be derived, the former from the wrath (orge) of Demeter against Zeus and the latter from the pollution (mysos) that took place in the connexion with Dionysus. But even if they are named after a certain Myus of Attica, who according to Apollodorus was killed in hunting, I make no objection.

Clement, Exhortation to the Greeks, 2.12.

Clement of Alexandria also writes that other ancient writers suggested another possibility for the origin of the word mysterion. These writers believed that the accusative plural form of the word mysterion (ta mysteria) was closely related to the word for "hunting-stories" (mythêria).

You may also, in another way, suppose them to be hunting-stories (mythêria), since the letters correspond; for as surely as there are men who hunt wild beasts, so do legends like those hunt the rudest among Thracians, the silliest among Phrygians and the daemon-fearers among Greeks.

Exhortation to the Greeks, 2.12

The 5th century C. E. lexicographer Hesychius defines mysterion as being arrēta kai anexēgēta (not spoken and unsearchable), and a scholastic commenting on Sophocles also uses the word arrēta to describe mysterion. Mysterion is thus something that is secret and not to be told; it is "ineffable, or that which is not proper to divulge because of its sacred or divine nature."⁴

Presently, many modern scholars attribute the origin of mysterion to the root my or myō "to keep one's mouth shut" and/or "to keep one's eyes shut."⁵ Therefore, mysterion, literally may mean, that people must "keep their mouth/eyes shut" on the "secret worship"⁶ and the beliefs of the mystery cult.⁷

The first extant occurrence of the root word myō is found within the fragments of the fifth century B.C.E. philosopher Heraclitus: "night-wandering wizards, Bacchants Leanaeans, initiates (mystais)"^{7a}.

But as we shall see, the word mysterion became more than just a definition to describe the secret rites of the mystery cult. Greek authors would use the word "mystery" and shape it into new and unique molds, placing the word "mystery" into a different context other than the mystery cults.

Yet this is not to say that all Greek authors changed the use of the word mysterion. Several Greek authors would continue to use the word mysterion in a general context as a reference to the mystery religions, or as a title of the mystery religions. In The Histories 2.51, Herodotus talks of "the mysteries of Cabiri" and "the Samothracian mysteries." In The Histories 8.65, Herodotus also makes mention of the Iacchus song of the "Dionysiac mysteries." Aristophanes also alludes to "The Mysteries (mystēri) of Demeter."⁸

II MYSTERY RELIGIONS

In order to become a part of the mystery religions, one had to be initiated into a mystery cult. "Zeus desired that the other of his two sons (Iasion) might also attain to honour, and so he instructed him in the initiatory rite of the mysteries (mysterion)."⁹ Now the way that a person was initiated into the mysteries depended upon which mystery the person was joining (the initiation of one such mystery cult will be described below). These privileged people (hoi myethentes) were given a secret communication (ieros logos) that described the myth, the name, and the meaning behind the sacred things that were revealed to them.¹⁰ But once individuals were initiated into the mystery cult they could not reveal to the uninitiated what was revealed to them. And this is the key to the mystery cults and the word mysterion - a person was to keep his or her mouth shut as to the experiences of the mystery cult.

She showed the tendance of the holy things and explicated the rites to them all ... sacred rites, which it is forbidden to transgress, to inquire into, or to speak about, for great reverence of the gods constrains their voices. Blessed of earthbound men is he who has seen these things ...

Homeric Hymn to Demeter, lines 475-481.

Whoever has been initiated at Eleusis or has read what are called The Orphica knows what I mean.

Pausanias, Description of Greece, I. 37. 4.

My dream forbade the description of the things within the wall of the sanctuary, and the uninitiated are of course not permitted to learn that which they are prevented from seeing.

Pausanias, Description of Greece, I. 38. 7.¹¹

But what was the purpose of such mysteries? In some cases it was to secure a blessed afterlife, to fulfil the hope that all of the hardships that one faced within the present world would not have to be faced again after death. Though some ancient Greek writers and philosophers had trouble accepting this form of theology, the mystery religions not only proposed the idea that one could obtain happiness in the afterlife, but also the mysteries provided the means by which a person could become happier and a better person in this life:

O happy mystic chorus
 The blessed sunshine o'er us
 On us alone is smiling,
 In its soft sweet light:
 On us who strove for ever
 With holy, pure endeavour
 Alike by friend and stranger
 To guide our steps aright.

Aristophanes, The Frogs, lines 454-459.

The claim is also made that men who have taken part in the mysteries become both more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before.

Diodorus of Sicily, Book V. 49. 6.

The Cynic philosopher Diogenes (412-323 BCE) opposed the idea that just because a person was initiated into the mysteries they were able to enter paradise and happiness. Diogenes could not accept the fact that a robber could get into Paradise, but a good and moral person who was not initiated could not enter.¹² However, the modern critic Thaddeus Zielinski notes that just because a person was initiated into the mysteries, this does not mean that a person was guaranteed a place in paradise. As Zielinski observes,

it was only the good and moral that were accepted into the paradise. For if one were wicked and continued to participate in the rituals of the mysteries, they "did so to their own spiritual destruction."¹³

Zielinski's view is in fact confirmed by an ancient text.

I myself shall do nothing shameful or wrong at the conclusion of the mysteries ... I shall obey what is written ... May I, by keeping the oath, experience what is in store for the pious, but may one who breaks the oath experience the opposite.

Rule of the Andanian Mysteries, I

The rites of the mysteries were sacred. And these rites were not to be taken lightly. In the fifth century B.C.E., a group of young Athenian men were reported to have mutilated many statues and in a drunken state made a mockery of the mysteries (ta mysteria and mystika); this was such a disgrace that the act itself was viewed as an act of sedition intended to overthrow democracy.¹⁴

Among the most popular mystic cults in Greece were the Eleusinian Mysteries of Athens.^{14a} Not only were the initiation rites secret, but they were also a public affair.

The Eleusinian Mystery was a cult that celebrated the abduction and return of Persephone from the underworld, and Demeter's search for her daughter. And since the mysteries were celebrated near Athens in Eleusis, they became known as the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The Eleusinian Mysteries probably had their origins in Mycenaean times and may have originally been a family (the Eumolpidae) cult which celebrated an agrarian festival.¹⁵

Though the Eleusinian Mystery cult may have originated during the Mycenaean

times, this does not mean that the cult came from or had a Minoan influence.^{15a}

Vases known as a kernoi have been found at Eleusis. Martin P. Nilsson makes the claim that vases of the same shape may also be found within Minoan civilization, and that therefore the Eleusinian Mysteries are to be traced to Crete.¹⁶ But George E. Mylonas warns against the dating of the two types of vases. The earliest kernoi found at Eleusis are a thousand years later than Minoan civilization. If the kernoi were found in the Mycenaean strata at Athens, scholars would have a claim to the connection between Eleusis and Crete (Minoan), but this is not the case.¹⁷

Even within the mythology of ancient Greece there can be found no connection between Eleusis and Crete. In key myths that involve both Crete and Athens (the story of Theseus; the tale of the Minotaur) there is no mention or allusion to Eleusis or the Eleusinian Mysteries.¹⁸

Now to the initiation into the mysteries, there are two different stages that initiates must go through before they were classified as members of the mystery cult.¹⁹

The first of these stages is called the Lesser Mysteries. In order for one to participate in the procession to Eleusis and the rituals held there, one had first to participate in the Lesser Mysteries. These mysteries were held during the month Anthesterion (February) at Agri on the east bank of the Ilissos.²⁰ A tablet dedicated to the Goddesses Demeter and Persephone by a person named Niinnion alludes to the initiation rites of the Lesser Mysteries. Scholars are not sure as to what exactly took place. All that is known, is that there was fasting, hymns, dancing, women initiates carrying the kernoi, sacrifices and the sprinkling or bathing of the initiate in the waters of Ilissos.²¹

The initiation into the cult was open to all: men, women, freemen, slaves, Greeks, and foreigners. The only restrictions were these: 1) you had to know how to speak Greek²²; 2) there was an initiation fee that one had to pay. By the late fourth century B.C.E., the fee was fifteen drachmas for each initiate.²³

The Greater Mysteries were held during the month of Boedromion (September).²⁴ Like the Lesser Mysteries, the Greater Mysteries were held once every year. But on the fourth year, the celebration of the mysteries took on a special splendor (penteteris).²⁵

On the thirteenth of Boedromion, military soldiers escorted the sacred objects of the Eleusinian mysteries down from Eleusis to Athens.²⁶ The sacred objects were carried by the priestesses of the mystery cult in chests (kistai) wrapped in ribbon.²⁷

The fifteenth of Boedromion signaled the assembling and journey to Athens of all initiates together with their sponsors (those who had already been initiated into the Mysteries). The purpose of the sponsors was to help and guide the initiates through a series of ceremonies.²⁸ The next day was known as "Seaward, Initiates."²⁹ On this day the initiates went down to the Saronic Gulf to purify themselves and the sacrificial pig (the holy animal of Demeter) in the water.³⁰

Among scholars there is some discrepancy as to the sacrificing of the pig. H. J. Rose suggests that the pigs were sacrificed the next day.³¹ H. W. Parke and George E. Mylonas both suggest that the pigs were sacrificed on the same day as the washing, and were sacrificed by the initiate themselves.³² Parke furthermore suggests that the pigs did not go to waste, but were eaten by the initiates that night.³³

The eighteenth of Boedromion was a day set aside to honour Asclepius, the god of

healing. This day was also a day of rest and was used for those who arrived late for their initiation into the mysteries. It honoured Asclepius because he himself was reported to have arrived late for his own initiation.³⁴

The nineteenth of Boedromian was the great procession of the initiates to the Kallicharon Well at Eleusis.³⁵ The initiates proceeded along the Sacred Way clad in white and carrying pine torches.³⁶ A rhythmic chant of Iakch' o Iakche was heard throughout the crowd as they made their way down the Sacred Way.³⁷

Dicaeus thought he recognized the Iacchus song, which is sung at the Dionysiac Mysteries, but Demaratus, who was unfamiliar with the religious ceremonial of Eleusis, asked his companion whose voices they were.

Herodotus, The Histories, 8. 65.³⁸

Along the way, the participants crossed a bridge, the Rheitoi,³⁹ where they were met by a group of people wearing masks. The masked figures mocked and made obscene gestures to the initiates as they crossed the bridge. These gestures enacted the ritual of gephyrismo to recreate the story of how Iambe cheered up the depressed Demeter when Demeter came in search of Persephone at the home of Celeus and Metaneira at Eleusis.⁴⁰ Parke suggests the possibility that these insults were used as "magic intention to forestall any ill-luck, or again ... a traditional opportunity for popular licence ..."⁴¹

Upon reaching the well, the initiates broke their fast and spent the remainder of the night singing and dancing in honour of the goddess Demeter.⁴²

The next few days (upon reaching the Kallicharon Well) involved the participants entering the Telesterion where the actual initiation into the cult took place. Scholars can only speculate on the events that occurred within the Telesterion, and can only agree upon

the fact that the initiated were viewed as full members once they had viewed the mystic union and understood all its implications.⁴³

C. E. Robinson suggests that the initiates entered a dark hall where they would witness the mysteries' visions by flashes of light. Robinson does not know what these visions were, but he does suggest "a tableaux representing mythological scenes."⁴⁴ J. N. Coldstream suggests that in the dark hall (Anakton) the visions were "achieved by the sudden admission of early-morning daylight through a lantern or skylight immediately above the Anakton."⁴⁵

George Mylonas divides the experience of the initiate into three parts. The first part, the enactment (dromena), included the sacred drama-telling of the myth of Demeter and Persephone.⁴⁶ The second part included those things which were shown (deiknymena) - the relics within the sacred chests.⁴⁷ And, finally, the last part was the words that were spoken (legomena). These were the descriptions of the mysteries, describing to the initiate what they were witnessing.⁴⁸

Therefore, the mysterion within the mystery cults was a mystery that was kept secret from the uninitiated.⁴⁹ The mystery was those things which were communicated at the sacred rituals. It was only by becoming initiated that one could witness and understand the mysterion.⁵⁰ But, the efficacy of the mysterion was also connected with the righteous conduct of a person. As a result of being initiated into the cult, one was not granted a place in paradise, and nor could one do whatever one wanted; instead the individual had to continue a pious life in order to obtain happiness in the afterlife.

III PLATO

I would suggest that Plato may have been the first ancient Greek author to take the word mysterion and transfer it to another field, this field being the realm of philosophy. When Plato applies the word mysterion to philosophy, Plato does not change the definition of the word. Plato still uses the word in relation to the mystery cults, but he also establishes a new context - the mysteries of philosophy.

For Plato, mysterion was the development of understanding into a new and higher level of knowledge, one that was previously hidden to the initiate but was now revealed to them (Theatetus, 155d).⁵¹ The way of knowledge was a ladder⁵² that one must climb higher and higher until one has reached the universal truth.

I have no doubt that even you might be initiated into these, the more elementary mysteries of love. But I don't know whether you can comprehend the final revelation, for so far, you know, we are only at the bottom of the true scale of perfection.

Plato, Symposium, 210a⁵³

Such mysteries can be understood because they are not limited by sense perceptions. To Plato, those who were unable to understand the mysterion were those who "believe that nothing is real save what they can grasp with their hands and do not admit that actions or processes or anything invisible can count as real."⁵⁴ Since they (the philosophers who believe) have gone through a particular training, and now have become changed, able to have communion with the gods,⁵⁵ they are now given salvation from the blemishes and evils, the "taint of the prison house which now we are encompassed withal, and call a body, first bound therein as an oyster in its shell."⁵⁶

But what are these mysteries? What were the mysteries of philosophy?

In Meno 76 e, Meno tells Socrates that if Socrates would give him more answers, he would stay and be initiated into the Mysteries (mysterion).⁵⁷ These virtues that Meno wishes to be initiated into are the mysteries pertaining to the characteristics of true virtue.⁵⁸

In Phaedrus 250, Plato describes the awe and wonder of gazing upon Beauty itself. Though Plato does not use the word mysterion, Plato does use terminology of the mystery cults: ōrgiazomen (250. C.1); atremē (250. C.3); epopteyontes (250. C.4); katharoi ontes (250. C. 4-5).⁵⁹

In the Symposium, Diotima⁶⁰ demonstrates the progress one must follow in order to go from the lower levels to the final revelation of the mysteries of Love (209 e - 210 a). First, there is the love of one body, and this progresses to the love of everybody. From here, the person must realize that there is a greater love - the love of the soul. This continues to develop from the love of the soul, to the love of laws and institutions, to the love of all forms of knowledge, "turning his eyes toward the sea of beauty ... he will come upon one single form of knowledge, the knowledge of beauty ... (210 d)." Therefore, the philosopher has reached the peak of the ladder and they have comprehended the true essence of the object - in this case it is Love.

And finally, in Phaedo 69 c., Socrates tells his students that philosophers do not fear death. Philosophers do not consider death a "great evil" (68 d), but rather death is a freeing of the soul from the body (67 d-e).

For Socrates and Plato the philosopher is like the initiated in a mystery cult - in an allegorical sense. For those who enter the after-life uninitiated and unenlightened, their existence will be mire. But those who have been a part of the purification rites (for the

philosopher it is a purification in wisdom), they will dwell with the gods (69 c).⁶¹

Since Plato only uses the word mysterion twice (Theaetetus 156 a; Meno 76 e), Plato's "mystery" and "mysterion" is one in which the philosopher gains understanding by being purified and initiated into the philosophical rites, therefore obtaining understanding of the ultimate - be it Beauty, Love, Death, Virtue.

Now a man who employs such memories rightly is always being initiated into perfect mysteries (teletas) and he alone becomes truly perfect;

Phaedrus, 249 c.

IV MAGIC

The Greek Magical Papyri are a collection of hymns, spells and rituals from Graeco-Roman Egypt, dating from the second century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E.⁶² The word mysterion occurs several times within the papyri. There is no distinction between the word "magic" and the word "mystery." They are viewed as the same thing. Within the papyri there is the "mystery" - mysterion (PGM IV. 723, 746); "as you have founded, as you have decreed, and have established the mystery. I am PHEROURA MIOURI (722-723) ... as you are anointing his face with the mystery" (746); the "mysteries" - mysteria (IV. 476; V 110); .. "I am Moses your prophet to whom you have transmitted your mysteries" (110); the great mystery - mega mysterion (I. 131; IV. 794); ... "share this great mystery with no one [else], but conceal it" (131); the greatest mystery - mysterion megiston (IV. 2592); ... "Your greatest myst'ry (sic.), goddess" (2592); the mystery of God - mysterion tou theou (XIII. 128, 685); ... "Begin to recite the stele and the mystery of the god, which is [called] 'Scarab'" (128); the divine mystery - theion mysterion (XIXa. 52); the super mystery - megalomysterion (XII.322); ... "So keep this in a secret place as a great mystery. Hide it,

hide it!" (322); and the holy mysteries - ta iera mysteria (IV. 2477).⁶³

The mysterion is also connected within the papyri to a magical ring that has a carved gemstone in the form of a scarab (XII. 275-76, 331, 333). And there is also a love spell that regards the sexual act as the "mystery rite of Aphrodite" (XXXVI. 306).⁶⁴

V SECULAR USE

The word mysterion also came to be used metaphorically in secular contexts. In Plutarch's Moralia, for example, Plutarch states that a person regards death as a mystery. "And not inelegantly did the man seem to put the case who called 'sleep the Lesser Mysteries (mysteria) of death'; for sleep is really a preparatory rite of death."⁶⁵ It would also come to be regarded as a general secret.⁶⁶

The word mysterion also transferred over into the Latin language. In Latin the word is mysterium. The word mysterium was used to describe the mystery cults. For example, the last first century BCE poet Ovid wrote that "the mysteries (mysteria) of Venus are not hidden in chests, nor does the hollow bronze resound to frenzied blows."⁶⁷ But the word mysterium was also used in areas other than the mysteries (similar to mysterion). It was used to refer to the "secrets of rhetoricians (rhethorum aperiamus mysterium),"⁶⁸ and the "secrets of oratory (dicendi mysteria)."⁶⁹

VI CONCLUSION

This chapter has taken a look at how the word mysterion has developed from its beginnings in the mystery cult, through its shift into Plato's philosophy, and onto the areas of magic and ordinary use. The concept of mysterion thus became a part of the cultural milieu of society.

The mystery religions were very popular cults in the ancient world. Even if one did not belong to a mystery cult, a person would know about the secrecy of the cult, the requirement that one must not tell the uninitiated about divine mysteries. Historians and playwrights also knew about the mysteries and often alluded to a cult's name in their writings. Plato likewise knew about the mystery cults and even adapted cult terminology (including mysterion) to explain the initiation of a person into the mysteries of philosophy. Furthermore, mysterion could even be found as a commonplace of magical spells and incantations. Indeed, the word mysterion was so widely employed that the term even became devalued to mean just "secrets" - with no divine connotations implied in its use.

Therefore, the word mysterion was used so broadly within the classical world, it seems unlikely that Paul would have limited the use of such a word to a single category of meaning. Moreover, Paul's audience would likewise have been aware of the broad use of the word mysterion, and would have interpreted and understood it in many different ways.

Endnotes

¹ Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, ed. by Philip Babcock Gove and the Merriam-Webster Editorial Staff, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc.), p. 404.

² There is a time frame for these ancient Greek references which contain the word mysterion (with the exception of the section entitled "Etymology") - before and during the life of Paul.

³ Chrys C. Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, (Doctoral thesis, Uppsala University, 1977), p. 9, n. 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1. C. Kerényi, Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter, trans. Ralph Manheim, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1967), p. 46.

⁶ Lewis Richard Farnell, The Cults of the Greek States, Vol. III, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 130.

⁷ H. Kramer suggests that the -terion in the word mysterion is a suffix denoting where the action is occurring. H. Kramer, "Mysterion" in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 446.

^{7a} Heraclitus, fragment 14.

⁸ Aristophanes, Peace, lines 419-420. Also see the Greek fragment IG I³ 6B. (35). A translation of this fragment can be found in Matthew Dillion and Lynda Garland, Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 349-350.

⁹ Diodorus of Sicily, Book V. 48.4 (brackets added). Also see Plato, Letters, VII. 333. E: "initiations (epopteuein) into the different Mysteries," ; Euripides, Hippolytus, lines 24-25: "initiated into the holy mysteries."

¹⁰ Farnell, The Cults of the Greek States, pp. 130-131.

¹¹ Also see Diodorus of Sicily, Book V. 48.4: "it is not lawful, however, for any but the initiated to hear about the mysteries (memyēmenon)."

¹² Diogenes, X. 139-144. Plutarch, Moralia, "How to Study Poetry, 37. Martin P. Nilsson, A History of Greek Religion, trans. F. J. Fielden, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 213.

¹³Thaddeus Zielinski, The Religion of Ancient Greece, trans. George Rapall Noyes, (Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc., 1975), pp. 149-150.

¹⁴Also see Thucydides, Book VI. 28. 1-2. Plutarch, Lives, "Alcibiades," 19.1; 22.3.

^{14a}There are many other mystery cults within the Hellenic and Hellenistic worlds: the Orphic mysteries; the Andanian Mysteries of Messenia; the Anatolian Mysteries; the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis and Osiris; the Dionysis Mysteries; and the Mithra Mysteries. For further reading see: W. Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); R. Furneau, Ancient Mysteries, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987); W. K. Guthrie and L. J. Alderlink, Orpheus and Greek Religion, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); M. Hall, Initiates of Greece and Rome, (Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research Society); R. Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery Religions, (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1979).

¹⁵Martin P. Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1961), p. 46, 51. A. R. Burn, Persia and the Greeks, second edition, (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Inc., 1984), p. 436.

^{15a}George E. Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p.

¹⁶Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 31.

¹⁷Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 17.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹Plutarch, Lives, "Demetrius," 26.

²⁰H. W. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, ed. H. H. Scullard, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 56. Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 240.

²¹Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 241.

²²Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 58. Zielinski, The Religion of Ancient Greece, p. 147. Jean-Pierre Vernant, Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 324.

²³Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 61. For a breakdown of how the fee was distributed between the temple, the priests, the priestesses, etc., see I G I³ 6C. Dillon and Garland, Ancient Greece, p. 350. Rice and Stambaugh classify this fragment as I G I² 6C. David G. Rice and John E. Stambaugh, Sources for the Study of Greek Religion, (Missoula,

Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 184-185.

²⁴Burn, Persia and the Greeks, p. 436. Kerényi, Eleusis, p. 46.

²⁵Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 243.

²⁶Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 59. Xenophon, Hellenica, I. IV. 20: "He led out all his troops and conducted by land the procession of the Eleusinian Mysteries (ta mysteria)."

²⁷Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 245. Walter Burkert, Greek Religion, trans. John Raffan, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 287. Plutarch, Lives, "Phocion", 28.3. In the Rule of the Andanian Mysteries, 6., has a similar use of placing the sacred objects in chests. ("Rule of the Andanian Mysteries", in The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook, ed. Marvin W. Meyer, [San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1987], p. 53.)

²⁸H. J. Rose, Religion in Greece and Rome, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 74.

²⁹*Tbid.*, p. 74. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, pp. 62-63.

³⁰Rose, Religion in Greece and Rome, p. 75. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 62. Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 49. Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 249. Aristophanes, The Acharnians, line 747. In Plutarch's Lives, "Phocion," 28.3, there is a description of how one year a bad omen happened to the tying of the ribbon around the sacred chests - instead of purple it was a "sallow and deathly colour." Later on an initiate was washing his/her pig in the harbour and it was eaten by a fish so that only the upper half of the body remained.

³¹Rose, Religion of Greece and Rome, p. 75.

³²Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, pp. 249-250. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, pp. 62-63. The blood of the pigs would be sprinkled on the initiates. Also see Burkert, Greek Religion, p. 286.

³³Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 63.

³⁴Luther H. Martin, Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 66. Pausanias, Description of Greece, II. 26. 8.

³⁵Kerényi describes the procession as a "ritual procession to this festival of 'vision'." Kerényi, Eleusis, p. 47.

³⁶C. E. Robinson, Everyday Life in Ancient Greece, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 137. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 65. Euripides, Rhesus, line 942: "And the torch-march of those veiled Mysteries (mysterion)."

³⁷Parke, Festival of the Athenians, p. 66. Burkert, Greek Religion, p. 287.

³⁸Plutarch, Lives, "Camillus," XIX. 6-7.

³⁹The stones of the bridge were built from the ruins of the old Eleusinian temple that was destroyed by the Persians. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 59.

⁴⁰Burkert, Greek Religion, p. 287. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 66.

⁴¹Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 55.

⁴²Plato makes mention of the dance of the Corybantes (Euthydemus, 277 d), and also the dance of the bacchanals (Laws VII. 815 c.d.).

⁴³Burkert, Greek Religion, pp. 288-290. Martin, Hellenistic Religions, p. 68.

⁴⁴Robinson, Everyday Life in Ancient Greece, p. 137.

⁴⁵J. N. Coldstream, "Greek Temples: Why and Where?" in Greek Religion and Society, ed. P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 91.

⁴⁶Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 261.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 273.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 272-273. Parke follows the same idea as Mylonas. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁹Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus, lines 1049-1051.

⁵⁰Herodotus, The Histories, 2.51.

⁵¹Kramer, "Mysterion," p. 447.

⁵²Plato, Symposium, 211c.

⁵³Also see Gorgias 497c. Plato uses the Lesser and Greater of the Eleusinian Mysteries as a metaphor for the initiation into the philosophical mysteries. E. R. Dodds, Plato: Gorgias, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 313.

⁵⁴Plato, Theaetetus, 155e.

⁵⁵Plato, Phaedo, 81a.

⁵⁶Plato, Phaedrus, 250 c.

⁵⁷Plato, Theaetetus, 156 a: "Whose secrets I am going to initiate you"?"

⁵⁸Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, p. 20. R. S. Bluck, Plato's Meno, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 254.

⁵⁹G. J. DeVries, A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato, (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969), p. 151.

⁶⁰James Adam considers Diotima a prophetess in the framework of the Eleusinian Mysteries. James Adam, The Religious Teachers of Greece, (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1908), p. 396. Festugiere suggests that Diotima was a priestess of Mantinea. Andre-Jean Festugiere, Personal Religion Among the Greeks, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), p. 43.

⁶¹G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 808. The main goal of the initiate into the mystery religions was a vision of the divine; the hope of a mystical unity with the divine. The same can be said for Plato's mysterion. It was the mystical wisdom that was gained by the unity with the divine. As a result of these mysteries, it enabled one to "elevate the soul to union with the divine." See Plato, Epinomis, 986 d.

⁶²Hans Dieter Betz, "Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri," in Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 248. Within the Greek Magical Papyri the procedure of the spells (PGM IV. 125); 2518-19 -- Krube) and the mystery of the spells were to remain a secret ("So keep this in a secret place as a great mystery. Hide, hide [it]!" [megalomysterion. Krube. krube] -- PGM XII. 321-322). The spells' mystery were supposed to have contained the revelation and knowledge of the divine, and also the literary source(s) of the spells (Hans Dieter Betz, "Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri," in Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions, ed. Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa, [Leiden and New York and Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995], pp. 154-160).

⁶³Ibid., p. 249.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 252-253. The Mithras Liturgy, line 795: "... while wearing the great mystery of the scarab"; in Meyer, The Ancient Mysteries, p. 221.

⁶⁵Plutarch, Moralia, "A Letter to Apollonius," 107.E.

⁶⁶Menander, Fabula Incerta, 168. Soranus the late first century writer, uses the word *mysteria* to describe family secrets (Gynaeciorum, 1.3) and superstitious beliefs (Gynaeciorum, 1.4). Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, p. 21. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," p. 811.

⁶⁷Ovid, The Art of Love, 609. Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 114. 14.8 -- "When you know whether or not there has been an intercalation in Rome please write to me definitely the date of the Mysteries (mysteria)."

⁶⁸Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, 4.55.

⁶⁹Cicero, De Oratore, 1. 206.

Chapter 3:

A Survey of the Word Mysterion And Its Hebrew and Aramaic Equivalents Within Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and Philo

In the previous chapter the conclusion that was reached was that the word mysterion underwent development. The word mysterion developed from a word that was associated only with the mystery cults to a broad word used by many different groups. Can this same development be said for the concept of mystery as it is found within the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature?

But what is Jewish Apocalyptic Literature? The period which contains Jewish Apocalyptic Literature is dated from 200 BCE to 100 CE. It is concerned with the writing of and by Jewish circles pertaining to the destiny of its people through the medium of

revelations, dreams and visions sent by God.¹ To be more specific, “Apocalypse” may be defined as:

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.²

There are many general characteristics that can be found within most of the apocalyptic literature. The literature may describe historical events, but the purpose of this description is eschatological. It is written to show the readers that the punishment that the people and/or the righteous have endured is almost over. The writings provide a hope that there is a cataclysmic end, one that demonstrates a glimpse into a kingdom of God.³ The literature is also esoteric in nature; that is to say, the literature is usually associated with a particular group who have and/or are given certain secrets and/or knowledge. These books are written under the premise that certain secrets and/or knowledge have been revealed to them (“them” being the writer(s) and/or the community) and now are to be used to provide both hope for the eventful end and instruction for the elect, for generations to come.⁴

The medium in which these secrets are revealed may vary. Sometimes the receivers of these mysteries are taken up to heaven, either bodily or spiritually (this idea will be described in more detail later on in this chapter). Sometimes an angel is the one who acts as a guide or interpreter of the mysteries. And the angels are the ones who sometimes function as the mediators of the secrets to humans.⁵

But the two most common forms of receiving a secret are through dreams and

visions. The dreams are considered to be the media through which God chooses to send the secrets and/or knowledge. Not only are they sent by God, but God is also the source of these secrets. And the receivers themselves must be open to the revelation that they are about to receive and also prepared to live a life that is righteous and upright.⁶

D S Russell lists the characteristics which are associated with visions as being:

- 1) a review of world history right up to the time in which the writer is supposed to have lived
- 2) a form of prediction which relates to eschatological events - i.e., future destiny of the world, the kingdom of God, judgement of the world, punishment of the wicked, rewards for the righteous
- 3) a description of the mysteries of another world
- 4) a description of cosmological events - i.e., movements of planets and stars, causes of thunder, lightning, wind and dew⁷

John J. Collins gives a different list regarding the characteristics associated with visions:

- 1) an indication of the circumstances
- 2) a description of the vision, introduced by a term such as "behold"
- 3) a request for interpretation, often because of fear
- 4) an interpretation, usually by an angel
- 5) concluding material, which may include the reaction of the seer, instructions, or parentheses⁸

Neither one is incorrect. Both are correct for different reasons. Russell gives a list which concentrates more on the subject and context of the visions. The visions' topics and context pertain more to the areas of eschatology, cosmology, and history. Collins's list

stresses more of a literary structure of the visions. These two lists will be illustrated more when we look at some of the apocalyptic literature in detail.

But these people who had received and written down the mysteries, who were they?

D. S. Russell proposes the idea that the writers of these Apocalyptic works did not come from a specific group, but they may have come "from the scribal circle and ... belonged to the same ilk."⁹ Russell suggests that the writers did not come from a specific community because when one looks at the literature, there are differences in the works' theology, setting, circumstances, and problems. But what is common among the different works, which suggest that the writers "belonged to the same ilk" is: 1) that all share a common conviction to be receivers of the secrets; 2) all share a common purpose to provide instruction to people during the troubled times; 3) and all share a common hope to tell of the coming of the Kingdom of God.¹⁰

The reference to a "scribal circle" comes from the Hebrew term maskilim ("those who are wise") within Daniel 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10. These "wise ones'" main purpose was to instruct the people (rabbim - the many) on how they themselves could also become wise. The "wise ones" were learned scribes who sought out and gained insight into the divine mysteries. The book of Sirach describes the "wise ones" as follows:

How different the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. He serves among the great and appears before rulers; he travels in foreign lands and

learns what is good and evil in the human lot.

Sirach 39: 1-4 (NRSV)¹¹

But other scholars have tried to come up with a more specific answer as to the identity of those who have written the apocalyptic literature. These scholars do not deny the importance of the term maskilim, but rather, they make the claim that these scribes were actually part of a group called the Hasidaeans.

Victor Tcherikover uses all three references to the Hasidim (1 Maccabees 2:42; 7: 12-13; 2 Maccabees 14:6) to propose the theory that this scribal sect became part of a national resistance during the revolt of the Maccabees.

Tcherikover suggests that verse 2:42 describes the Hasidim as an established scribal sect before the revolts began. Around the beginning of the second century B.C.E. Simon the Just, a high priest and a member of the Hasidim, helped the sect gain acceptance by the priesthood. The scribal writings (the Oral Law) were also accepted as being an "official authoritative interpretation of the Mosaic Law."¹² Therefore the Hasidim became an established sect and part of the Jewish hierarchy.

In 1 Maccabees 7: 12-16, it appears as if the Hasidim is connected to the scribes, but also, this group is referred to as an army. This "group of scribes" (verse 12) came before the Seleucid High Priest, Alcimus, and the general, Bacchides, to talk peace, and Alcimus made the claim that "We will not seek to injure you or your Friends" (verse 15). But Alcimus went against his word, seized and murdered "sixty of them in one day" (verse 16). The group (Hasidim) then fled out into the desert to settle there and "seek out righteousness and justice" (1 Maccabees 2: 29-30). Tcherikover suggests that the group

who fled out into the desert is the same group who went to talk to Alcimus because both references use the same expression of a group searching and seeking out peace and justice.¹³ Therefore the Hasidim became a group of freedom fighters, and would “not let the kingdom attain tranquillity” (2 Maccabees 14:6).¹⁴

Russell suggests a possible objection to the Hasidim being the “mighty warriors of Israel” (1 Maccabees 2:42) because this idea goes against the belief of the references to the maskilim in Daniel, suggesting that they were a quiet, peaceful group.¹⁵ But Russell does propose the idea that the Hasidim were a peaceful group, but because of the revolt they were forced to become part of the rebellion.¹⁶

The Hasidim were peaceful because they were known for being butchered on the Sabbath because they would not take up arms.¹⁷ Tcherikover warns against the idea proposed by other scholars that the Hasidim were peaceful. Tcherikover makes the point that there are six other days in which the Hasidim could take up arms and cause resistance.¹⁸

Thus far we have looked at the general characteristics that classify literature as being part of Jewish Apocalyptic and we have also looked at the possible theories as to who wrote these works. But this thesis deals with the word mysterion. How does the word mysterion fit into and deal with the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature?

The Greek word mysterion is used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the Aramaic word rāz¹⁹ (the Hebrew root is ruz - to hide) and the Hebrew word sôd. The word rāz involves mysteries/secrets of the divine, while sôd are mysteries/secrets among humans: secrets that are planned by a king (Judith 2:2; Tobit 12:7); secrets that pertain to war (2

Maccabees 13:21); secrets that relate to gossip (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19; and secrets that pertain to friendship (Sirach 22:22; 27: 16-17, 21).²¹

The word rāz places its origins within Sanskrit. In Sanskrit rāz first takes the form of rahas- and means "solitude, lonely place, secret, what is hidden;"²² it was adapted by Proto-Aryan and remained unchanged. The word rāz found its way into the Aramaic language which borrowed it from Old Iranian (razah-), but is found more frequently within Middle Persian and still carries the meanings "hidden, secret, etc."²³

Dictionaries have labelled rāz with many different meanings:

- 1) a secret; cf. berāzā' in secret; secretly
- 2) agreement, council
- 3) conspiracy
- 4) anything having a secret or mystical meaning, a type, figure, sign, symbol; cf. berāzā, "mystically, "; nersheumūm berāzā, selibā, "they sign with the sign of the cross;"
- 5) a mystery, sacrament, the Holy Eucharist, the sacred species
- 6) pagan rites; cf. rāzā deshidé "the secret (=rite) of devils"²⁴

Some dictionaries, according to Raymond E. Brown, include the idea that the word "council" may also be used to translate the Hebrew word sôd.^{24a} As stated above, one of the ways in which the mysteries are revealed is by the receiver of the mysteries being transported to heaven, either bodily or spiritually. It is this medium that is linked with the concept of a heavenly council.

According to Raymond E. Brown, this concept of a Heavenly council has its origins within Babylonian and Ugaritic literature. Within Ancient Mesopotamian religious beliefs the leadership of the heavenly assembly was headed by An, the father of the gods. Alongside him was another god, Enlil, the god of storms. Between them they "broached

the matters to be considered."^{21b} this divine assembly was in charge of the destiny of humankind. It was the assembly that granted kingship, the outcome of a person's life (i.e., the rape of Ninlil), and the council that decided the destruction of humankind by the flood.^{24c}

Ugaritic literature is similar to the Hebrew Bible in that both councils speak in the first person plural. The Ugaritic text 49:1 states "let us make (N.) king" and text 51:42-44 states "Our king is ... our judge without peer."^{24d} The same idea can be found within Genesis 1:26, "let us make humankind in our image," (NRSV); and Genesis 3:22, "Now that the man has become like one of us knowing good from evil," (NIB); and Genesis 11:7, "Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there," (NRSV).

The people of Israel believed that there was a heavenly council which God ruled over. God was the One Who had the final say in all matters. God is the One Who is feared and Who judges (Psalms 82:1; 89:7). The role of the angels was to come before the council, to make suggestions and to carry out the decisions decreed by God.

... until a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, "I will entice him." "How?", The Lord asked him. He replied, "I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. Then the Lord said, "You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it."

1 Kings 22:21-22 (NRSV)

But God is not the One Who reveals the secrets to the people directly; rather, it is through the prophets (a privileged few who are allowed into the council) that the message is proclaimed.²⁶ The author of Amos states in 3:7 that, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets." In 1 Kings 22, the King of Israel

disliked the prophet Micaiah because the prophet never spoke prophecies that were favourable to the King (verse 22:8). Micaiah believed that all of the other prophets were false (verse 23), but his prophecies were true because "whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak ... I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of Him (verses 14, 19)." Jeremiah follows this same idea of false prophecy, by warning the people that the prophecies are not true because they are "not from the mouth of God ... For who has stood in the council of the Lord so as to see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word so as to proclaim it? (Verses 23: 16-18)."²⁷

The best example of how the prophets were able to "attend" the heavenly councils and to hear the mysteries that were to be revealed is found in the prophet Isaiah. In chapter 6 of Isaiah, Isaiah views God sitting on a throne with Seraphs above Him, singing praises to God (verses 1-3). Isaiah does not wish to enter the temple because he is unclean. A Seraph comes over to him and cleanses his mouth with a hot coal. Isaiah hears a voice that says, "Whom shall I send, who will go for us?" (verse 8). Isaiah responds, "Here am I, send me!" (verse 8). The prophet receives the oracle and becomes a divine herald to pronounce the message to the people. This same idea also occurs in Isaiah 40:3-8 and 48:20-21.

What is interesting within these three examples (chapters 6, 40, 48) is the fact that Isaiah is told the oracle through an angelic herald; it does not come directly from God. In these chapters an anonymous herald addresses the oracles with God in the third person singular, and not in the first person singular.²⁸ Another interesting thing to note is the fact

that God's chosen people are not addressed as "my people." Instead, the verses describe them as "this people" (6:9) or "All people" (40:6) and finally, "for them" (48:21). In 40:1 God does say, "Comfort, O comfort My people," but the sentence ends with "says your God." This suggests that there is some sort of "legalistic communication" at work. The prophets only receive the mystery from the heavenly herald, which the heavenly heralds have received from God.

Before the death of Jesus there is still this system of revelation. Even at the events of the birth of Jesus there existed angelic heralds - Joseph to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:20-24); birth of John the Baptist foretold (Luke 1:11); Mary visited by Gabriel (Luke 1:26-27); the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:8).

But when one looks at the "mystery verses" of Paul, the question is raised, "Is sôd an influence on Paul?" Is there an angelic herald? Is there the concept of a heavenly council within Paul's "mystery verses"? These questions will be addressed in more detail in the chapters to follow.

The next pages will take a chronological look at the development of mysterion (as used for a translation of raz) as it occurs within Jewish apocalyptic literature. Another matter that must also be taken into consideration with regard to the selection of the following literary works is that they fit into the timeframe of being written before and/or during Paul's lifetime. The works that will be focussed upon are: Daniel, Sirach, 1 Enoch; works of the Qumran Community; and Wisdom. Each section will follow the same structure: first to look at the proposed dates for the literary work; second to examine the use and meaning of mysterion within the literary work; and finally, to compare and

contrast the use of mysterion between the literary work and any other apocalyptic literature which has already been examined. After this is completed, an examination of the philosophical works of Philo and his use of the term mysterion will also be viewed.

I A) Daniel

There are two dates for the book of Daniel. Scholars do not believe that the book of Daniel was written all at once. There exists a developmental theory as to the creation of the book known as Daniel. It is suggested that chapters 1-6 were probably written sometime during the fourth to third centuries B.C.E. and were later on connected with chapters 7-12. The reason given for the chapters 1-6 being written around the fourth or third centuries is the language. Verses 1-2:4a were written in Hebrew, and verses 2:4b-6:28 were written in Aramaic.²⁸ The style and the language of the Hebrew and Aramaic indicate a later date than the style and language of the Elephantine papyri. The Elephantine papyri were written in the fifth century B.C.E. Therefore, Daniel 1-6 must have been written sometime after the fifth century B. C. E.²⁹

The descriptions that the author of Daniel 7-12 gives within chapters 9 and 11 suggest the possibility that this literary piece was written during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.). The author gives an interesting description in 9:27 and 11: 30-36 about Daniel's vision of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and profanation of the temple (11:31). Though the author does give details of the persecutions and events that did take place during the Seleucid Dynasty, the author does not tell of the death of the king. Rather, it is hazy and only points to the inevitable fate of an end:³⁰ "He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with no one to help him (11:45)."³¹

John J. Collins supports the developmental theory of the two different parts of Daniel, but along with the allusion to the persecutions that occurred within the Hellenistic age, there are other differences with which to contend. The revelations found within chapters 1-6 are part of a larger story - the court tales, while the revelations in chapters 7-12 are strictly revelations; they are not tied to or part of a larger picture. Within chapters 7-12, Daniel is the only one who receives the visions, but in chapters 1-6, there are others along with Daniel who sought out the visions (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah).³²

The Aramaic word raz (translated into Greek as mysterion) occurs eight times within Daniel. All of these occurrences appear within the first half of Daniel (chapters 1-6).

The mystery is found within the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. Nebuchadnezzar had a series of dreams that troubled him. He asked his magicians and enchanters to reveal the interpretation of his dreams. But the sorcerers could not give the king the interpretation unless they were able to know the dream (Daniel 2:2-3). In verses 4:5-7, Nebuchadnezzar tells the magicians and enchanters the dream, but they are still unable to give an interpretation of the dream.³³

Daniel, along with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were able to know and understand the dreams because they sought God to reveal the "mystery" to them (2: 17-18). Within verse 2:18, mysterion (LXX) has the characteristics of a secret hidden from humans by God, and this mysterion is only disclosed by God to humans. The same idea is found in verse 2:23 where Daniel praises God and says,

To you, God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have revealed to me what we asked of you, for you have revealed to us, what the king ordered.

And in verses 2: 27-28, Daniel tells the king that,

"No wise men, enchanters, magicians or diviners can show to the king the mystery that the king is asking, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of the days."

The mysterion was revealed to Daniel through the medium of a vision (see above - - visions as a medium) within verse 2:19.³⁴ In chapter four, Daniel is once again called into the presence of the king to interpret a dream because the king tells Daniel that he is "endowed with a spirit of holy gods" and that "no mystery is too difficult for you (4:9)." But, unlike chapter 2, the time period is vague. In chapter two, Daniel went home and received the vision during the night (2: 17-19),³⁵ but in chapter four, Daniel "was severely distressed for awhile (4:19)." But in the next verse Daniel does not give any indication that the interpretation of the dream has been revealed to him by God; rather it is indirect. Daniel just starts into the interpretation of the dream. The only indication that the reader has as to the interpretation being from God is in verses 8-9 and 31-33. In verse 8, King Nebuchadnezzar states that Daniel is a person "who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods, and no mystery is too difficult for you." Also, the king was taken back by the interpretation that Daniel gave (verse 29) and the king only believed the interpretation when a voice from heaven restated what Daniel had spoken to him previously within the king's court.

In chapter 5, the queen tells King Belshazzar (King Nebuchadnezzar's son) that there is a person who can interpret the writing on the wall. A man "who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods (5:11)."³⁶ Though God is central in the interpretation (5: 18-19, 21, 23, 26), God is not mentioned as the one who reveals the mystery of the writing. Daniel is the one, not God, who reads the writing (5:17). But indirectly and quite vaguely it may be said that God is the one who lets the king "know the interpretation (5: 14-17)."

In Daniel, the visions and dreams use a language that is filled with symbols and strange images (a statue made of gold, bronze, iron, and clay - 2: 32-33; a tree that reaches heaven - 4: 10-11). The visions and dreams are a series of strange symbols which are themselves a mystery. Not only are the symbols individual mysteries, but when viewed as a group, they are also a mystery. Not only do the symbols reveal the end, they are the vehicles through which the mystery is presented.³⁷

G. Bornkamm believes that the mysteries of eschatological events were only revealed to those who were "inspired by His Spirit;"³⁸ though this is true, there is another half that must be looked at. In verse 2:30, Daniel states that the dreams have been revealed to Daniel "in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind." The Hebrew word in this verse is hōddi'ak. It is in the causative form which means "that he may cause you to know."³⁹ Not only are there people who reveal the mysteries to others, but there are also special people who become a part of God's plan to reveal the mystery. Even though the individual does not have the wisdom to understand the

mystery, it was believed that God intervened in history and made them a part of the revelation process.

Raymond E. Brown makes the suggestion that the mysterion that is revealed in the dreams as interpreted by Daniel shows the beginning development of a heavenly council - sôd. The medium in which the mysterion is revealed is different (there is the use of symbols). What is important is the fact that the mysteries are revealed by God to those certain people chosen by God. This same idea is similar to the sôd of Amos 3:7.⁴⁰

Surely the Lord God does nothing,
without revealing his secrets to his servants
the prophets.

In conclusion, Daniel's use of mysterion is one that is disclosed by the God of heaven, only to those that are inspired by him. The mysterion cannot be known by humans. It is something that is beyond human understanding. Only God is the one that can reveal the mysteries to humans: "The king said to Daniel, 'Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery' (2:47)."

The mysterion in Daniel is very much eschatological and historical in nature. When Daniel was finished giving the interpretation of the king's first dream, Daniel told the king that the events spoken in the interpretation were those of "the end of days (2:28)." John J. Collins makes the point that the phrase "the end of days" (Collins uses the translation "at the end of the era") is used eight times in the Hebrew Bible (Numbers 24:14; Genesis 49:1; Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29; Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; Hosea 3:5; and Ezekiel 38:16). None of these references uses the phrase to denote an ending of history or the ending of the world. Rather, it is used to suggest the ending of a particular period of time. The references in Deuteronomy

describe a change in the history of Israel because of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. "Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will neither abandon you nor destroy you; He will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that He swore to them (4:31)." And the Isaiah/Micah references talk of events that will happen in the near future.⁴¹

The mysterion of chapters 1-6 is eschatological, but not in the sense of end times and the end of history. Rather the mysteries that are found within the dreams describe the events of things to happen in the distant future, much the same as Isaiah and Micah describe the "end of the era." The dreams concentrate on the coming of a new kingdom, but it is not the coming of the Kingdom of God. Instead, the mysteries center around the establishment of Kingdoms in the near future. Chapter 2 of Daniel describes the kingdoms that are to follow after Nebuchadnezzar: Nebuchadnezzar is the gold; to follow are the bronze, the iron and the clay. The dream found in chapter 4 persuades Nebuchadnezzar to search for God, but he is later re-established as king of his kingdom (4:36). The dream of chapter 5 describes to King Belshazzar who will conquer and divide his kingdom - the Medes and the Persians (5:27).

B) Sirach

There is a general consensus among scholars as to the date of Sirach. The author of Sirach describes in verses 50: 1-21 the high priest Simon, son of Onias, performing the rituals of a Daily Whole-Offering.⁴² It is believed that Simon was the high priest from 219 to 196 B.C.E.⁴³ But the book Sirach does not mention any troubled times or persecutions. Therefore, this leads some people to believe that Sirach was written during or after the time of Simon, but before the ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.) and his reign of

persecutions of the Jews.⁴⁴

As stated above, the word mysterion is used in Sirach to translate the Hebrew word sôd, pertaining to friendship. Verse 22:22 describes how a person will lose friends if they disclose secrets about that friend. In verses 27: 16-17, 21, this same idea of not betraying the secrets of your friends is once again described (mysteria).

But the author of Sirach does not use mysterion to describe the divine secrets. Instead, the Greek word kruptos (secret) is used to describe the divine mysteries disclosed by God through Wisdom.

If a person wishes to receive the divine mysteries of God, they must pass several tests in order for the secrets (ta krupta) to be revealed to them (4:18). They must also spend time meditating on these secrets (Tois apokruphois - 39:7). "Happy is the person who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently, who reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets (Tois apokruphois - 14: 20-21).⁴⁵

Therefore, though the author does use the word mysterion, it does not pertain to this chapter and thesis with regards to "mysteries" which are revealed by the divine. But the reader should be made aware of the fact that the author of Sirach does use the concept of divine secrets, but does not use mytsterion to describe this concept.

C) 1 Enoch

1 Enoch (also known as Ethiopic Enoch) is divided into five sections: The book of Watchers (chapters 1-36); The book of Parables (chapters 37-71); The book of Astronomy (chapters 72-82); The book of Dreams (chapters 83-90); and The Epistle of Enoch (chapters 91-107).

R. H. Charles was a scholar who set the stage for the dating of 1 Enoch. Chapters 6-36 is placed some time before the latter half of the second century, around 170 B.C.E., on the basis that it does not mention the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes; secondly, since the work was written in Aramaic, it was before the Maccabean revolt and its struggle to revive the Hebrew language.⁴⁶ Chapters 37-71 were written some time between 94 and 64 B.C.E. The section is written before 64 BCE because Rome is not viewed as a power within Judaea. And the date 94 B.C.E. is established when the writer of 37-71 states that the righteous' blood had been shed (47: 1-4). Charles believes that this is in reference to the hatred imposed upon the Pharisees by the Maccabean princes and their Sadduceans supporters.⁴⁷ Chapters 72-82 are mentioned in the Book of Jubilees (4: 17-21). Therefore, Charles places a terminus ad quem of 110 B.C.E. on these chapters. Chapters 83-90 is dated by the reference to the lambs who became horned (Charles interprets this to be the Maccabean family) and the great horn (Judas Maccabeus). And since the great horn was still warring with the eagles, the vultures, the ravens and the kites (90:16), Charles places a date before the death of Judas (161 B.C.E.).⁴⁸

C. C. Torrey does not believe that the great horn is a reference to Judas, but rather it was Alexander Jannaeus (102-76) who caused all of the bloody wars and created the hatred towards the Pharisees. Judas' reign was too short to cause the strife mentioned in chapter 90. Torrey believes that 90: 14-17 refers to a time after the civil war that Alexander had created, hence dating this part of the book after 95 B.C.E.⁴⁹

Though scholars vary on the exact date of these writings, what can be determined is the fact that these works range from a time period shortly before 164 B.C.E. to 64 B.C.E.

The “mysteries” within the book Enoch are all found in heaven. Enoch is taken to heaven where he is met by Michael who guides and reveals to him the mysteries of heaven.⁵⁰ To be more specific, the mysteries were found on heavenly tablets. These tablets hold the mysteries of all the deeds of humankind, and recount the names of all who will be born (89:2); the tablets tell of the rewards the righteous will receive in heaven (103:2); the tablets also record the names of the elect and concern “the plant of righteousness and uprightness” (93:2); the tablets describe the destruction of the wicked and the rise of the righteous (106:19 - 107:1); even the angels are allowed to read from the tablets:

that the angels may read them and know what is to come upon the sinners, and upon the spirits of the humble ... and those who were abused by evil men; who love God, and did not love gold, silver, or any worldly good ...

Enoch 108:7-8⁵⁷

The heavenly tablets were one source of the mysteria. It was by the visions that Enoch “saw the secrets of heaven, everything that will occur on earth:” The visions themselves are what transported Enoch to heaven (11:8).⁵² The visions found in Enoch may also be described as “throne visions.” These visions describe the throne room in heaven and how “He who is great in glory, sat on it ... no creature of flesh could look,” (11: 15-24). In the second and third parables in the section known as “The Parables of Enoch,” both describe how “the Chosen One” (also described as the “Son of Man” [46: 2-4] and “the Head of Days” [60:2]) sat on the throne, and will judge the wicked and transform the earth so that the righteous may dwell upon it (45: 1-6; 60: 1-6). In the section known as “The Book of Dreams,” Enoch has “dream visions” regarding the destruction of the world by a flood (ch. 83; and another dream vision recounts the history of the world up to the

Maccabean period, which will be followed by the coming of the Messianic Age (ch. 85-90).⁵³ Both the "throne visions" and the "dream visions" use symbolic language. Enoch 60:7-8 describes monsters like the Leviathan and the Behemoth. Enoch 85-90 describes such things as a ball coming out of the earth (85:3), wolves pursuing sheep (89), and the shepherds who guard the sheep (90).⁵⁴

Even though Enoch is taken up to heaven, is revealed the mysteries of the universe and is taken to the throne room, Enoch still describes God as unsearchable. "And everything secret is clear before you, and your power is for all generations ... deep and without number are all your secrets, and your righteousness is beyond reckoning (63:3)." No one can understand the actions of God, they are a mystery to humankind, but God is the only one who knows and understands the actions of humankind (63:3), and their destiny.⁵⁵

Even the actions of all are regarded as a mystery. In Enoch 83:7, Enoch has a dream vision concerning "the secrets of all the sins of the earth." But the mysterion is also referred to as "the secrets of the righteous" (38: 2-3). Not only are the deeds of humankind recorded on tablets (89:2); they are also recorded and measured on "the ropes of the righteous" (61:3). These ropes are used to measure the righteous and to help strengthen the judgment of who is righteous (61: 1-5).

Throughout Enoch there exists a connection between the word "mystery" and the concept of "righteous." Not only is it linked with the theme of humans and their actions, but it is also connected with humans themselves. Here a dualistic socio-religious struggle is created between the mighty ("the sinners") and the oppressed ("the righteous"). It is the

mighty who corrupt and nullify the words of wisdom (46:5-8; 50:1-3; 98:14-15; 99:2), while it is the poor and the oppressed who listen to and follow the commandments in order to obtain salvation (99:10).⁶⁰

And now I know this mystery: For they (the sinners) shall alter the just verdict and many sinners will take it to heart; they will speak evil words and lie, and they will invent fictitious stories and write out my Scriptures on the basis of their own words ... Again I know another mystery!: that to the righteous and the wise shall be given the Scriptures ... and they shall believe and be glad in them ...

Enoch 104: 10-13

Enoch 58:5 states, "And after this it will be said to the saints in heaven that they should seek out the secrets of righteousness."⁵⁷ What do the "secrets of righteousness" mean? Does the expression refer to rewards or to good actions? For Brown the term is not clear; it may suggest either ideas.⁵⁸ However, if we look at the verses on the judgement of God (48:7, 49:4, 61:9, 62:7, 89:1, 103:2), we notice that the judgement of God is a mystery.

And he will judge the things that are secret, and
no one will be able to say an idle word before
him,

Enoch 49:4

The mystery is the punishment and salvation of the sinners and the elect respectively (38:3). It is the Son of Man who will judge humans at the final judgement. All will face the Son of Man, even the dead, whose judgement is considered a mystery (chapter 61). For the first time we view mysterion being connected with the concept of the Son of Man (48:6-7, 51:3, 62:1-7, 69:14).⁵⁹

Some scholars suggest the possibility that the term "Son of Man" is the work of a

Christian interpellator. Rowley makes the claim that there is no real evidence for the interpolation theory. The term must be given the benefit of the doubt and treated as a genuine part of the work. Rowley warns against the association the "Son of Man" as an individual connected with a Davidic believer or Christ.⁶⁰

T. W. Manson would argue that one should not even call the "Son of Man" in Enoch an individual. Manson suggests the idea that the "son of Man" in Enoch represented a group of people. Manson points out that the term "Son of Man" is also connected with the terms "the Elect" and "the Righteous." But these last two terms are also found in the plural form. Elect ones and Righteous ones. Manson believes that as a whole, all of the elect are called "The Elect." And when Enoch calls himself "the Son of Man" (48:6) Enoch does this to represent himself as the first person to enter the kingdom.⁶¹

The mysteries are not always associated with God and the Son of Man. The mysterion was also made known to humankind illegitimately by fallen angels. Here exists an almost "Promethean" concept of something that was kept to the gods/God and only made known through the descent of a divine being who makes known some of these mysteries to humankind.⁶²

You see what Azazel has done; how he has taught all (forms of) oppression upon the earth. And they have revealed eternal secrets which are performed in heaven (and which) man learned.

Enoch 9:6

The mysteries that pertain to the area of cosmology are rather frequent in Enoch. The character Enoch is allowed to view and understand the secrets of the heavens once again through visions (41: 1-7; 43: 1-2; 60: 11-22).⁶³ In Enoch 41: 1-7 Enoch is revealed the

secrets of how thunder and lightening occur;⁶⁴ where the wind blows; the secrets of clouds, dew, and the cycle of night and day. In 43: 1-2 Enoch is told the names of the stars and how their light is weighed. And Enoch 60: 11-22 describes the intervals of weather. Enoch also continues with a large description of these cosmological secrets in chapters 72-82. Brown suggests that the purpose of these secrets was to demonstrate that everything followed the will of God, and everything was for the plan of salvation.⁶⁵

In verses 92: 11-17 and 93: 1-10 (also known as the Apocalypse of Weeks) Enoch describes history in ten different parts. Seven of these parts have already come to pass, and the last three represent the time when the righteous will conquer the wicked and the new world will be created for all the righteous to live. In the second of Enoch's dream visions (already mentioned above) the Maccabean era will end with the triumph of the righteous.⁶⁶

The character Enoch declares that the visions and secrets that he has seen are not for his own generation (the character Enoch being the Enoch mentioned in Genesis), but the secrets pertain to "a distant generation which will come (1:2)."⁶⁷ This is stated by the writer, in order to give validity to the hidden secrets that are revealed; and to make a "declaration that the truth revealed of old has at last reached its consummation."⁶⁸

Enoch's mysterion is viewed through heavenly tablets and visions. For Daniel the visions are revealed directly from God. In Enoch there is a development in the concept of the heavenly council. Enoch is taken up to heaven and has throne visions. The Dream Book of Enoch resembles a connection with Daniel. The visions are connected with dreams and strange symbols. Within Daniel, however, the dream comes first and then there is the

interpretation vision. Enoch's dream-visions are more closely connected with Daniel 7-11 (written around the same time as Enoch). In both cases the dreams and visions are connected together, unlike the visions and dreams of Daniel 1-4.

Therefore, with regard to Enoch, there is a development in the use of the divine council, there are additions to the mediums of the mysterion (tablets, throne and dream visions; angels show and reveal mysteries), and there is a dramatic change in the use of cosmological, eschatological, and historical uses of mysterion in Enoch. This change in the literature may be the result of the persecutions by Antiochus. Here the writer(s) felt a need to encourage the people about the hard times they were facing. The people needed hope and satisfaction that their torment was not in vain. The people need some sort of assurance that their time would come and that God would deliver them and they would be rewarded in the new established kingdom. The writer(s) of Enoch believed that the Son of Man, the Chosen One would come and deliver the righteous.

D) The Qumran Community

There are several factors to consider regarding the date of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first of these factors is the archaeological evidence found at the ruins of Qumran. The pottery found at the site was found to be Roman dating from the timeframe of the second century B.C.E. to the first century C.E.⁶⁹ Other evidence found at the site are coins. As a result of studying the coins, there are three phases of the site. Phase I is divided into two parts, I(a) and I(b). The earliest coins found are from the reign of Antiochus VII Sidetes (138-129 B.C.E.) and there are 15 coins from John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BCE). These coins suggest that Ia was built sometime during the reign of John Hyrcanus I. The community

went through a change and the number of buildings increased during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE). There were eighty-six coins found from this time period. But the end of the Ib phase was marked by the destruction of the community by an earthquake in 31 BCE (Josephus, Antiquities 15:121). Evidence at the site shows that many of the buildings dropped 50 centimetres. There was no change to the rebuilding of the community. This suggests that the people who rebuilt the site originally came from the community. This is the beginning of phase II. Coins suggest that the community was rebuilt after Herod during the reign of Archelaus (4 BCE-6 CE) - 558 coins were discovered as part of a treasury. The community was destroyed by the Roman army in 68 CE and was later used as a Roman garrison.⁷⁰ Hence the scrolls were placed in the caves as a result of the attack. Therefore, the scrolls cannot be later than 68 C.E. In 1950 a Carbon 14 test was performed on the fragments and they were shown to be dated sometime around 33 C.E. (plus or minus 200 years). In 1983 a new test was performed and dated the scrolls to be around 20 B.C.E.⁷¹

Scholars have also taken a look at the literary works themselves. The use of five final letters that are part of the Hebrew square alphabet suggests a period from second century BCE to 70CE. The lettering is similar to that found from the first century BCE and CE. And the spelling and linguistic characteristics also suggest a time period of 200 BCE to 100 CE.⁷²

From this and other manuscript analyses, scholars have placed the works into three different categories: The pre-Hasmonean (250-150 BCE) which includes the biblical fragments; The Hasmonean (150-30 BCE) which includes the Damascus Rule and Isaiah;

and finally, The Herodian (30 BCE - 68 CE) which includes all of the commentaries, the second Isaiah scroll, the Thanksgiving Hymns, the War Rule, Genesis Apocryphon, Psalms, and Job Targum.⁷³

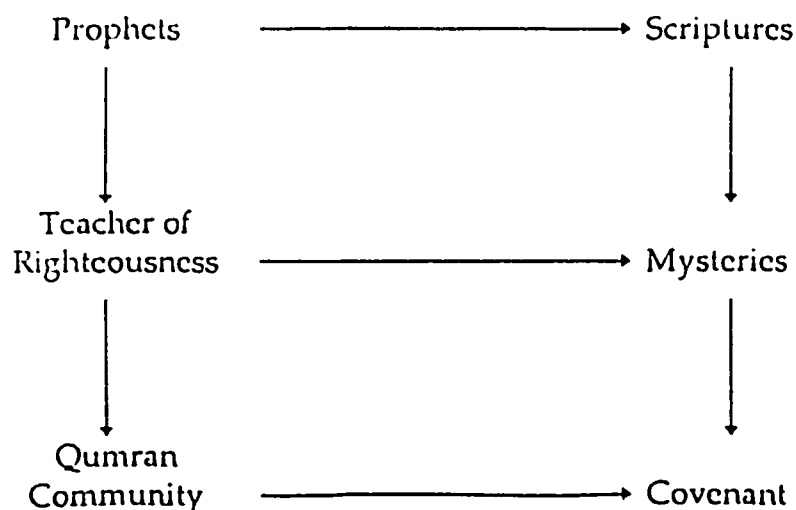
The word mysterion occurs fifty-five times within the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷⁴ Within both the Hebrew Bible and the literature of the Qumran Community the word mysterion is found in the pescharim.⁷⁵ That is to say, mysterion is linked with the concept of interpretation (peser). In Daniel 4:9 these two ideas are present: "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that you are endowed with a spirit of the holy gods and that no mystery is too difficult for you. Hear the dream that I saw; tell me its interpretation."⁷⁶ Within the Qumran Community, the method of pescharim became central. The realization of scripture was the interpretation of scripture as it related to the community. Scripture was something that was hidden, but according to the Qumran Community they had the key to its understanding as it related to them.⁷⁷ Three themes existed with the interpretation of the scripture:

- 1) The prophetic passages and the resulting pesher deal not with theology or doctrine, but with "realized eschatology."
- 2) The relevancy of the historical setting of the Scriptural passages is not significant; only contemporary events bear significance in understanding the prophetic passage.
- 3) The unity and cohesiveness of the context of the passage have no meaning in the understanding of it; rather contemporary events provide the

cohesiveness around which the text is interpreted. Thus, the sectarians must have felt that atomizing of the text did not discredit the prophetic message.

For the Qumran Community, the one who reveals and bears the mysteries is the "Teacher of Righteousness."⁷⁸ It is the Teacher of Righteousness who communicates the mysteries to the community.⁷⁹ The Commentary on Habakkuk 7:1-5 states " ... and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end ... the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets."⁸⁰

Therefore, within the theology of the community, there existed a process of revelation. The prophets were first given the message of the end times and were only told to write it down; they were never told the meaning of the scriptures. It was God who "raised for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of His heart."⁸¹ As a result, the community was able to understand the mysteries that were hidden from ordinary humans (1 QS 11:5-8).



The above diagram is one that I have designed to show the relationship, the process and the result of the mystery.

The inheritance is not only the understanding of the mysteries, but there is also the creation of the eternal covenant.

Through it the first members of the Covenant sinned and were delivered up to the sword, because they, forsook the Covenant of God and chose their own will ... But with the remnant which held fast to the commandments of God he made His Covenant with Israel for ever, revealing to them the hidden thing in which all Israel had gone astray.

The Damascus Documents 3:11-15

But the revelation of hidden things was to remain within the community. Outsiders were not able to know the mysteries of the community. It was the rule of the Community to have a "faithful concealment of the mysteries of truth" (IQS 4:6).⁸² But even within the community there also exists a separation between those who are not able to know the mysteries and those God has "plunged into the spirit of purification that he may instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High and teach the wisdom of the sons of heaven to the perfect way."⁸³ Even within the Community there was a council consisting of twelve men and three priests who were "perfectly versed in all that is revealed of the Law" (1QS 8:1).

The "mysteries" found in the literature of the Qumran Community also deal with the cosmic qualities and quantities of the universe. The mysteries are related not only to the sun and moon, but also to how they relate and are a part of the seasons and the times of the seasonal feasts (1Q 1:11-13).

Moreover the important thing to remember when looking at the mystery as a cosmological element is that the mystery is not just something that is hidden, but it is also something that is a part of "the forces" of nature. The mystery is the law by which "the forces" abide. The community believed God created these forces by "Thy" will: "the heavenly lights to their mysteries, the stars to their paths, [the clouds] to their tasks, the thunderbolts and lightnings to their duty, the perfect treasures (of snow and hail) to their purpose ... to their mysteries" (1QH 1:10-14). A member of the community knows of these things "by the wisdom which comes from Thee, for Thou hast unstopped my ears to marvelous mysteries" (1QH 1:21).⁸⁴ But a member cannot understand all of the mysteries of the universe: "Thou hast opened knowledge to me, and in Thy mercies [Thou hast unlocked for me] the fountain of Thy might. Before Thee no man is just [that he may] understand all Thy mysteries ..." (1QH 12:14-20).

These mysteries also include the mystery and hope of a new Paradise (1QH 8:6), the mystery of the workings of music and lyrics with regards to measurement, sound and "flow of breath" (1QH 1:29). Even "the past," the history of the world, is a mystery and subject to the divine will of God (1QS 3:15).⁸⁵

From the God of knowledge comes all that is and shall be.
Before ever they existed He established their whole design and
when as ordained for them they come into being ...

But God is not considered the direct agent of sin.⁸⁶ Rather there exists the dualistic concept of a struggle between the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness", between the righteous and the wicked. The Community believed that sin was first a result of the domination of Satan over the world,⁸⁷ and secondly, that sin came as a result of sin:

"According to the mysteries of sin, they change the works of God by their transgression (1QH 5:35-38)."⁸⁸ Though the elect of the community are righteous there is always the possibility of sin (1QS 3:10-15). However, the Community believe that the dominion of Satan would not harm the community.

In all our generations Thou hast bestowed Thy wonderful favours on the remnant [of Thy people] under the dominion of Satan. During all the mysteries of his Malevolence he has not made [us] stray from Thy Covenant; Thou hast driven his spirit [of destruction] far from [us],

1QM 14:9-10

And this does not omit the possibility that the God of the Qumran Community is a God of forgiveness.⁸⁹

But God, in His wonderful mysteries forgave them of their sins and pardoned their wickedness;

CD 3:18⁹⁰

These elect, who did follow the perfect way, will also obtain salvation, and the wicked will be destroyed and suffer eternal punishment.⁹¹

But in the mysteries of His understanding and in His glorious wisdom, God has ordained an end for injustice and of the time of the visitation He will destroy if forever. Then truth, which has wallowed in the ways of wickedness during the dominion of injustice until the appointed time of judgement, shall arise in the world forever.

1QS 4:18

Not only are the mysteries of the Qumran Community cosmological, eschatological and moral, but they are also philosophical. The Community was set on improving one's life spiritually (through righteousness), physically (through ritual cleansing) but also mentally (through meditation). The mysteries are regarded as "The Mysteries of Existence"

(or "The Mysteries of Being"), where there exists a Cynical and/or ascetic notion of poverty. It is through poverty that one gains knowledge. The riches of the world will only inhibit one's progress towards the Truth. The Qumran Community believed that it was through Poverty that one was able to thirst for knowledge and not be swallowed up by desires" (All the Ways of Truth, fragment 10, column 2, line 9).⁹²

Though you are Poor do not say, "I am penniless, so I cannot seek out knowledge" [Rather] bend your back to all discipline and through all [wisdom] purify your heart and in the abundance of your intellectual potential investigate the Mystery of Existence. And ponder all the Wages of Truth and consider all the roots of Evil. Then you will know what is better for a man and what is sweet for a person.

All The Ways of Truth, fragment 10, Column 2, lines 13-16

The mysterion of the Qumran Community is found in the interpretation of the scriptures. But within Daniel the mysterion is the interpretation of the mysterious dream. The Qumran community viewed the scriptures as being relevant to them (similar to Enoch 1:2). But for Daniel the interpretations were meant for the king and used to reveal the meaning of the dreams.

What is similar between the Qumran texts and Daniel is the character of history. The writer of Daniel describes how God is in control of history. God is the one who is to determine the kingdoms, for God "does what he wills with the hosts of heavens and the inhabitants of the earth (4:35)." God is in control of what is to come; God "discloses ... what will happen at the end of days (2:28)." The Qumran community viewed God as one who was fulfilling the divine plan of history, which was made known through the study of the scriptures.⁹³

For there shall be yet another vision concerning the appointed time. It shall tell of the end and shall not lie. Interpreted, this means that the final age shall be prolonged, and shall exceed all that the Prophets have said; for the mysteries of God are astounding.

Commentary on Habakkuk 7: 8-9

The eschatological aspect of the Qumran community is similar to that in the writings of Enoch, but yet, there are differences to be explored.

Both believed that from the revelation of the mysterion the end time was at hand. This end time was the beginning of a Messianic age.

Then the High Priest shall draw near ... he shall strengthen by the power of God their hearts [and hands] in His battle ... for you have heard from ancient times through the mysteries of God ...

The War Rule 16: 14-15

In Enoch, there will only be the "Chosen One - the Son of Man," but for the Qumran Community there were two Messiahs. The first is the Teacher of Righteousness who prepared the way for the coming of the new age and gave the interpretation. But in the new era The Teacher of Righteousness would be resurrected from the dead (The Damascus Document 6: 2-11). The other Messiah was the "Anointed One", "The High Priest." It was the role of this second Messiah to lead the community of soldiers into battle and to victory at the "Day of Revenge" (The War Rule 15: 1-15).

Cosmologically the Qumran community is similar to 1 Enoch in the way that the forces of nature abide by the will of God. But what is different is the fact that any member of the community could understand these mysteries. In 1 Enoch the reader is not told the mysteries, "Enoch" tells the readers that he has viewed these secrets. Here there is a sense

that these mysteries are hidden and given to only one person. But for the community, all the mysteries were open to all of those who were allowed to view them.

E) Wisdom

The time period that scholars have placed for the date of Wisdom is from 250 BCE to 50 CE. But most scholars would lean towards the second half of this spectrum. Ernest G. Clarke suggests that the work fits sometime in between the creation of the Septuagint (since the author of Wisdom makes use of Job and Isaiah in its Greek form) and Philo. Clarke suggests that Wisdom was one of the seeds that helped to develop the philosophy of Philo.⁹⁴ Addison G. Wright also supports the idea that the work must be before Philo, since the writer of Wisdom is ignorant of the works and ideas of Philo.⁹⁵

James M. Reese claims that Wisdom was written “to make an impression on students who admired the syncrastic [sic] philosophical style” of the Imperial Roman period.⁹⁶ Reese dates the Book of Wisdom to the time soon after 28 BCE. Reese suggests this date because out of the less than 7,000 Greek words used, the author uses 1,003 of them only once. An example of this is the word threskeia (“cult” - 14:18,27). Reese claims that this word is found in Herodotus to describe people who lived with piety. But the word disappeared in literature until it had its beginnings again in the Roman period.⁹⁷

David Winston proposes the idea that Wisdom could have been written sometime during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caligula (37-41 CE). Verses 5: 16-23 describe how the Most High will arm creation with the vehicles of war to “fight against his frenzied foes (5:20).” Winston suggests that His description describes the hope of the Jews against the anti-Jewish riots in Alexandria (38 CE).⁹⁸ Winston also claims that this book could not have

been written before the reign of Augustus. The author uses the word kratēsis ("mighty, to rule" - 6:3). This word is used in the Talmuds to describe "the day on which Rome seized an empire ... in the days of Queen Cleopatra."⁹⁹

The Wisdom of Solomon has two key elements with regards to the definition of mysterion. First, there is mention of mysterion in its general term, and second, mysterion is linked with Wisdom.

Within the first case, the author of the Wisdom of Solomon does make mention of the mystery religions. It is important to realize that these mysteries are also connected in his/her mind with wickedness and ignorance. There are mysteries which are connected with those who kill "children in their initiations or celebrate secret mysteries or hold frenzied revels with strange customs" (Wisdom 14:23), or there are the divine mysteries of God (to be explained later). The people who follow these lesser mysteries are blinded by their own wickedness (2:22), "err about the knowledge of God" and live "in great strife due to ignorance" (14:22). All of those who reject God and accept these mystery religions will have a price to pay, according to the author of Wisdom. "But just penalties will overtake them on two counts: because they thought wrongly of God in devoting themselves to idols, and because in deceit they swore unrighteously through contempt for holiness (14:30)." These mysteries are evil because: 1) they promote the existence and the beginnings of evil (14:27); 2) these followers are placed into a state of madness (14:28); 3) they create false prophecies and lies (14:28); 4) followers are given a false sense of trust (14:29); 5) and finally, the followers create harmful oaths and expect that no harm will come to the followers as a result of what they have done (14:29).¹⁰⁰

Raymond E. Brown claims that within this use of mysterion as a general term, there are two different functions. First, there is the use of the mysterion as an historical reference to the pagan rituals of past Israelite enemies.¹⁰¹ The author describes how the Canaanite initiates (mystēs) feasted upon flesh and sacrificed children in order that "the land most precious of all to you might receive a worthy colony of the servants of God" (12:7). Second, mysterion is used in a contemporary setting and/or to express the religious understanding of the author.¹⁰² In verse 14:15 there is a description of a father who grieved over the death of his son, and as a result he started up a cult in his honour. The cult included secret rites and initiations, and because it was kept for some time, and there were many people being initiated into the cult, it became law (14:16).

This section has taken a look at how these lesser mysteries have been tied to ignorance and wickedness, but there also exist divine mysteries that are tied to Wisdom. It is not the angels who are the heralds of the mysteries; rather it is Wisdom that "shares the secrets of God's knowledge and chooses what He will do" (8:4; New Jerusalem Bible).¹⁰³ Wisdom is something that has existed since the beginning of creation (6:22) and to come to know Wisdom brings one closer to God (6:19-20). As in the case where the lesser mysteries are tied with ignorance and wickedness, here the shift of mysterion is viewed as Wisdom holding teachings that are mysterious, and not for those who are envious.¹⁰⁴ As a result of humans striving for Wisdom, mysterion also becomes connected with salvation: "Honor wisdom so that you may reign forever" (6:21) also "the multitude of the wise is the salvation of the world" (6:24).

Wisdom is guided by God (7:15). And Wisdom is the active cause of all things (8:6)

because Wisdom is viewed as being a part of God. Wisdom is not a distinct aspect or entity; rather Wisdom is a reflection of God.¹⁰⁵

For she is a reflection of eternal light,
a spotless mirror of the working of God
Wisdom 7:26.

When one followed Wisdom, they "learned what is secret and what is manifest," (7:21). The New Jerusalem Bible translates this verse as "And now I understand everything, hidden or visible, for wisdom the designer of all things has instructed me." One is able to understand the mysteries of "the structure of the world ... the beginning and end and middle of times ... the cycles of the years ... the natures of animals ... the powers of spirits and the thought of humans ..." (7:15-20).¹⁰⁶

As in Sirach, it is Wisdom which reveals the secrets to those who strive for Wisdom. But unlike Sirach, the book of Wisdom makes the connection between mysterion and Wisdom. It is not by dreams, visions or angels that the mysterion is revealed, but it is through Wisdom.

When the author of Wisdom wrote about knowing the mysteries of the cycle of years, the nature of animals, etc., he/she also included in this group the idea that a person may also know "the thoughts of human beings" (7:20). And this is a point where the book of Wisdom is very different from another book that has been looked at. In Enoch (63:3; 83:7; 89:2) the sins and deeds of all humankind are a mystery. God is the only one who knows about these things. And at the time of judgment, it is God Who will judge those things that are secret (49:4). But in Wisdom there is a shift. God is no longer the one who knows the secrets of humans; according to the author of Wisdom, humans can now know

the hidden secrets of other humans.

II Philo

The reason for looking at Philo within this thesis is twofold: First, Philo uses the word mysterion; second, Philo's life is a parallel to that of Paul's. Philo was an upper class Jew who was known to have associated with other people of the upper class elite - particularly members of the Roman Imperial society. Philo lived from 20 BCE to 50 CE in the City of Alexandria. Philo witnessed the persecutions of the Jews and he was surrounded by many of the different mystery cults. Philo's writings do not fit the style of Jewish Apocalyptic literature. His writings were, however, philosophical and theological. Centering on Judaism, his writings also carried a Hellenistic polish.¹⁰⁷

Philo uses the word mysterion thirteen times within his extant writings. On the one hand, Arthur Darby Nock states that it was unlikely that Philo had any association or personal experience with the mystery religions.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, Harry Austryn Wolfson believes that Philo did witness some of the events of the mystery religions and found them to be "licentiousness and effeminacy ... imposture and buffoonery."¹⁰⁹ Philo did witness eunuchs "continually strutting through the market place at midday, and leading the processions in festivals ... and beginning the sacred and initiating rites and concerned even in the holy mysteries of Ceres" (Special Laws III, 7,40).¹¹⁰

Though Philo was taken aback by the conduct of the mystery religions, and did not wish for the Jewish community to integrate with these practices, Philo did adopt the vocabulary of the mysteries and incorporated it into his own thinking about how the Jewish religion was a "greater mystery" (Allegorical Interpretation III, 100). This same idea

was first adopted by Plato (as we have already stated in the previous chapter) and now has influenced the thinking of Philo.¹¹¹

The mysteries for Philo were revealed only to those who were worthy. What was it that made a person worthy to receive the mysteries? Initiation into the mysteries came as a result of fulfilling two criteria:

- 1) obedience to virtue
- 2) a form of asceticism in which the mind strictly controlled the body.

According to Philo, a virtuous man is free. They are free from the bonds of wickedness and are not compelled to do evil. It is the wicked who are slaves and have no free will (Every Good Man is Free, 6).

... a citizen and one who dwells in a house, that is to say, in virtue ... For they being inclined to seek out the secret mysteries of God ... build up the actions of virtue.

Allegorical Interpretation, III, 2-3

Therefore, those who do wickedness are concealed from the mysteries of God because they are "enveloped in darkness as being enemies and adversaries to right reason" (III, 1). It is through one's building up of virtuous action, that one is able to receive the mysteries of God.

... ought to keep one end constantly in view, namely to do good to all who come within his reach. Those, therefore, who have received a fortunate disposition and an education in all respects blameless, finding the path of life which proceeds in this direction plain and straight, take truth with them as the companion of their journey; by which they are initiated in the true mysteries relating to the living God.

On The Unchangeableness of God, 61

The body was also viewed by Philo as being wicked. It was filled with desires that

needed not to be totally eliminated, but controlled. To maintain the sound state of the soul, there must exist a state of moderation where there is a "good mixture of the powers conversant with hunger and appetite, and reason, the reasoning power having the predominance and guiding the other two as a charioteer guides and restrains restive horses" (On the Virtues, 13).

Philo believes that when one busies the mind "and becomes initiated into the mysteries of the Lord, it judges the body to be a wicked and hostile thing." (Allegorical Interpretations, III, 71). The Therapeutae formed a community in which the individuals known to Philo "perform all the mysteries of a holy life, bringing in nothing, neither meat, nor drink, nor anything else which is indispensable towards supplying the necessities of the body, but studying in that place the laws and the sacred oracles of God ..." (On the Contemplative Life, 25). This group practised Philo's belief of a set moderation where the hunger and appetites of the community were placed second and the importance was placed on reason -- the studying of God.

In Plato's works, a philosopher initiated a person from the lesser mysteries into the greater mysteries. In Philo, who did the initiation? The technical term for the high priest within the mystery religion is hierophant (hierophantes). In the mysterion of Philo, Moses is the hierophant of the mysteries.¹¹² Philo states that Moses "initiates them in his laws ... which exhort men to practise sincerity... and to cling to truth and simplicity, those most necessary virtues which above all others, contribute to happiness" (On the Virtues, 178). Edwin Goodenough believed that for Philo, Moses was the true high priest, the true initiate, the true hierophant of the rites and the mysteries.¹¹³ But unlike Paul (1 Corinthians

4:15), Philo was not one who himself had begotten his "disciples" in Moses.¹¹⁴ Chrys Caragounis, however, does make the point that Philo did take on the role of a Hierophant.¹¹⁵

.... for we are about to teach those initiated persons who are worthy of the knowledge of the most sacred mysteries ... But we will not act the part of hierophant or expounder of sacred mysteries to those who are afflicted with the incurable disease of pride of language or quibbling expressions and juggling tricks of manners and who measure sanctity and holiness by no other standard.

On the Cherubim, 42

When Philo used the word mysterion as a metaphor it was also connected with sexual imagery. In Plato's Symposium, the hearers are given the opportunity to follow Diotima's sexual analogies into a higher level of understanding.¹¹⁶ Philo uses the sexual analogy to explain the connection between God, virtues and humans. The relationship between the three groups is much the same (according to Philo) as sexual intercourse. In the same way God bestows the seed of virtue onto the created beings. "This, therefore, is the being who sows, and presently he bestows his own offspring, which he himself did sow; for God creates nothing for Himself, inasmuch as He is in need of nothing, but He creates everything for him who is able to take it" (On the Cherubim, 44).

The mysteries were not for all. They were off limits to the uninitiated. The uninitiated did not have a native ability, a good education and a moral character.¹¹⁷ In much the same way as the initiated of the mystery religions were to guard their secrets, the initiated of the mysteries of God were to keep secret the knowledge that they had acquired.¹¹⁸ With regard to Sarah being initiated into the mysteries, she was told,

"not to be ready to divulge the divine secrets to anyone", but to "treasure them up" in herself, and "conceal them in silence" ... "because the sacred and mystic statements about the one uncreated Being, and about these powers, ought to be kept secret; since it does not belong to every one to keep the deposit of divine mysteries properly."

On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and By His Brother Cain, 60

Therefore, though Philo's mysterion is different from the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature (which has been examined in this chapter), in the sense that it is not connected with dreams, visions, or any eschatological, cosmological concepts, there are some similarities that must be viewed.

First, though Philo does not use the same medium as the Jewish Apocalyptic Literature with regards to the process of the revealing of the mysteries, what is important is that there is a similar process. The mysteries are not revealed to just anyone. In the book, Wisdom, people had to strive for Wisdom in order to have the secrets of God revealed to them. In Philo, it is those people who are virtuous and control their body, who are the ones who will receive initiation into the mysteries of God.

The Qumran Community believed that the Teacher of Righteousness was the one who received the interpretations of the Scriptures. Though Philo does not have someone who fits this role, Philo does have an important figure like the Teacher of Righteousness who is connected with the mysterion - Moses. It is Moses who initiates the person into the Laws.

Second, the wicked will not understand, hear or receive the mysteries. In Philo, the wicked do not have the ability to comprehend the mysterion. In Daniel, the prophets of

the king could not interpret the king's dream. Within the writings of the Qumran Community, outsiders could not obtain the mysteries. Finally, in Wisdom, the wicked are satisfied with the lesser mysteries (the mystery cults) and not the Wisdom of God.

III Conclusion

Therefore, in conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the word mysterion has developed in many different forms and into many different areas and groups. The word mysterion has been used to translate the word sôd for its concept of a "heavenly council," and in secular use. It has also been used to translate the "divine mysteries" of the Aramaic word rāz. Mysterion has been linked with many different types of media: dreams, visions, mediations by angels. It has been connected with 3 major themes: cosmological, eschatological, historical. And it has been received by and through many different people: interpreted by Daniel and the Teacher of Righteousness; through Wisdom; by the visions of Enoch; and through the hierophant Moses.

In Daniel, the mysterion was dreams telling the king(s) of the impending future. In Enoch, the mysterion was heavenly tablets and visions describing the hope of the "righteous." In the Qumran Community the mysterion was the scriptural interpretations reserved for the community. In Wisdom, the mysterion was the salvation one obtained as a result of striving for God. And finally, in Philo, the mysterion was the freedom one experienced as a result of one controlling one's body with their mind.

Part II of this thesis will examine the "mystery verses" of Paul in 1 Corinthians and Romans to see if there are any links between Paul's use of mysterion and its wider use in the Jewish and/or Hellenistic world.

ENDNOTES

¹D. S. Russell, Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 6, 13.

²John J. Collins, "The Jewish Apocalypses," Semeia, XIV (1979), p. 22. Also see Russell's definition of "apocalypse." Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 71.

³H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 185. D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 106. There are differences between prophecy and apocalyptic. Prophecy concerned the rule of God over the people of Israel and it was directed and understood by the people. Apocalyptic concerned the rule of God over all and used visions (symbolic language). The outcome of the Prophecy could be averted by the people if they changed their ways. Apocalyptic mysteries could not be changed; they were set. John J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Visions of the Book of Daniel, (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 75-76. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, pp. 15-16. Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Post-Exilic Period: Spirit, Apocalyptic," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Vol. I, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 343.

⁴H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, p. 16. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, p. 107.

⁵Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 105. John J. Collins, Hermeneia: Daniel, ed. Frank Moore Cross, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 55. For a detailed discussion of the importance of angels in apocalyptic literature, see Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, chapter 9.

⁶Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 73.

⁷Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, p. 107.

⁸Collins, Hermeneia: Daniel, pp. 54-55.

⁹Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 32.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹²Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, trans.

S. Applebaum, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, The Magnes Press, 1961), p. 125.

¹³Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁵Collins suggests a peaceful two-fold plan of action for the maskilim: 1) to suffer persecution in order to make them pure; 2) and convert "the many" to righteousness. Collins, The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel, p. 207.

¹⁶Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 32.

¹⁷Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, p. 197. Tcherikover also proposes the idea that the Hasidim "haphazard form" did not take an organized wartime form until Mattathias introduced two innovations: 1) to get rid of the restriction of not fighting on the Sabbath; 2) appointed a leader. Ibid., pp. 204-205.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 198. Frank Moore Cross suggests that the Hasidim moved to the desert and became known as the Essenes. Frank Moore Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, revised edition, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 132. Martin Hengel suggests that the Greek word, Essenes is a translation of the Hebrew word Hasidim - 'Essaioi. Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1979), p. 175.

¹⁹The only time the word raz appears in Hebrew is Sirach 8:18.

²⁰Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, p. 119. Raymond E. Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XX (October, 1958), p. 418, n. 4. A. E. Harvey, "The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible," Journal of Theological Studies, XXXI (October, 1980), p. 327, n. 2.

²¹G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 816.

²²K. Luke, "The Technical Term Rāzā'," Christian Orient, IV (September, 1983), pp. 114-115.

²³Ibid., p. 114.

²⁴Ibid., p. 113.

^{24a}Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 418.

^{24b}Thorkild Jacobsen, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," Journal of near Eastern Studies, II (July, 1943), p. 168.

^{24c}Ibid., p. 169.

^{24d}Frank M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," Journal of near Eastern Studies, XII (October, 1953), p. 275, n.4.

²⁵Also see Job 1:6; 2:1; Isaiah 6: 1-4.

²⁶Galen W. Wiley, "A Study of Mystery in the New Testament," Grace Theological Journal, VI (1985), p. 351. Also see Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 420. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, p. 168.

²⁷Also see Jeremiah 23:22; Job 15:8.

²⁸Pamela J. Milne, "Daniel," in The Harper Collins Study Bible, ed. Wayne A. Meeks et al., (New York: The Harper Collins, Publishers, Inc., 1993), p. 1303.

²⁹Louis F. Hartman, "Daniel," in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, (Englewoods Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 408.

³⁰Ibid., p. 448. Andre Lacocque, The Book of Daniel, trans. David Pellauer, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), pp. 7-8.

³¹All of these verses stated (Daniel, Sirach, Wisdom) are from the NRSV - unless stated otherwise.

³²Collins, Hermeneia: Daniel, p. ;29.

³³Nebuchadnezzar's son also had an encounter with an event that the magicians and enchanters could not interpret. The fingers of a human hand wrote on a wall a saying. The magicians and the enchanters could not read or interpret the writing on the wall (5: 8, 15).

³⁴The vision that Daniel had was a "vision of the night (2:19)." The New American Bible translates this verse as "During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision ..."

³⁵Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 74.

³⁶The king repeats this verse in 5:13 when Daniel comes to visit the king.

³⁷Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 423.

³⁸Bornkamm, "Mysterion" p. 815.

³⁹Luke, "The Technical Term Rāzā'," p. 117.

⁴⁰Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 423.

⁴¹Collins, Hermeneia: Daniel, p. 161.

⁴²Alexander A. Di Lella, The Anchor Bible: The Wisdom of Ben Sira, (New York: Doubleday, 1987), p. 9.

⁴³Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 9. Burton Mack agrees with Di Lella, but suggests a date of 180 B.C.E. Burton Mack, "Sirach," in The Harper Collins Study Bible, ed. Wayne A. Meeks et al., (New York: The Harper Collins, Publishers, Inc., 1993), p. 1531. Thomas H. Weber also suggests a time period of 180 BCE, but proposes the idea that Simon II was already dead (50: 1-21) and that the revolt had not begun. Thomas H. Weber, "Sirach, in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Vol. I, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 541.

⁴⁵Sirach 1:30 - ta krupta; 3:22 - ton krupton.

⁴⁶R. H. Charles, The Book of Enoch, (Jerusalem: Maker Publishing, 1912), pp. lii - liii. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd, (New York and Hagerstown and San Francisco and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 619.

⁴⁷The same argument can be said for chapters 91-104, with the interpretation of verses 103: 14-15.

⁴⁸Charles, The Book of Enoch, p. liii. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament, p. 619.

⁴⁹Charles Cutler Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), pp. 113-114.

⁵⁰George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Revealed Wisdom as a Criterion for Inclusion and Exclusion: From Jewish Sectarianism to Early Christianity," in "To See Ourselves as Others

See Us" ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 76. John J. Collins, "The Sage in the Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature," in The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 344.

⁵¹Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, pp. 107-108.

⁵²Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 75.

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁴Russell suggests that the shepherds are the guardian angels of the nations. Russell, Divine Disclosure, pp. 40, 76.

⁵⁵Bornkamm, "Mysterion," p. 815. Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 436.

⁵⁶Nickelsburg, "Revealed Wisdom as a Criterion for Inclusion and Exclusion," pp. 74-79. Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 444. Enoch and Sirach are similar because both write about the followers of God being put through a test (Enoch 108:9).

⁵⁷Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 436.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 432, n. 62.

⁵⁹"The issue which divides the righteous and the wicked is belief in the heavenly world of the Lord of Spirits and "son of man," and in the judgement where they will prevail ... Faith here involves both belief in their existence and trust and dependence on them for salvation." John J. Collins, "The Heavenly Representative: The "Son of Man" in the Similitudes of Enoch," in Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins, (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1980), p. 117. "He shall judge secret things. And no one will be able to utter vain words in His presence. For He is the Elect One before the Lord of the Spirits according to His good pleasure" Enoch 49:4.

⁶⁰Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, pp. 61-62.

⁶¹T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 228-229.

⁶²Collins makes the claim that the book of Enoch was influenced by the divination of Babylon, but this is not to say that the book of Enoch promoted divination, rather they

rejected it. But it is the interest in dreams, the stars and heavenly tablets which helps to create the influence. "What one finds in the Enochic apocalypses is ultimately a new phenomenon, which draws motifs and patterns from many sources ... It is wisdom encoded in mysterious signs, not the straightforward, empirical wisdom of Proverbs and Sirach, and it carries with it the implication that the course of history has been determined on the heavenly tablets. For the decoding of these mysteries, however, the Jewish sages relied not primarily on divinatory techniques but on what they believed to be divine revelation." Collins, "The Sage in Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature," p. 347.

⁶³Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 83.

⁶⁴Also see Enoch, ch. 59.

⁶⁵Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," pp. 430-431.

⁶⁶Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 40.

⁶⁷Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic, p. 16.

⁶⁸Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 69.

⁶⁹Menahem Mansoor, The Dead Sea Scrolls, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 25.

⁷⁰Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, pp. 58-65. Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective, (London: Collins, 1977), pp. 33-34.

⁷¹Mansoor, The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 25.

⁷²Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 36. Mansoor, The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 26.

⁷³Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 37.

⁷⁴Kelvin G. Friebel, "Biblical Interpretation in the Pesharim of the Qumran Community," Hebrew Studies, XXII (1981), p. 13.

⁷⁵Also see Daniel 2: 26-27, 30.

⁷⁶Friebel, "Biblical Interpretation in the Pesharim of the Qumran Community," p. 18.

⁷⁷F. F. Bruce, "Biblical Exposition at Qumran," in Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography, vol. 3, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham, (Sheffield: JSOT

Press, 1983), p. 77. Collins, The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel, p. 78. Also see Thanksgiving Hymn 1:21; 12: 11-13.

⁷⁸Also see 1QH 1:21; 2:13; 4:27-28; 5:11-15; 7:27; 8:11; 10:4; 12:13, 1QS 11:3-5. Helmer Inggren, The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls, trans. by Milie T. Sander, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 60-61. John Pryke, "Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls." The Scrolls and Christianity, ed. Matthew Black, (London: SPCK, 1969), p. 53.

⁷⁹For Paul, the Teacher of Righteousness was Jesus. It was because of the events of Jesus that the mysteries were able to be revealed. See chapters on Romans 11:25; 16:25; and 1 Corinthians 15:51.

⁸⁰CD 1:10-12.

⁸¹Also see 1QS 5:11; 9:17, 22; CD 15:10-11; 1QH 5:25-26; 1QH fragment 6:5.

⁸²CD 4:22. Also see CD 4:9-12; 15:10; 1QS 8; 9:18-19. The knowledge of the mysteries was not one where people gain a knowledge of God, but rather, it was a case where one gained God's own knowledge. "... 'perfection,' 'secret(s),' 'mysteries' ... 'perfect' occurs quite frequently in the Scrolls. gain and again the reference is to 'perfection of way,' i.e., to conduct; for instance, in 1QS i.13, xi.2, etc. The very Community itself is to be '... a most holy abode for Aaron, ... a house of perfection and truth in Israel ...' The whole life of the sect is aimed at fulfilment of Torah: positively, by study of it, meditation upon it, and 'deeds in Torah'; negatively, by abstention from all that confers uncleanness and impurity, or might involve the slightest departure from Torah." Max Wilcox, "Dualism, Gnosticism, and other Elements in the Pre-Pauline Tradition," The Scrolls and Christianity, ed. Matthew Black, (London: SPCK, 1969), pp. 88-89, 91.

⁸³Also see 1QH 7:26-32; 11:9-10, 15-20; 1QS 11:15-18; The Angels of God's Holiness, fragment #7, lines 5-6.

⁸⁴ Also see 1QH fragment 3:7; 1QS 3:16-20, 23.

⁸⁵ Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran" in Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament exegesis, ed. by Jerome Murphy O'Connor, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), p. 136.

⁸⁶Also see 1QM 3:9; 14:9; 16:11; 1QS 3:23; 4:18.

⁸⁷"Moreover, there is also mention of 'the mysteries of sin' (1QM v. 36; The Book of Mysteries [1Q 27] i.2; cf. 1QM XIV. 9) which naturally can be an intimation that the domination of evil is ordained by a divine decree (cf. 1QS iii. 23), but can also simply refer

to the hidden activity of the evil powers." Ringgren, The Faith of Qumran, p. 61.

⁸⁸Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran," p. 136.

⁸⁹Also see 1QS 11:1-5, 9.

⁹⁰Also see 1QM 3:9; 14:11, 15-16; 1QS 3:23; 4:18.

⁹¹Also see The Mystery of Existence fragment #8, lines 1-9; All the Ways of Truth fragment #10 column #2, lines 10-11, 19, 21-22.

⁹²Richard N. Longnecker, Paul, Apostle of Liberty, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 44.

⁹³Lacocque, The Book of Daniel, p. 43.

⁹⁴Ernest G. Clarke, The Wisdom of Solomon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 1-2.

⁹⁵Addison G. Wright, "Wisdom," in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 510.

⁹⁶James M. Reese, The Book of Wisdom, Song of Songs, (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), p. 17.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 17.

⁹⁸David Winston, "Wisdom of Solomon," in Harper Collins Study Bible, ed. Wayne A. Meeks, et al. (New York: The Harper Collins, Publishers, Inc., 1993), p. 1498.

⁹⁹David Winston, The Anchor Bible: The Wisdom of Solomon, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), pp. 152-153.

¹⁰⁰Clarke, The Wisdom of Solomon, p. 97.

¹⁰¹Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 426.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 426. The author of Wisdom tries to give an explanation on the origins of idolatry. The author of Wisdom believes that there is a direct correlation between the worship of idols and moral evils. David Winston, The Anchor Bible: The Wisdom of Solomon, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), p. 273. Rev.

Eugene H. Maly, The Book of Wisdom, ed. by Neil J. McEleney, (New York: Paulist Press, 1962, p. 31.

¹⁰³Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," p. 439.

¹⁰⁴Maly, The Book of Wisdom, pp. 19-20. Winston, The Anchor Bible: The Wisdom of Solomon, p. 160.

¹⁰⁵Clarke, The Wisdom of Solomon, pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁶Russell, Divine Disclosure, p. 83.

¹⁰⁷Robert Murray. "Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some Needed Distinctions," *Novum Testamentum XXIV* (July, 1982), p. 202.

¹⁰⁸A. D. Nock, "The Question of Jewish Mysteries," in Essays on Religion and the Ancient World, vol. I, ed. by Zeph Steward, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 468.

¹⁰⁹Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁰All of the Philo passages are from The Works of Philo, trans. C. D. Yonge, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993).

¹¹¹H. Kramer, "Mysterion," in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 447.

¹¹²The word "Hierophant" is also connected with God (Somn I, 164); the seventy elders of Moses (Sob, 20); the high priest (Special Laws III, 135) and Jeremiah (on the Cherubim, 49). Wolfson, Philo, p. 43.

¹¹³Erwin R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism, (Amsterdam; Philo Press, 1969), p. 96. But unlike Paul ("I became your father [egennēsa] through the gospel -- 1 Corinthians 14:5).

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹¹⁵Chrys C. Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, (Doctoral thesis, Uppsala University, 1977), p. 21.

¹¹⁶Harvey, "The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible," p. 325. The Symposium states in 210 a: "It is these kinds of mysteries about love, Socrates ... I'll tell you about them, and

I'll spare any effort on my own part. You must try to follow as best as you can."

¹¹⁷Wolfson, Philo, Vol. 1, p. 52.

¹¹⁸Also see On the Cherubim, 48-49; On the Unchangeableness of God, 61; Allegorical Interpretations III, 3, 27, 100; On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and His Brother Cain, 62.

Part II

Part II: Introduction

The second part of this thesis will be an exegetical examination of the word mysterion. Each chapter will examine certain words and/or phrases in order to help to define Paul's idea of the mystery. As a result of this definition, one is able to have a better understanding of the influences on Paul's mysterion, either Jewish and/or Hellenistic.

Each of the following chapters will follow the same structure: 1) **Authenticity** - is the section in which the mysterion is found an authentic work of Paul (some chapters will not have this section because there is no debate)? 2) **Words and Phrases** - are certain words and phrases related to and do they define the meaning of the word mysterion? 3) **Jewish and Hellenistic Influences** - what influences helped form Paul's definition of mysterion? 4) **Mysterion Analysis** - how is the chapter's definition of mysterion linked to the previous chapter's definition of the word mysterion?

The following chapters will examine the following verses: chapter 4 - 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7; chapter 5 - 1 Corinthians 4:1; chapter 6 - 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2; chapter 7 - 1 Corinthians 15:51; and chapter 8 - Romans 11:25-26.

1 Corinthians will be looked at first because 1 Corinthians was written before Romans, according to most scholars.

William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther suggest that Paul first arrived in Corinth in 52 C.E., based on the presence of Aquila and Priscilla and the proconsulship of Gallio.¹ Acts 18:12-17 states that Paul was brought before the proconsul Gallio. Gallio was a proconsul between January 25, C. E. 52, and January 24, C. E. 53.² According to Orr and

Walther, Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, then made a trip to Syria, and returned to Ephesus where he wrote 1 Corinthians in 56 C. E.³

Although Orr and Walther base their date on information from Acts, what is important is the fact that 1 Corinthians was written some time after Paul's departure from Corinth. Hans Conzelmann suggests that 1 Corinthians 4:18 contains evidence that it had been some time since Paul had made contact with the Corinthian community. Therefore, he suggests a date of the spring of ca. 55.⁴ I believe Hans Conzelmann suggested the most probable date, since Conzelmann looks at evidence within 1 Corinthians rather than basing his date on a secondary source (the book of Acts).

Most scholars are in agreement that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans shortly before his journey to Jerusalem -- "But at the moment I am on my way to Jerusalem, on an errand to God's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia have resolved to raise a fund for the benefit of the poor among God's people at Jerusalem" (Romans 15:25-26). Most scholars are in agreement that Paul's travel plans are similar to the ones mentioned in Acts chapters 20-21 (Paul's Third Missionary Journey). And since Paul spent time in Philippi observing the days of Unleavened Bread and Passover, the date of the composition of Romans is in the winter during the years of 57 to 59 C. E.⁵

Endnotes

¹ William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 120.

² Ibid., p. 81. Barrett suggests the date of the proconsul to be from summer 51. (C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, [New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968], p. 5.

³ Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 120. Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), p. 4 n. 13.

⁴ Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. MacRae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 4 n. 31. Barrett suggests a period during the time of spring (Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, [New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968], p. 5.

⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 86. C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, (London: Hadder and Stoughton, Limited, 1960), pp xxiv-xxvi. F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 12. Karl Herman Schelkle, The Epistle to the Romans, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 14. Eugene H. Maly, Romans, (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), p. X. Ernest Kasemann places the date (using the same argument of Acts chapters 20-21) at the early part of 55 or 56 C. E. (Ernest Kasemann, Commentary on Romans, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, [London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1980], pp. 398-399).

Chapter 4:

Paul's Use of the Word Mysterion in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom.

1 Corinthians 2:1

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden (sophian en mysteriōi tēn apokekrummenēn), which God decreed before the ages of our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this;

1 Corinthians 2: 6-8a

I INTRODUCTION

The first and second occurrences of the word mysterion are found in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7. The first questions this chapter seeks to answer are the following: is the mysterion in verse 2:1 an original part of Paul's epistle, and if so, how does verse 2:1 fit in relation to the mysterion of verse 2:7? Some scholars make the claim that verse 2:7 is not an authentic piece of 1 Corinthians. What is the evidence to support this idea? The next intent of this chapter is to examine the connection between mysterion and certain words/phrases found in relation to the word mysterion. Who were the "mature" of Corinth? To whom was Paul referring when he spoke of "the rulers of this age"? What is the role of the Spirit? From this examination, one may get a better understanding of the meaning of mysterion in verses 2:1 and 2:7. The last section will take a look at the literary background of these words and phrases in order to examine the question of whether Paul was influenced by the Jewish and/or Hellenistic use of the word mysterion.

II Authenticity

A) The Verse 2:1 Debate

Verse 2:1 is debated, because scholars are not certain as to whether the word mysterion was in fact used by Paul. The word mysterion may be the word originally used by Paul, or it may have taken the place of a similar looking word (martyrion -- "witness, testimony"). The word martyrion is possible because it refers back to verse 1:6 and Paul's proclamation at Corinth ("Just as the testimony (martyrion) of Christ has been strengthened among you" -- verse 1:6). On the other hand, the word mysterion helps to set up the reader for the later occurrence of the word mysterion in verse 2:7.¹

C. K. Barrett does not believe that mysterion is the original word used by Paul; rather a copyist was subconsciously influenced by the anticipation of mysterion in verse 2:7. Also, when mysterion is used, Barrett suggests that this reading implies a wisdom/secret only for the mature Christians, whereas the word martyrion describes "the initial proclamation of the Gospel."²

But Barrett realizes that there are problems with using the word martyrion. A literal translation of this phrase is "the testimony of God (martyrion tou theou)." How can God give a testimony? Barrett proposes other possible translations: 1) "my testimony about God" (objective genitive); 2) "the testimony borne by God" (subjective genitive); 3) "initiated by God" (genitive of the author).³ I believe that Barrett is grasping at straws, so to speak. I would argue that the word mysterion fits into the sentence more easily than the obscure phrase "the testimony of God". Barrett is trying to make the word "testimony" fit within the sentence by proposing translations that may not be inherent within the text.

Some scholars believe that mysterion is the original word used by Paul because it fits the content and context of verse 7.⁴ It is this position that this thesis will take. The support for this position will be explained later on in this chapter, in the section on the relationship between mysterion and certain words and phrases relating to mysterion.

B) The proposed interloper of 1 Corinthians 2:7

William O. Walker, Jr. proposes the idea that a part of 1 Corinthians (2: 6-16) was written after the death of Paul in response to the popularity of Gnostic beliefs, in order to bring the writings of Paul into the area of Gnostic doctrine.⁵

Walker points to the fact that there is a shift from the singular in verse 2:4 ("my

speech and my proclamation -- ho logos mou kai to kērygma mou) to the plural in verse 2:6 ("we do speak wisdom" -- sophian de laloumen) and back to the singular in verse 3:1 ("I could not speak to you" -- ouk ēdunēthēn lalēsai humin). There is a shift from the aorist to the present and back to the aorist. And there is also a shift from autobiographical text to timeless propositions and back to the autobiographical.⁶

Walker suggests that Paul could easily have stated in verse 6, "I impart wisdom." But Paul uses an anonymous (timeless) "we" in verse 6. This anonymous "we" is quite distinct from the autobiographical account found in verses 2: 1-4 where Paul accounts for why he spoke to the Corinthians the way he did. The text returns to an autobiographical account "in the first person singular at 3:1, shifting momentarily to the plural at 3:9 because here Paul speaks of both himself and Apollos, but returning to the singular at 3:10 in order to distinguish Paul from Apollos and other leaders."⁷

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor believes that there is a natural explanation for the shift in 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16. Paul uses the plural so that he may be connected with Apollos. But Paul uses the singular when it is related to his own personal experience (2: 1-5) and/or his judgement (3: 1-4). Therefore the "we" is not the result of an interloper, but rather, it is "calculated."⁸

E. Earle Ellis proposes the idea that 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16 was "a pre-formed piece that Paul has employed and adapted to its context."⁹ This "pre-formed piece," according to Ellis, is a "self-contained pericope", one that is similar to a midrash, created not by Paul but by a colleague who is familiar with Paul's or another apostolic circle.¹⁰ There are also several phrases which do not occur anywhere else in the New Testament: "rulers of this

age" (verse 2:6 and 8); "before the ages" (verse 2:7); "the spirit of man" (verse 2:11); the spirit of the world" (verse 2:12); "natural man" (verse 14); "the mind of Christ" (verse 2:16); and "the Lord of glory" (verse 2:8; found in James 2:1).¹¹

I believe that the passage 2: 6-16 is in fact a part of the authentic letter of Paul and not the result of an interloper. This passage is calculated (as Murphy-O'Connor argues) but it is also deliberate. It is "deliberate" in the sense that Paul uses 2: 6-16 as a comparison with 1: 18-30. First there are many parallel statements: "the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (verse 1:18) compared with "the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish" (verse 2:6); "wisdom of the wise" (verse 1:19 -- Paul is referring to Isaiah 29:14) compared with "wisdom of this age" (verse 2:6); "the world did not know God through wisdom" (verse 1:21) compared with "None of the rulers of this age understood this" (verse 2:8).

Secondly, verses 2: 6-16 is a continuation of 1: 18-30. In verses 1: 18-30, Paul describes the difference between God's wisdom and human wisdom, and how Jesus is the wisdom from God. But the question remains, how does one receive and/or know what is God's wisdom? Paul describes in verses 2: 6-16 how it is through the Spirit (by God) that believers may know certain things (2: 12-13).

Thirdly, the idea of a "pre-formed piece" proposed by Ellis does not seem probable. The mysterion in 2:7 is linked with and comparable to Paul's other mystery verses (this idea will be expanded upon in other chapters to follow). If Paul did borrow this piece, then one would also have to state that Paul's use of mysterion has its origins and/or foundation in this other piece. Such a conclusion seems highly unlikely. As we shall see,

there are many factors and influences that helped to create Paul's concept of the mysterion. If this was a "pre-formed piece," then the links and the connections that exist between the mystery verses would not be evident.

With regard to the list of words and phrases that Ellis points out as not occurring anywhere else in the New Testament, though it is true that these words and phrases do occur only once, it does not mean that verse 2:6-16 is an inauthentic work.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-16 there are some striking parallels with 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. In 2:6-16 Paul talks about "the rulers of this age" not understanding the mysterion that was hidden before the ages; and as a result, the rulers are doomed to perish. In 2 Corinthians 4:3 the gospel "is veiled to those who are perishing." And this has come about because "the god of this world has blinded" the unbelievers (verse 4:4). The "mind of Christ" in 2:16 is similar to the phrase "the face of Christ" in 4:6. Paul states in 2:14 that the "natural man" ("unspiritual" in the NRSV) does not receive gifts from God's spirit. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul mentions one's "outer nature" and the "inner nature" that is being "renewed". And in verse 2:8 the phrase "the Lord of Glory" is similar to "the glory of Christ" in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Hence, though the phrases are not exact, it is possible to say that these parallels show that there are links between these two sections, and therefore, these words and phrases (mentioned by Ellis) may have come from Paul and not an interloper.

III Structure, Words and Phrases in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

A) Structure

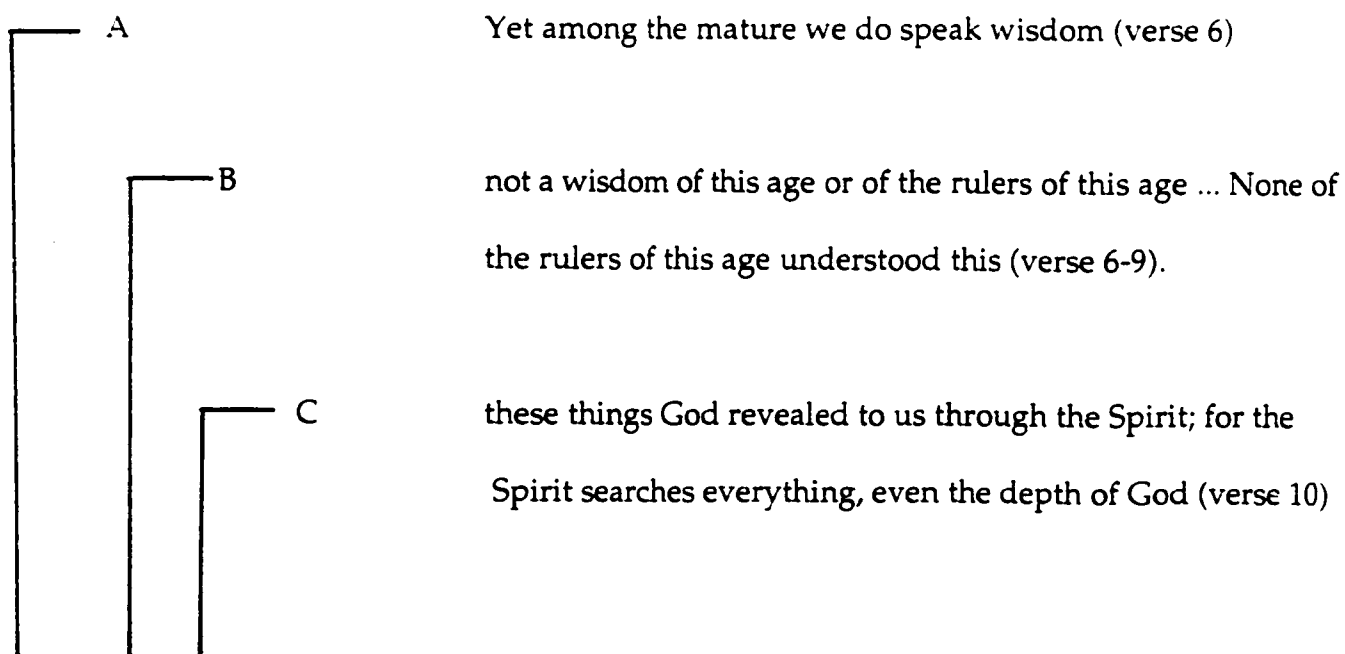
With regard to the words and phrases found in verses 2: 6-16, some scholars have

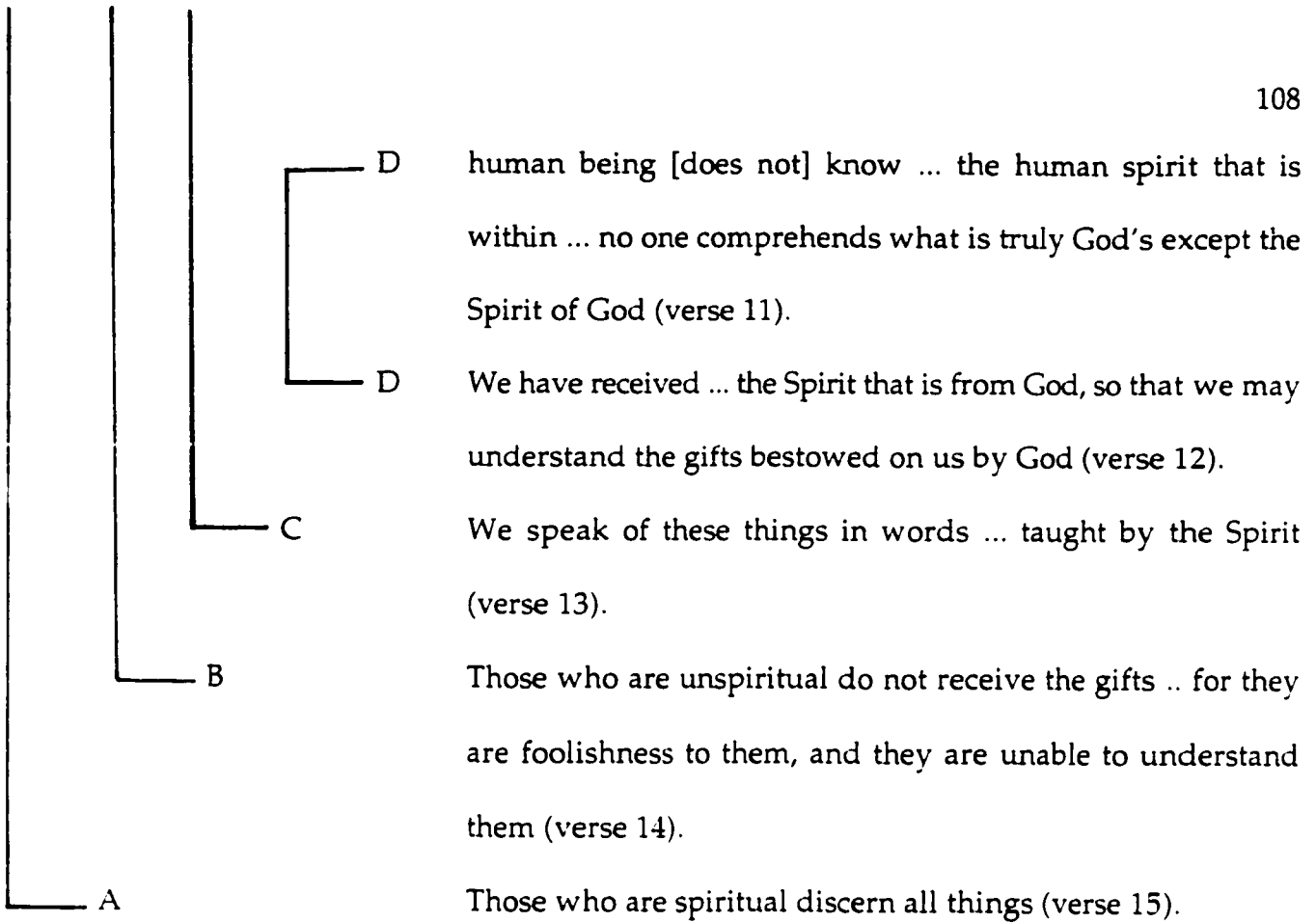
divided this section into different parts.

According to Fee, there are three different parts to 2: 6-16. The first section (verses 6-10a) focuses on the nature of God's wisdom. God's wisdom is a predestined wisdom that is hidden in a mystery and is now made present for those who have attained it and for those who cannot perceive it. The second section (verses 10b-13) introduces the Spirit that knows the mind of God. The Spirit reveals to people (those who are let in on the secret) spiritual things from God. The last section (verses 14-16) reaffirms what has been stated in the above two sections.¹²

Hans Conzelmann divides 2: 6-16 into two sections. The first section (verses 6-9) describes wisdom, while the second section (verses 10-16) describes wisdom among the perfect.¹³

I believe that the structure proposed by Fee and Conzelmann is too simple. This section (2:6-16) can be divided into a more detailed structure. I would suggest that this section can be divided into a chiasmic arrangement of four symmetrical parts (abcd/dcba).





Section A names two groups: the mature and the spiritual. For Paul the mature are those who are spiritual (a discussion of who the mature are will come later on in the chapter). In section B Paul describes those who are unable to comprehend the mystery. To these people, the mystery (in verse 14 it is "the gifts of God's Spirit") is foolish, and they are unable to understand it. Section C describes the role of the Spirit. In both verses (10 and 13) Paul tells his readers that certain things are taught and revealed "to us" through the Spirit. Lastly, in Section D Paul contrasts humans with God. In verse 11 humans cannot understand what is God's, because humans can only comprehend what is human. In verse 12 Paul contrasts the spirit of the world with the Spirit that is from God.

B) Words and Phrases

Since we have looked at the structure of 2: 6-16, we will now look at specific words

and phrases that are found in this passage.

a) tois teleiois

The word teleiois (the "mature"/"perfect") occurs in verse 2:6. The question that scholars have asked is, "Who are the mature?"

Conzelmann suggests that Paul's reference to "the mature" is linked with verses 3:1ff. Hence, "the mature" are "a higher class of believers."¹⁴ William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther first proposed the idea that Paul spoke a deeper message to the mature Christians of Corinth, and add support to this possibility by suggesting that the particle de in verse 2:6 creates a shift to a new subject. Paul first states that he "decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ" (verse 2:2), but indicates by the de (translated "yet" in NRSV) that there is a shift to a deeper message, one that could only be comprehended by those who could understand the deeper message.¹⁵

But Orr and Walther suggest another possible answer to the question, "Who are the mature?" Orr and Walther refer back to verses 1: 17-18 for a possible solution. In verse 1:17, Paul believes that the deepest wisdom is that of the Cross.¹⁶ And with the support of Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:5, and Colossians 1:26, the mature are not those who are part of an inner circle; rather, the mature are those who choose "to be accepted because of Jesus Christ" because the "entire wisdom of God is contained in the message of the cross."¹⁷

Orr and Walther find the second solution more probable, but I believe it is the weaker of the two. First, Orr and Walther are gathering support from two deutero-Pauline works. And second, not only is Romans written after 1 Corinthians,¹⁸ but verse 8:29 is one that does not talk about a believer's "choice" of acceptance, but rather, verse 8:29

is a scripture reference about predestination.

I believe that the teleioi are the spiritual (see symmetrical pattern). As Wiley suggests, they are spiritually grown up;¹⁹ or at least they are on the way to becoming spiritually grown up. In 3: 1-3 Paul does not believe that they are spiritually ready. Paul still speaks to them "as people of the flesh" (verse 3:1). But they are spiritual enough to understand some of the mysteries.²⁰ For they, unlike "the rulers of the world" (verse 2:6), were able to understand the meaning of the cross (verse 1: 17-18).²¹

I do not suggest that there is a two-tiered Christianity in Paul's concept of the mature, nor is there the absence of a two-tiered theology. Rather, what I am suggesting is a three-tiered approach with regard to the mature. First, there are the immature -- those who have rejected and/or do not understand the mysterion. But with regard to the mature there are two levels. Everyone who accepts Jesus is regarded as being mature, for if not they would have rejected the mysterion. But some are more mature than others. Paul views the Corinthian community with a lesser maturity (secondary mature -- "infants" in verse 3:1), those who are not mature enough because they still are jealous and quarrel. These infants are in the process of becoming more mature. As 1 Corinthians 1:18 states, "the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" -- i.e., the immature/unspiritual of verse 2:6. In 1:18 there is also the phrase "But to us who are being saved (tois de sozomenois). The word sozomenois is a present passive participle, suggesting that there is a process implicit in one's salvation, a process of one starting off as a spiritual infant and progressing towards the spiritual mature.

Conzelmann suggests that within 2: 6-16 there is a "seeming contradiction." On the

one hand, secrets may be disclosed, but on the other hand, Paul does not impart this wisdom to the Corinthians because "in a strictly logical sense it would be pointless" and it would be "a matter of pedagogy about what he would do."²² What Conzelmann is suggesting is the idea that if the mysteries were disclosed to some, they would not be able to understand the mysteries -- it would be "pointless".

But I would suggest that this is not a contradiction; rather, it is a matter of spiritual development. Paul makes a distinction between the "mature" and "the rulers of this world." The "mature" are able to understand the mysterion, while the "rulers of this world" are not. Paul sees the Corinthian community as a group who are sitting on the fence, so to speak. Paul viewed the Corinthians as infants (3:1), but they are mature in the sense that they were able to realize the importance of Jesus Christ and did not follow the same path as "the rulers of this world", who did not understand the mysterion and crucified Jesus. But Paul does not remain silent for long. Later on in 1 Corinthians, Paul does impart a mystery to the Corinthians (15:51). Though Paul does view the Corinthians as infants, they are still mature enough to receive a mysterion.

b) tōn archontōn tou aiōnos

The phrase "the rulers of this age" (tōn archontōn tou aiōnos) occurs in verses 2: 6 and 8. But as with "the mature," the question that some scholars ask is, "Who are the rulers of this age?"

The first century Christian writer, Ignatius, believed that the "rulers of this world" (the evil one -- demon(s)) did not notice the death of the Lord.²³ The late second century Christian writer Origen believed that "the rulers of this world" may refer to "spiritual

powers who have been appointed to exercise rule over certain definite nations in this world."²⁴ But "rulers of this world" also refers to

special energies .. who control definite activities which they have themselves by their own free will chosen as their task ... for instance, there is a particular energy or power who is the inspirer of poetry, another of geometry, and in the same way a particular power is the originator of every such art and subject of instruction.²⁵

According to some modern scholars, "the rulers of this world" are evil cosmic forces who are determined to destroy this world.²⁶ Orr and Walther suggest that the belief in the influence of supernatural powers on the world is inconclusive in the writings of Paul. In Romans 8:38 and 1 Corinthians 15:24, supernatural powers are working through humans. But in Romans 13:1, governing authorities are instituted and responsible to God.²⁷

Fee makes the suggestion that the "rulers of this age" are "the wise of this age."²⁸ They did not understand God's wisdom, so they crucified Jesus.²⁹ They did not understand this because the wisdom was hidden and they could not grasp what was not revealed to them by the Spirit (2:10). Therefore, they took part in a historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus (which was a human act) by showing their ignorance.³⁰

I believe that "the rulers of this age" does not refer to secular rulers, but rather to supernatural powers. As stated above, there are parallels between 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-16. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, the "god of this world" has blinded the minds of the unbelievers. In the same way, it is the "rulers of this age" who did not understand the mystery and as a result crucified Jesus. Therefore, the "ruler of this age" is the same term/concept as the "god of this world."

c) pneuma

The word "spirit" (pneuma) occurs seven times in 2: 10-14 ("through the Spirit" -- dia tou pneumatos [verse 10]; "for the Spirit" -- to gar pneuma [verse 10]; "the Spirit that is from God" -- to pneuma to ek tou theou [verse 12]; "taught by the Spirit" -- en didaktois pneumatos [verse 13]; "of God's Spirit" -- tou pneumatos tou theou [verse 14]). The word "spiritual" (pneumatikos) occurs four times in verses 2: 13-15 ("spiritual things to those who are spiritual" -- pneumatikois pneumatika [verse 13]; "spiritually discerned" -- pneumatikois anakrinetai [verse 14]; "Those who are spiritual discern" -- ho de pneumatikos anakrinei [verse 15]).

According to Paul, the Spirit is from God (2:12). And it is God who reveals things to the Spirit, who in turn gives the spiritual person wisdom (2: 10-12).³¹ But what are these things that God has revealed to the Spirit?

French L. Arrington suggests that it is the understanding of what God did in Christ.³² Barrett proposes the idea that the Spirit brought out the meaning of the Gospel,³³ those things which "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived."³⁴

As I have stated above, in my demonstration of Paul's chiasmic structure in 2:6-16, there is a link between "the spiritual" and "the mature". Vincent P. Branick also connects teleiois and pneumatikos with sōizomemoi (those "who are being saved") in verse 1:18 and teleiois with pisteuontes ("those who believe") in verse 1:21. It is these people who do not view the cross as "a stumbling block or stupidity but rather the power and wisdom of God."³⁵

John Koenig also views "the mature" and "the spiritual" as the ones searching for the power and the wisdom of God. But Koenig does not believe that the Corinthians were the

pneumatikoi. Koenig points to the idea that the Corinthians failed in using the gifts that were given to them (1: 4-7) and instead have been jealous, quarrelled and behaved "according to human inclinations" (verse 3:3).³⁶

Therefore, as the above scholars have pointed out (and I would agree), the role of the Spirit was to reveal to the spiritual / mature the meaning of the cross (Jesus). For if the "rulers of this world" and the "unspiritual" were shown the meaning of the mysterion, then they would not have crucified Jesus, nor rejected God's gifts.

Koenig states that the spiritual / mature are not the ones searching for the wisdom of God (the mysterion). The Corinthians are not spiritual according to Koenig. But how are they to be classified, if they are not spiritual? I would argue that they cannot be regarded as the unspiritual, because they would never have received the gifts of God's spirit (1:4-7; 2:14-16). Instead they are a group of infants (secondary mature). They are mature enough to receive some gifts but still do not understand how to use them (1 Corinthians 14:1-19).

d) mysterion

Thus far, this section has looked at the concept of "the mature", "the rulers of this age", "the Spirit" and "the spiritual." How do these words/phrases relate, connect and influence Paul's understanding of the term mysterion found in verses 2:1 and 2:7?

Some scholars put forth the idea that when Paul arrived in Corinth he did not speak to the Corinthians using fine words or wisdom (2:1)³⁷, but, rather, focused his attention on the proclamation of the message (the mysterion) of the crucified Jesus (2:1).³⁸

The mystery is not spoken in secret. The mysterion was hidden in God³⁹ from the

world, but it is now revealed⁴⁰ in history through the crucifixion of Jesus. In turn it is the spiritual who are able to receive the mystery that comes from the Spirit.⁴¹

Since the mysterion was hidden in God, it has been with God "before the ages" (pro tōn aiōnōn -- verse 2:7), therefore, intended from the beginning.⁴²

This mysterion, which was hidden before the ages, but is now made present, was made present because it was decreed/designed by God (verse 2:7). And this decree/design is eschatological⁴³ because the conclusion of the mysterion is waiting for the coming of the final age (according to Fee).⁴⁴

The "rulers of this age" did not understand the mystery. If they had, they would not have crucified Jesus.⁴⁵ For it is the unspiritual who are unable to receive the mysteries of God.⁴⁶

Therefore, the mysterion found in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7 is connected with the proclamation of Christ. "The rulers of this age" (supernatural) could not understand the mystery of God because they viewed the mysterion with human wisdom. Hence they portrayed the mysterion as foolishness (verse 19). But it is the spiritual (the mature) who are able to realize that the mysterion is from God, and it was at one time designed and hidden by God, only to be revealed in the events (the crucifixion) of Jesus. The spiritual (the mature) are able to know this because they have accepted Jesus, and they have received wisdom (not human wisdom) from the Spirit, which is from God.

IV Jewish and Hellenistic Influences

But the question still remains, was Paul's use of mysterion influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources? The answer to this question can be found once again in the

words and phrases that surround the word mysterion.

A) tois teleiois

Conzelmann suggests that the concept of Paul's "mature" in verse 2:6, was influenced by Hellenistic sources. The word teleios not only can be found within the area or realm of the mysteries, but it also can be found in the area or realm of philosophy⁴⁷ Plato states in Phaedrus 249c that a person is mature when they first come to a realization of God and connect this concept to the world of ideas. Therefore, that person becomes a true being because he or she strives for the ideal.⁴⁸ As well, other Greek philosophers believed that when one was making progress towards a particular goal, that person could be regarded as being in the sphere of perfection.⁴⁹

... and are continually making procrastination after procrastination ... fixing day after day ... you will not know that you are not making improvement, but you will continue ignorant (uninstructed) both while you live and till you die. Immediately, then, think it right to live as a full-grown man, and one who is making proficiency ... Socrates in this way becomes perfect, in all things improving himself, attending to nothing except to reason.

Epictetus, Enchiridion, 50.

Philo believes that when a person follows virtue, that person is able to distinguish what is part of the perfect nature from that which belongs to "mediocre habits" (On the Cherubim, 9). For a perfect person is able to discard "all the pleasures of the belly without being prompted by any command to do so" (Allegorical Interpretation, III, 144, 147). Therefore, those who "participate in virtue" will receive eternal life (Special Laws II, 262; Concerning Noah's Work as a Planter, 37).⁵⁰

But unlike Epictetus, Philo makes a distinction between the perfect person and those

who are striving for perfection. According to Philo, the perfect person is able to rid himself or herself of vices, while a person striving for perfection must invest in the virtues of "perspicuity and truth" (Allegorical Interpretations, III, 140). And as we have already stated, the perfect person is able to discard certain pleasures, but the person "who is only advancing onwards towards perfection only does so in consequence of being commanded ... instigated by reason, which points out to him what he ought to do ..." (Allegorical Interpretations, III, 144).

Robin Scroggs states that the teleios is prominent within Jewish wisdom literature.⁵¹ In Wisdom 9:6, the "perfect among human beings" is nothing without the wisdom that comes from God.⁵²

Scroggs believes that the closest parallel to Paul is found within the writings of the Qumran Community. Here "mature" refers to giving "one's total obedience to the dictates of the sect."⁵³ There is only one rare occurrence to suggest that the mature are given knowledge:⁵⁴

In the Council of the Community there shall be twelve men and three Priests,
perfectly versed in all that is revealed of the Law,

The Community Rule, 8. 1-2.

This parallel appears to support the idea that Paul's mature were part of an elite group. But this is not the case. Paul's mature were those who accepted Christ and to whom Paul would later reveal a mystery. Another problem with this proposed parallel is that the revelation in the Qumran teaching is through the Law, whereas in verse 2: 6-16 it is through the Spirit.

Therefore, what Paul does is to modify the concept of teleios.⁵⁵ Paul's "mature" is similar to Philo's and the Stoic's concept of perfection - the Corinthians are striving for perfection. The Corinthians are still infants (verse 3:1), but they are mature and spiritual enough not to be considered part of the unspiritual, those who view the gifts of God as foolishness. Evidence of this is in verse 1:7 where Paul states that the Corinthians "are not lacking in any spiritual gift."

B) tōn archontōn tou aiōnos

According to Scroggs, "the rulers of this age" is a prominent concept within the book of Wisdom. The book begins by addressing the "rulers of the earth" and asking them to "Love righteousness" and to seek out the Lord with sincerity in their hearts (verse 1:1). In chapter 6, the rulers are asked to listen, understand, learn and honour wisdom in order that they may reign forever (6:1, 21). They are told this because they have been charged with the accusation that they have not ruled rightly (6:4).⁵⁶

In Enoch the rulers are viewed as an evil force (38: 3-6).⁵⁷ And in Enoch 16:3 the "wicked ones" only knew the rejected mysteries.⁵⁸

In chapter 3 of this thesis, I advanced the idea that there is an historical aspect connected with the mysterion. Paul's mysterion and its relation to the "rulers" is similar to the one found in Daniel. In Daniel, neither King Nebuchadnezzar nor his son King Belshazzar or even the magicians, the enchanters, and the sorcerers could know and interpret the dreams and writings on the wall. And when the interpretations were made known to the kings and enchanters, they related to the kings' role in history and also their kingdoms (see Daniel section).

Blessed be the name of God from age to age
 for wisdom and power are his.
 He changes times and seasons,
 deposes kings and sets up kings;
 he gives wisdom to the wise
 and knowledge to those who have understanding.

Daniel 2: 20-21.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul states that it is the rulers of this age who do not understand the mystery, for if they did, the rulers would not have crucified Jesus. Therefore, the "rulers" played a part in history (the crucifixion of Jesus) that related to the mysterion.

C) ton kurion tēs doxēs

In 1 Corinthians 2:8 "the Lord of Glory" (ton kurion tēs doxēs) is the title for Jesus, since the phrase "the Lord of Glory" is connected with the word "crucified" (estaurōsan).

Many scholars attribute the phrase "the Lord of Glory" in 1 Corinthians to 1 Enoch.⁵⁹ But there, unlike 1 Corinthians, the phrase "the Lord of Glory" is a title given to God. In 63:2-3,⁶⁰ there is a connection between "the Lord of Glory" and mysterion (the same as Paul):

Blessed is the Lord of the Spirits - the Lord of kings, the Lord of rulers, and the Master of the rich - the Lord of glory and the Lord of wisdom. Your power exposes every secret thing from generation to generation ... Deep are all your mysteries - and numberless;

Also, there is a connection between the mysterion and how it is "deep." In 1 Corinthians 2:10, the Spirit searches out the "depth of God." Even though the Spirit is the one who searches out the depth of God, what is important is the fact that (like 1 Enoch 63:2) Paul also maintains this idea that the mysteries of God are deep.

D) 1 Corinthians 2:9

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him (NRSV).

1 Corinthians 2:9

Scholars have proposed many different sources for the ideas and imagery in this verse. Nevertheless, no such source matches this verse exactly. It may be possible that Paul was not quoting a particular passage of scripture, or that such a passage is now lost or may be hidden in the sands of a desert.

Some scholars suggest that Paul is quoting from memory Isaiah 64:4,⁶¹ or another Biblical reference, such as Isaiah 52:15, 65:17; and Jeremiah 3:16.⁶² Conzelmann does not believe that the quotation can be found in the Old Testament or any other Jewish writings. Instead, Conzelmann proposes the idea that "there is a wide scattering of similar passages, in keeping with the widespread religions motif of hiddenness and unveiling."⁶³

Without having an exact source it is hard to say exactly where Paul obtained this quotation. But what Conzelmann does present is the idea that there is a broad spectrum from which Paul may have drawn this passage.

E) pneuma

In the book of Wisdom, there is a relationship between God and Wisdom. Not only is Wisdom a reflection of God (7:26), but it is also guided by God (7:15). And it is by Wisdom that one is able to get closer to God (6: 19-20 - see chapter 3). It is the Spirit that enables the spiritual to understand those things from God (verse 12-13). In the same way, it is Wisdom who instructs those who wish to "learn what is secret and what is manifest, for wisdom [is] the fashioner of all things, taught to me."⁶⁴

This is not to say that the author of Wisdom did not view Wisdom as a spirit. In verse 1:6, Wisdom is viewed as a "kindly spirit."⁶⁵ But some scholars believe that the concept of the Wisdom-Spirit in Wisdom is Stoic.

Stoicism believed that Wisdom can know everything that happens in the world, and that Wisdom can be from God and penetrate the human soul.⁶⁶ These same ideas can be found in Wisdom 7: 22-25.

Scroggs believes that the strongest parallels between Stoic Wisdom and Paul are the parallels between Wisdom 9: 6-18 and 1 Corinthians 1:26 - 2:16. In Wisdom 9:6, the author states that if a person is "perfect among the sons of men, if he lacked Wisdom that comes from you, he would still count for nothing." Scroggs makes the link between this verse and 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31 with the difference between human wisdom and the wisdom from God.⁶⁷ But similar parallels may also be found in verses 2:11 and 12. Here Paul again contrasts human wisdom with the wisdom of God (see above section on symmetrical structure).

In Wisdom 9:13 and 17, the author talks about the counsel of God and discerning the wisdom from the counsel. This may be another possible parallel for the connection Paul makes between mysterion and the Spirit. In chapter 3 we looked at how sôd was connected with the concept of the counsel of God. With regard to counsel, God was the one who knew about mysteries, and God in turn imparted this knowledge to the prophets. Now in Wisdom, only those with Wisdom may know and discern things of the counsel (secrets) from the "holy spirit" (verse 17). For Paul, the mysterion is known by those who have wisdom (the realization of the crucifixion of Jesus) which was taught by the Spirit, who interprets "spiritual things to those who are spiritual" (verse 13) because they are able

to "discern all things" (verse 15).

V Conclusion

To conclude, we have taken a look at the authenticity of verse 2:1 and concluded that the word mysterion is authentic because it fits the context of the passage. 2:7 likewise is also authentic. It is a calculated and deliberate move by Paul to reinforce what he stated previously as discussed in chapter 1.

1 Corinthians 2: 6-16 also possesses a symmetrical structure. There are links between: "the mature" and "the spiritual", the rulers and their foolishness, and the role of the Spirit, and a contrast between human wisdom and the wisdom of God.

After examining the words and phrases that are near the word mysterion, mysterion can be understood as a hidden wisdom which the rulers of this age could not understand. Consequently, and as a result, they crucified Jesus because they could not comprehend the mystery using only human wisdom. The spiritual (the mature) on the other hand, are able to understand this because they have been taught by the Spirit.

But was Paul's mysterion influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources? The answer to this question was found in the words and phrases that surrounded the word mysterion. The words and phrases that helped to define the word mysterion show the influence of both Jewish and Hellenistic sources on the writing of Paul. If Paul was strictly influenced by Jewish sources then there would be no Hellenistic parallels.⁶⁸ But parallels for both Hellenistic and Jewish sources are evident.

With regard to "the mature", Paul's "mature" seems rather close to Philo and the Stoics' understanding of a person striving for perfection. The role of "the rulers of this age"

is similar to the historical role the kings of Daniel 2-4 played. The "Lord of Glory" seems to have come from 1 Enoch. There is a broad spectrum of possibilities for the origins of verse 9. And finally, it seems as if Paul is borrowing the role of the Spirit from Wisdom and Stoicism.

Following the same structure as this chapter, the next chapter will, in addition, include a section on comparing the use of mysterion in 4:1 with that of 2:1 and 2:7.

Endnotes

¹Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. MacRae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 53 n. 6. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, ed. Clifton J. Allen, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 305.

²C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 62.

³*Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 156. G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 819 n. 141.

⁵William O. Walker, Jr., "1 Corinthians 2. 6-16: A Non-Pauline Interpolation?" Journal for the Study of the New Testament, XLVII (1992), p. 79.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁸Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XLVIII (1986), p. 82.

⁹E. Earle Ellis, "Traditions in 1 Corinthians," New Testament Studies, XXXII (1986), p. 490.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 490.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 499 n 69.

¹²Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), p. 99.

¹³Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 57.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁵Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 163.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 163-164.

¹⁸See Introduction to Part II, on the dating of Romans and 1 Corinthians.

¹⁹Galen W. Wiley, "A Study of 'Mystery' in the New Testament," Grace Theological Journal, VI (1985), p. 354.

²⁰Paul does tell the Corinthian Church a mystery in verse 15:51.

²¹James M. Reese, "Paul Proclaims the Wisdom of the Cross: Scandal and Foolishness," Biblical Theology Bulletin, IX (October, 1979), p. 150. William Baird, The Corinthian Church: A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture, (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 45.

²²Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 60.

²³William R. Schoedel, Hermeneia: Ignatius of Antioch, ed. Helmut Koester, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 87 n. 1. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 164.

²⁴Origen, On First Principles, trans. G. W. Butterworth, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 3.3. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 164.

²⁵Origen, On First Principles, 3.3.

²⁶The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 307. French L. Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1977), p. 136. D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 267. C. K. Barrett suggests that the reference to the "rulers of this age" refers to "heavenly angelic powers." C. K. Barrett, "Christianity at Corinth" in Essays on Paul, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), p. 9.

²⁷Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 164.

²⁸Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 104. Carl refers to "the rulers" as "princes." K. James Carl, "Mysterion in the New Testament," Banglore Theological Forum, XVI (May - August, 1984), p. 133.

²⁹Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 104. Chrys C. Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, (Doctoral thesis: Uppsala University, 1977), p. 29. J. Christiaan Beker, Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 41.

³⁰Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 106. Orr and Walther also view the crucifixion as a human act because there is no reference to any supernatural intervention.

Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 164.

³¹The Broadman Bible Commentary, p. 308.

³²Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 142.

³³Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 74.

³⁴Barrett, "Christianity at Corinth," p. 10.

³⁵Vincent P. Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul?" The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XLVII (1985), p. 671. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 163. John Painter suggests that not only do the pneuma/teleioi have wisdom and knowledge (gnosis) but they also have "the manifestation of the Spirit." (hē phanerosis tou pneumatos -- verse 12). John Painter, "Paul and the Pneumatikos: at Corinth," in Paul and Paulinism: Essays in honor of C. K. Barrett, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson, (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 237.

³⁶John Koenig, "From Mystery to Ministry: Paul as Interpreter of Charismatic Gifts," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXXIII (Spring and Summer, 1978), p. 168.

³⁷Sherman E. Johnson suggests that Paul's attempt at speaking in Athens failed to reach the intellectuals. Sherman E. Johnson, "Paul in Athens," Lexington Theological Quarterly, XVII (July, 1982), p. 42.

³⁸Baird, The Corinthian Church, p. 50. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 162. Koenig and H. Kramer consider the mysterion of 2:1 to be God's saving plan. Koenig, "From Mystery to Ministry: Paul as Interpreter of Charismatic Gifts," p. 172. H. Kramer, "Mysterion" in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 448.

³⁹Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 105. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," p. 820.

⁴⁰Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 71.

⁴¹Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 105. Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 142. H. L. Goudge, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (London: Methuen and Company, 1909), p. 21. The Boardman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 308. Carl suggests that the "hiddenness is due to human unwillingness or inability to conceive it." Carl, "Mysterion in the New Testament," p. 130.

⁴²Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 105. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 307. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," p. 820.

⁴³Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 105. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 308.

⁴⁴Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 105.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 106. Goudge, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 21.

⁴⁶Richard N. Longnecker, Paul, Apostle of Liberty, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 45. Arrington states, "unspiritual men are blind to the significance of what God did in Christ because they lack the Spirit." Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 142.

⁴⁷Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 60 and n. 34-35. Goudge suggests that Paul's "mystery" is similar to the mystery cults in that both incorporate the moral purity of an initiation (see chapter # 2). Goudge, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 21. Barrett thinks it is doubtful that Paul has the mystery cults in mind when he uses the word "mature." Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 72. Also see The Broadman Bible Commentary, p. 308.

⁴⁸"Wherefore if a man makes right use of such means of remembrance, and ever approaches to the full vision of the prefect mysteries (teleous aei teletas teloumenos), he and he alone becomes truly perfect." Phaedrus 249 c. For other occurrences of the word teleios in Plato, see Laws III, 653 a; Phaedrus 246 b-c; Timaeus 32 d, 68 e. G. Delling, "Teleios," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. VIII, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 69.

⁴⁹Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 60 n. 35.

⁵⁰Delling, "Teleios," pp. 70-72.

⁵¹Robin Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," New Testament Studies, XIV (1967-68), p. 38.

⁵²Also see Wisdom 6:15; Sirach 34:8. Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 39.

⁵³See 1 QS 1.8, 2.2, 3.9; 1 QH 1.36.

⁵⁴Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 39.

⁵⁵Reese, "Paul Proclaims the Wisdom of the Cross: Scandal and Foolishness," p. 149.

⁵⁶Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 41.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁵⁸Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 63.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 63 n. 63. Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 147 n. 71. Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 42.

⁶⁰Also see 1 Enoch 22:14; 25:3; 27: 3-4; 75:3.

⁶¹Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 157. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 307. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 73.

⁶²Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 157. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 73.

⁶³Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, pp 63-64. Scroggs suggests that verse 9 comes from Wisdom 9: 9-18. Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 49.

⁶⁴Wisdom 7: 21-22 (brackets added).

⁶⁵The Spirit of the Qumran Community is different from the Spirit of 2: 6-16. In the Community Rule, III, 19-20, the spirit of truth was born from the fountain of light while the spirit of injustice sprang "from the source of darkness" (verse 20). Though both come from two different sources, both spirits were created by God. Therefore, there is a difference between Paul and the Qumran Community concept of "the spirit," and any comparison should be taken lightly. W. D. Davies, Christian Origins and Judaism, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 162-163.

⁶⁶Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 48. Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 65. For a detailed discussion of Stoicism and pneuma, see Schweizer, "Pneuma," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. VI, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pp. 353-355.

⁶⁷Scroggs, "Paul: Sophos and Pneumatikos," p. 49.

⁶⁸Ruef states that "it was in Corinth that Paul turned to the gentiles and for the first time, perhaps faced the problem of presenting Christianity outside the Jewish milieu." John Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 16. But if this were the case, 1 Corinthians would have been strictly in a Hellenistic motif, with no allusion to Jewish references or ideas.

Chapter 5:

Paul's Use of the Word Mysterion in 1 Corinthians 4:1

Think of us in this way, as servants (hupēretas) of Christ and stewards (oikonomous) of God's mysteries (mystērion). Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4: 1-2

I Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the first and second occurrences of the word mysterion (1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7). This chapter will continue to examine Paul's use of the word mysterion and its Jewish and/or Hellenistic influence, but this chapter will also examine and link the mysterion of verse 4:1 with the mysterion of 2:1 and 2:7.

The first section of this chapter¹ will examine the connection between mysterion and certain words/phrases. In particular, this section will ask the questions: Who are the 'us'

that are mentioned in verse 4:1?; What was the function of the `servant' and `steward' in the ancient world? And how does this relate to the function of Paul within the Corinthian community?; Why does Paul employ the concept of judgement in this section (verse 3-5)? From these questions, one may get a better understanding of Paul's mysterion in verse 4:1.

The next section poses the question, "Where did Paul get this concept of mysterion?" Was Paul influenced by Classical Greek authors, or by Jewish Apocalyptic sources, or by Philo? Or was Paul influenced by the parables of the stewards found in Luke 12: 41-48 and 16: 1-9? The last section will examine the idea of whether there is a connection between the mysterion of 2:1 and 2:7 and the mysterion of 4:1.

II Words and Phrases

A) houtōs hēmas logizesthō anthrōpos

When Paul states "Think of us in this way (houtōs hēmas logizesthō anthrōpos)", one is left to wonder, "to whom is Paul referring when he mentions `us'?"

Many scholars believe that Paul is referring back to verse 3:5. Hans Conzelmann suggests that the word houtōs does not look forward to the word hōs ("as" -- in verse 1) but rather the word houtōs looks back to something that Paul previously wrote. What Paul refers back to is the theme in 3: 5-9.²

In 3: 5-9 Paul mentions Apollos and himself as servants (verse 5 -- diakonoi; verse 9 -- sunergoi). In chapter 3: 5-9, Paul talks about the role of the servants, and how these servants should not be regarded above their master ("the master" being God). In 4: 1-5, Paul is stating a conclusion, that the servants are answerable only to God and not to any human critic.³

C. K. Barrett follows the idea of Conzelmann by suggesting that the word houtōs does refer back to 3: 5-9. Barrett also suggests that there is a connection between the servant (diakonos) of 3: 5-9 and the hupēretas of 4:1. The theme of chapter 3 looks at the service done by the servant, while chapter 4 stresses the servants' "subordination" to their master.⁴ Where Barrett does differ from Conzelmann and other scholars is in the idea that Cephas may also be included with Apollos and Paul.⁵

But does the word houtōs have reference back to 3: 5-9? Could it not refer back to the previous verses 3: 21-23? In verses 3: 21-23 Paul mentions the leaders Apollos, Cephas and himself. Paul also states the idea that the Corinthians should not choose one leader, because "inordinate loyalty to particular leaders not only creates an idolatrous personality cult which denies allegiance to God, it also robs the church of the full benefit of his servants' ministries."⁶ Since there is this close proximity, does the "us" refer to Apollos and Paul or to Apollos, Paul and Cephas? In this case, I believe that it is just Apollos and Paul. In 3: 21-23 there are no real parallels to draw upon. In 3: 5-9 there is mention of "servants (diakonos and sunergoi)."⁷ Also, as Conzelmann and Barrett have pointed out, Paul introduces a concept (the role of the servants) in 3: 5-9 and concludes that concept (the role of the servants in relation to God) in 4: 1-5.

And in verse 3:6 a triad factor is present. Paul first came to the Corinthians and planted "the seed." Apollos came and watered "the seed" while God helped to develop "the seed."⁷ But Paul is not excluding Cephas from the missionary process by stating that Apollos and he are the only two missionaries to Corinth; what Paul is doing is trying to establish himself within the Corinthian Community. Paul is trying to justify the demand

for his “right of support” that other apostles have been given (1: 1-18).⁸

B) hupēretas

The word hupēretēs is a Greek word to mean “any labourer: an assistant, servant, inferior officer.”⁹ This is the only time that the word hupēretas occurs within the letters of Paul.

Originally, the word hupēretēs was used to mean an oarsman in the lowest level of a Greek trireme.¹¹ Later on it developed to mean “a servant or helper.” William Baird suggests that since Paul uses the word hupēretas, it implies a lowly, slavish service.¹² I would not agree with the above definition; rather I would follow the definition suggested by Orr and Walther. William Orr and James Arthur Walther propose the idea that the term “servant” implies an assistant who is in a secondary service to person(s) of official status.¹³ Plato makes a distinction between two different types of servants: douloi and hupēretēs. The douloi are those “who can be hired for work for pay, who work for a daily wage and who are always ready to work for any employer, will never be found daring to claim any share in the art of ruling.”¹⁴ But a hupēretēs is a servant “who [does] all manner of administrative work for the elected officials ... civil servants, but not [a ruler] exercising an independent authority in the state.”¹⁵

The hupēretēs was not limited to just civil service. The hupēretēs were carriers of shields and swords¹⁶; aides to generals or other military commanders¹⁷; physician assistants who carried out minor medical tasks¹⁸; judges’ assistants who carried out the execution of the convicted¹⁹; contractor servants²⁰; assistants of poets²¹; “servants of the argument”²²; and the term is even used to describe a friend who helps a friend with a

particular matter.²³

Therefore, when Paul uses the word hupēretēs, he does not use it to describe a lowly slave, but rather, as the Greek sources show, although the servant is in a subordinate role²⁴, he/she still maintains an official status, as Orr and Walther argue.

C) oikonomous

The word "steward" (oikonomous) occurs in verse 4:1. The same word also occurs in Luke 12 and 16²⁵; Galatians 4:2; and in Romans 16:23. In Romans 16:23 Paul sends greetings from Eratus "the city treasurer (ho oikonomos tēs poleōs). Niel Asher Silberman sees a similarity between the Eratus of Romans 16:23 and an inscription found in Corinth naming an Eratus who served as a "municipal market inspector."²⁶ In Galatians 4:2 (NRSV) the word "trustees" is used to translate the word "oikonomous." And in Luke 12:42 and 16:1 the author presents the oikonomos as a "manager" (NRSV). Here the word is used to denote a servant who is placed in charge of an estate and is responsible for distributing duties among the other servants and/or slaves.²⁷

Plato uses the same understanding as the author of Luke. Plato described the oikonomos as a "master of a household."²⁸ And he also viewed the oikonomos to be identical with a slavemaster.²⁹ Philo refers to God one who administers (oikonomei sōtēriōs) the salvation of the world, and also Philo states that in "the world, together with the number seven (of planets) and the eight sphere of fixed stars ... the divine Logos is the governor and administrator (oikonomos) of all things ..."³⁰

Reumann states that there was a development in the use of the word oikonomos. And from these above passages one can see the many different usages being applied. The

first usage is the “manager in a household (oikos)” -- Luke and Plato. The second usage is “the manager of a city-state (polis)” -- Romans 16:23. And lastly, “the manager of the world” -- Philo.³¹

But how does Paul use the term oikonomos in 1 Corinthians 4:1?

Some scholars suggest that Paul is using the word “steward” in a way that is similar to a manager of a household, in that he is dispensing the mysteries/gospel of God. And since he is distributing something that is from God, he is accountable to God,³² in the same way that a “secular” steward distributes duties among others and is accountable to their master/employer.

I believe that these scholars are making a correct assumption, that Paul is using the term steward in a religious context. Since the word steward is connected with God, there is a relationship between the steward and God. This idea will be explored in more detail in the section on the Jewish and Hellenistic influences on 1 Corinthians 4:1. But for now we may state that the steward in 4:1 is a person who has been given the mysteries of God and they are accountable for the dispensing of these mysteries.

D) hupo anthropinēs hēmeras

The phrase “by any human court” (hupo anthropinēs hēmeras) occurs in verse 4:3. Literally, the phrase reads “by any human day.” But it is translated to imply that one is “having their day in court.”³³

Scholars are generally in agreement (I would also tend to agree) that the “day” Paul speaks of in 4:3 is the “final day.” It is the day in which everyone will be judged by God and they will receive Judgment from God. It is the “Day” in which the actions of all will

be revealed (verse 3: 13-14 “the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it”).³⁴ It does not matter to Paul that he is judged by others (verse 4:3), but what does matter is that “the Lord” is the one who will judge him (verse 4:4).³⁵ According to Paul it is on this “day ... God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret (ta krupta) thoughts of all” (Romans 2:16), which are hidden (1 Cor. 4:5).

Therefore, according to Paul, the only real form of judgment is not the one from one’s peers, but rather, it is the judgment at the final days by Jesus. The “only competent tribunal is the eschatological one.”³⁶

E) mysterion

How do these words and phrases relate to the mysterion found in verse 4:1?

As it is stated above, the “us” in verse 4:1 is in reference to Apollos and Paul. Paul is trying to establish for himself the rights and support that other apostles (Cephas) have. Some of the Corinthians made criticisms and judgments of Paul (verse 4:3). And it is because of those judgments that some of the Corinthians have dismissed Paul and belong to Apollos, or to Cephas, or to Christ. Even Paul’s apostleship was in doubt (verse 9:3).

Paul refutes these judgments and criticisms of his apostleship for two reasons. First, the only judgment that matters to Paul is the one that comes from Jesus Christ (verse 4:4). Second, Paul is playing a part in God’s work. Paul views himself as a planter, and as “a skilled master builder” laying a foundation (verse 3:10). And Apollos is viewed as a “waterer” and a builder (verse 3:10).

Hence, Paul viewed Apollos and himself as servants and stewards. But other apostles were also considered to be servants and stewards. It is just at this point Paul is

trying to establish his apostleship. If Paul did believe that he and Apollos were the only two servants, then Paul would be contradicting what he stated in verse 3:21 -- "So let no one boast about human leaders."

If Paul is trying to establish his apostleship by stating that he and Apollos are servants and stewards, what are the function and status of the servant and steward?

With regard to status, Paul is not trying to elevate himself to a grand position. Instead he is keeping his role on a subordinate level. Paul even considers himself to be "The least of the apostles" (verse 15:9).³⁷ In a similar way the hupēretas is a role which carries with it some level of responsibility (that of the medical assistant and the judicial assistant) but at the same time it is a role that is subordinate. The oikonomos is also a role that is at a subordinate level. The oikonomos is in charge of others, but they too must also answer to a higher official/employer. For Paul, this higher official is God.

Since the hupēretas and the oikonomos have a certain level of responsibility, they have been entrusted with the mysteries of God.³⁸ They have been given a function to perform. But what was this function?

Jerome Murphy O'Conner suggests that it was their duty to ensure "the reliability of the view of Christ accepted by believers."³⁹ But there is no evidence to support this idea of disputing viewpoints on the ideas and concepts of Christ in the text around verse 4:1.

Albert Schweitzer proposes the idea that Paul views himself as "a recruiting officer" trying to encourage people into accepting the salvation of God. And Paul views himself as a "slave to men", one who allows the burdens of others to be placed upon himself.⁴⁰ What Schweitzer is doing is trying to combine verse 4:1 with 2 Corinthians 4:5 and 5: 20-21.

In 2 Corinthians 5: 20-21, Paul is not trying to defend his apostleship; rather, he is talking about salvation. And in verse 4:5 (“your slaves” -- doulous humōn), the slave does not suggest a somewhat elevated role; rather, it is the opposite. Therefore, though Paul does present other roles within his writings, the roles of 2 Corinthians 4:5 and 5: 20-21 cannot be connected with the hupēretas and oikonomos of verse 4:1.

Barrett gives the most probable solution to the function of the servants and the stewards. The servant is not the one who can take credit for mysteries (since the mysteries are disclosed by God [2:7]); rather everything must point back to Jesus.¹¹ As we have stated, the servant is an assistant. Paul has been entrusted with these mysteries; he cannot go around and say that these mysteries are his when in fact they have been hidden in God. In the same way the stewards are to be viewed as “teachers of the revealed truths.”¹² The mysteria have not been revealed to them directly so that each apostle has his/her own mystery. Instead, the mysteries have been revealed through the events of Jesus,¹³ by the Spirit.

Therefore, the purpose of verse 4:1 was to demonstrate to the Corinthians the role that Paul and Apollos played in the development of the Corinthians’ community. Paul defends his apostleship by stating that he is a servant of God/Christ (verse 3:8 and 4:1) and as a steward he has been entrusted with the mysteries of God. Though Paul does not view himself as a great apostle, he does view himself as an apostle who has been given the mysterion to reveal to the mature/spiritual.

III Jewish and Hellenistic Influences

Was Paul's *mysterion* influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources? The solution to this question may be found in the words and phrases that surround the word *mysterion*.

A) *huperetas* and *oikonomos*

In ancient Greek literature, the term "servant" (*hupēretēs*) was used to define an assistant. But the term *hupēretēs* is also connected with the divine.

The first time the word *hupēretēs* occurs within extant Greek literature it is used in connection with the divine. The fifth century playwright Aeschylus portrays Hermes as a servant of Zeus who is executing the will of Zeus, and as a result of this role, Hermes has the power and authority of Zeus.⁴⁴

Socrates held the belief that he was the servant of Athens who was commanded by God to persuade the people of Athens both "young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls."⁴⁵ Socrates also views the area of art as an area in which the artisan does not utter certain art forms, but rather, it is by the divine that the art form is accomplished

Herein lies the reason why the deity has bereft them of their senses, and uses them as ministers (*hupēretais*) ... that it is not they who utter these precious revelations while their mind is not with them, but that it is the god himself who speaks, and through them becomes articulate to us.

Plato, *Ion* 534 c-d.

Thus far, these above references have shown that there was within ancient Greek literature a relationship between the divine and a servant - a servant whose role it was to

act as a messenger of the words and will of God and/or a guide of a group of people.

With regard to the mysterion found in verse 4:1, Paul may view himself (and other apostles) as messengers of the mysteries of God to be shared with a certain group of people (the mature/spiritual).

As for the word “steward”, the Eleusinian myth describes the goddess Demeter going to Eleusis, to the royal family and “the royal stewards of the right” and teaching them the sacred rites, objects and utterances.⁴⁶

An inscription from Delphi describes a vote by an assembly asking for the names of the stewards of the holy Apollo to be recorded.⁴⁷ In another inscription the word “steward” is connected with the god Dionysos (Dionysiou poleōs Kōion oikonomou).⁴⁸

Therefore, the hymn and the inscriptions add support to the connection between the steward and religion. But though there is this connection, it does not seem likely that Paul would have been influenced by these exact sources. Later on in this section we will look at a more probable parallel.

Several scholars do not believe that the “servants and steward” of verse 4:1 imply those of the mystery cults. Rather, the parallels and influence can be found within Semetic writings.⁴⁹

Within the LXX the word hupēretēs only occurs once.⁵⁰ In Proverbs 14:35 the word hupēretas is used to describe a servant who gains the king’s favour. Also within the LXX the word oikonomos occurs several times and it is used either in reference to a secretary or a chief official in charge of distributing orders to others.⁵¹

In Philo, the only references to God’s huperetōn are to angels (On the Posterity of

Cain and His Exile, 92: On the Change of Names, 87), and the chiefs of war (The Decalogue, 178).⁵² And in reference to the steward, God is the one who manages the world.⁵³

Therefore, it does not seem likely that Paul was influenced by Jewish sources. The Greek Jewish writings do not make a strong connection between God and servant/steward. And Philo's references do not relate to Paul's use of the term in verse 4:1. The references do not link the servant/steward with a role of a person who receives and shares the knowledge that is given to them from God.

But what was the influence behind verse 4:1? Several scholars believe (and I would agree with them) that Paul was influenced by a quote from Epictetus, or the idea behind the quote.⁵⁴

When he sees that he has watched over men, and toiled in their behalf; and that he has slept in purity, while his sleep leaves him even purer than he was before; and that every thought which he thinks is that of a friend and servant (hupēretēs) to the gods, of one who shares in the government of Zeus; and has always ready at hand the verse, "Lead thou me on, O Zeus, and Destiny," and "If so it pleases the gods, so be it," why should he not have courage to speak freely to his own brothers, to his children, in a word, to his kinsmen?

Epictetus, Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus, III. 22. 95-96.

What is similar, is that in both cases, the authors view themselves (or another member -- either Cynic or apostle/prophet) as servants (hupēretēs) of/to the god.⁵⁵ There is a word relation that is present between the words hupēretēs and theoīs. But what is also important is the fact that both quotations demonstrate a similar role. In the quote from Epictetus, the Cynic's (the servant [hupēretēs] to the gods) proper concern is with the

welfare of others. In the same way, Paul is concerned with the Corinthian community. And like the Cynic, Paul also struggles with the problem of speaking freely to others. If not, Paul would not be criticized by others (verse 4: 3-4).

Some scholars have suggested that the role of the steward in 4:1 is similar to that in Luke 12: 41-48 and 16: 1-9. Since Paul makes reference to the steward being "trustworthy", some scholars see this image as a parallel with Luke's parable of the unjust steward of 16: 1-9 and the injustice of the steward towards others in 12: 41-48.⁵⁶

I do not believe that Paul was quoting from these parables. It is doubtful that Paul would have known about these parables, and if he did Paul would have made the reference more explicit so that his readers would have also understood the connection. But where the link occurs between Luke and Paul is in the theme of the parable. Within Luke, the steward is viewed as cruel and unjust. This may suggest that within ancient times, some of the stewards were taking advantage of their position. Paul may have added the sentence about being "trustworthy" in order to defend his position as steward and his apostleship. Paul then continues to enforce his trustworthiness by stating that he will be judged by God (verse 4:4) for his actions.

Therefore, I conclude that Paul was influenced by Hellenistic sources with regard to the steward and servant. The steward/servant was a messenger (Socrates)/preacher (Epictetus) of God. And there is no strong Jewish equivalent to support the idea of a Jewish influence.

B) phōtisei ta krupta tou skotous

Though the concept of the servant and steward is influenced by Hellenistic sources,

there is a Jewish element that must be considered.

Fee suggests that Paul is using a “Semitic parallelism”, one that demonstrates that God will “bring to light” (photisei) the things which are “hidden in darkness” (ta krupta tou skotous) because nothing can be kept from God; not even the thoughts of a person.⁵⁷

This concept of God disclosing the hidden thoughts within a person is found throughout ancient Jewish writings. The author of 1 Samuel states that “the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (verse 16:7). And the author of Jeremiah states:

I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

verse 17:10⁵⁸

In Sirach, this concept of God revealing the hidden thoughts is found many times. The author of Sirach warns a person against exalting his or herself or the “Lord will reveal your secrets (sôd)” (verse 1:30). The author of Sirach also states:

Their ways are always known to him; they will not be hidden from his eyes ... and his eyes are ever upon their ways. Their iniquities are not hidden from him, and all sins are before the Lord.

verse 17: 15-20.⁵⁹

And within 1 Enoch, one of the heavenly tablets held the mysteries of all the deeds of all humankind (verse 89:2).

Therefore, one cannot make the claim that the mysterion is strictly influenced by Hellenistic sources. Because of verse 5, there is a significant Jewish element that must not

be dismissed.

IV Mysterion Analysis

In the previous chapter, Paul demonstrates the process of the mysterion. The mysterion was hidden in God and determined before the ages (verse 2:7). The mysterion was made known through the events of Jesus.⁶⁰ But some could not understand the mysterion, so as a result they crucified Jesus. But to those who did understand the mysterion, it was revealed to them through the Spirit. Therefore, thus far, the mysterion process constitutes the mysterion being from God, realized through Jesus, and taught by the Spirit (verse 2:13).

In verse 4:1 Paul defines the mysterion process further by adding an additional step. The Spirit cannot simply reveal the mysterion to just any mature/spiritual person. If this were the case, then the Spirit would reveal this wisdom to people who are spiritual infants. In turn, it is the servants and stewards (apostles/prophets) who are taught by the Spirit. And as a result, it is their responsibility to make the mysterion known to the proper people (mature/spiritual) at the proper time.⁶¹

Within both verses there is an eschatological element connected with the mysterion. In verse 2:7 the mysterion is eschatological.⁶² The mysterion will be complete at the final days. According to Paul, it is still not complete, and still must be fulfilled.

The eschatological element of chapter 4 is found in verse 5. It is in verse 5 that Paul makes reference to the day of judgement by Jesus. This day is eschatological because no judgment/criticism by others matters until the coming of the Lord (verse 4:5).

Therefore, this section has demonstrated a link between the mysterion of verse 2:7

and verse 4:1. Paul believes that there is an eschatological element connected with the mysterion. And this eschatological element will be demonstrated again in the other mystery verses. But more important this chapter has demonstrated that there is a hierarchy connected with the mysterion:

mysterion hidden in God



made known through Jesus



taught by the Spirit



entrusted to apostles/prophet



told to mature/spiritual



occasionally hidden from secondary mature

Endnotes

¹ The first section of the previous chapter examined the authenticity of 2:6-16. With regard to this chapter, there is no debate as to the authenticity of verse 4:1.

² Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. MacRae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 82 n. 1. William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 177.

³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), p. 28. Jouette M. Bassler, "1 Corinthians 4:1-5," Interpretation, XLIV (April, 1990), p. 180.

⁴ C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 99.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, ed. Clifton J. Allen, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 313. Rengstorf suggests only Apollos and Paul. Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 542.

⁶ William Baird, The Corinthian Church: A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture, (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 54.

⁷ Geoffrey Lampe, "The Pauline Background," in Stewards of the Mysteries of God, ed. Eric James, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), pp. 21-22.

⁸ Antoinette Clark Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 24-25.

⁹ Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, abridged, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 736.

¹⁰ The Interpreter's Bible: Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 52.

¹¹ Baird, The Corinthian Church, p. 53. The Broadman Bible Commentary, p. 313. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 177. John Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 28.

- ¹² Baird, The Corinthian Church, p. 53.
- ¹³ Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 177. Murphy-O'Connor defines "servant" as an official witness" (Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, p. 29). Fee defines "servant" as a "one who has the duties administering the affairs of another" (Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981], p. 159).
- ¹⁴ Plato, Statesman, 290a.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 290b.
- ¹⁶ Herodotus, Histories, V. 3.4; Thucydides III. 17.3.
- ¹⁷ Plato, Euthyphro, 13e - 14a; Plato, Laws, VI, 755b; Xenophon, Cyropaedia, IV, 2.13.
- ¹⁸ Plato, Laws, IV 715c, 720a.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ix 873b; Plato, Phaedo, 116 bc.
- ²⁰ Plato, Euthyphro, 13e.
- ²¹ Plato, Republic, II 373b.
- ²² Plato, Theaetetus, 177c.
- ²³ Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs," pp. 530-32.
- ²⁴ Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, p. 29. Bassler, Interpretation, p. 181.
- ²⁵ A comparison between Luke and Paul will be discussed later on in the chapter.
- ²⁶ Neil Asher Silberman, "The World of Paul", Archaeology, (November/December, 1996), p. 34. But as stated in the appendix, the names found in Romans 16 refers to people in Ephesus. Therefore, Eratus could not be the inspector at Corinth.
- ²⁷ Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 177.
- ²⁸ Plato, Statesman, 258e. Also see Plato, Republic, III 417a and Laws, x 902d.
- ²⁹ Plato, Statesman, 259b.

³⁰ "... the Ruler of the great World-city ... the Pilot who ever steers all things in safety" The Decalogue, 53. M. J. Joseph, "The Pauline Concept of the Economy of Salvation," Indian Journal of Theology, xxx (July/December, 1981), p. 139, n. 8. J. Reumann, "Oikonomia - Terms in Paul in Comparison with Lucan Heilsgeschichte," New Testament Studies, xiii, p. 152, n. 5, 6. The references for Philo viewing the Logos as a steward are found in Questions and Answers on Genesis 4, 110; and Questions and Answers on Exodus 2.39.

³¹ Reumann, "Oikonomia," p. 150.

³² Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 159. H. L. Goudge, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (London: Methuen and Company, 1909), p. 30. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 313.

³³ Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 161.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, p. 314.

³⁵ Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 161.

³⁶ Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 83.

³⁷ In Galatians 1:1, Paul is an apostle who is commissioned not by human authorities but by God.

³⁸ H. Kramer, "Mysterion," in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 447. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 179.

³⁹ Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), p. 322.

⁴¹ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 99.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁴ Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, line 983. Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs," p. 530. Also see Sophocles, Philoctetes, line 990.

⁴⁵ Plato, Apology, 29b-30b.

⁴⁶ Homeric Hymn to Demeter, lines 470-480.

⁴⁷ Guilelmo Dittenbergero, ed., Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum, vol II, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1960), p. 114.

⁴⁸ Guilelmo Dittenberge, ed., Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum, vol III, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1960), p. 383.

⁴⁹ Reumann, "Oikonomia," p. 160. The Interpreter's Bible, p. 52. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 160.

⁵⁰ Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs," p. 532.

⁵¹ Esther 1:8, 8:9; Isaiah 36:3, 22; 37:2. O. Michel, "Oikonomos," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol 5, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 149.

⁵² Rengstorf describes Philo's use of the word "hupēretēs" as used in a way that "it makes no difference whether the controlling subject is God, a ruler, a person in high position, an ordinary man, or even a bodily organ which needs the support of another organ to perform its function" (Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs", pp. 535-536.)

⁵³ See footnote 30.

⁵⁴ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 102. Rengstorf, "Hupēretēs," pp. 531, 542. Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 83.

⁵⁵ Barrett gives a translation of "preachers as a servant of Zeus." Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 102.

⁵⁶ Gerd Theissen, Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology, trans. John P. Galvin, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 60. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 180.

⁵⁷ Fee, The Epistle to the First Corinthians, pp. 163-164.

⁵⁸ Also see 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalms 139:1, 11-12; Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, vol 413. Fee, The epistle to the First Corinthians, p. 163 n. 33.

⁵⁹ Also see Sirach 16:17; 23:18-20; 39:19. Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)" Biblica, xxxix (1958), p. 441.

⁶⁰ See chapter #2, footnotes 45, 47.

⁶¹ Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 179.

⁶² See chapter #2, footnotes 52, 53.

Chapter 6:

Paul's Use of the Word Mysterion in 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13: 1-2

Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14: 1-2

I INTRODUCTION

While in the previous two chapters the word mysterion was shown to demonstrate the hierarchial development of the dispensing of the mysteries from God through the Spirit to the apostle/prophets, the examination of 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2 in this chapter will continue to demonstrate this process: the process of how the mysteries are transmitted from the Spirit to apostle/prophets. It is a process that in Paul's opinion, the Corinthians do not fully understand and have abused. Hence, this chapter will examine the following questions: What was Paul referring to when he stated that he was a "noisy gong" and a "clanging cymbal"? Are these phrases a direct reference and comparison to the mystery cults? Or was Paul referring to something else? How do these phrases help to define the "misused" situation at Corinth? And how does this "mystery verse" compare with those contained in the previous chapters?

II Authenticity

Before one takes a look at the words and phrases of 1 Corinthians 13 and 14, the question as to the authenticity of 1 Corinthians 13 must first be addressed.

Most scholars do not believe that 1 Corinthians 13 is the work of an interloper. But scholars do question whether 1 Corinthians 13 was originally written between chapter 12 and 14, or 1 Corinthians 13 was a piece that was edited in between chapters 12 and 14.

This debate arises through observation of a shift in mood. In 1 Corinthians 12:31a Paul uses the imperative mood "But strive for the greater gifts", but in 12:31b there is a shift to the indicative "And I will show you a still more excellent way." A shift back to the imperative occurs in 14:1.

But along with this shift in mood there is also a contextual shift. In 12:31a Paul was instructing the Corinthians to "strive for the greater gifts." Then in chapter 13 Paul talks about love (Paul's "Love Chapter"). Later, in 14:1 Paul returns to the idea of striving for gifts. There seems to be a flow of ideas that is interpreted by the insertion of another idea.

Gordon D. Fee suggests that this break is not the result of including another work but the result of two factors. First, Fee suggests that verses 1-3 fit a "poetic mold." Fee also proposes the idea that the shift from imperative to indicative is the result of "digression."¹ It is a digression because of its context. 1 Corinthians 13 is an ethical context in which Paul expressed reservation about the gift of tongues and demonstrates how the "love of others" is more important than the love of oneself. This ethical context in 13 relates to chapter 14 in which Paul instructs the Corinthians to "build up" and edify the community rather than harm it. According to Fee, we must also consider the structure of chapter 13, a structure that contrasts Paul with the community. The community is one that has been given certain gifts (such as "asceticism, knowledge and tongues" - 12: 8-11) but they have abandoned the ethic of love which Paul advises the Corinthians that they should have followed (13: 1-3).²

According to other scholars, language is also another factor that demonstrates the connection between chapters 12, 13, and 14. In chapter 12 Paul mentions "knowledge" (verse 8), "faith" (verse 9), "prophecy" (verse 10), and "tongues" (verse 10, 28, 30). In chapter 13, these words are restated.³ And without the mention of the word "love" in chapter 13, the reader would not be prepared for its appearance in 14:1.⁴ What the reader is not prepared for is the word "love" being connected with the concept of striving for

spiritual gifts. In chapter 12 Paul talks about how one receives a spiritual gift. But in 14:1 Paul tells the Corinthians to strive for the spiritual gifts, but he also tells them to "Pursue love." If chapter 13 were not placed between chapters 12 and 14, the reader would be asking the questions, "What is this idea of pursuing love?" "How does pursuing love relate to striving for spiritual gifts?"

On the other hand, Barrett criticizes the idea (expressed by Fee) that 1 Corinthians 13 is a form of poetry. Barrett makes the point that "rhythmical patterns are not regular enough to warrant presentation of poetry."⁵ Barrett still maintains that chapter 13 is the work of Paul, but regards it as a separate composition that was inserted at this point.⁶

I would follow the idea proposed by Barrett and Conzelmann that chapter 13 is a piece written by Paul, but inserted at another time by him or by another. However, how does one explain the word links between chapters 12, 13, and 14?

Whoever inserted chapter 13 placed this chapter at this point for good reason; there is a linguistic connection. Nevertheless, the "word links" by themselves do not explain the shift from the imperative to the indicative. Fee's poetry proposal only explains a part of chapter 13 and not the entire chapter. And Fee's "digression" theory does support the idea of connecting themes between the chapters, but does not explain the shift from the imperative, for if this was a digression, why would Paul not continue with the imperative? The idea proposed by Fee is inconclusive. Fee just states that chapter 13 is a tangent (a digression). He does not give support to his idea. It may be a digression with a shift in mood, or it may be something else (as Barrett and Conzelmann suggest an apparent edit).

Though connections exist between the themes of the chapters, one cannot dismiss

the fact that there is an apparent break between the striving for gifts in 12:31a and the pursuit of gifts in 14:1. Therefore, it is likely that chapter 13 was inserted at a later time, as Barrett and Conzelmann have suggested.

III Words and Phrases

A) chalkos

The only time that the Greek word chalkos ("gong") occurs within the letters of Paul is at 1 Corinthians 13:1. The Liddell and Scott Lexicon define chalkos as "brass, or rather copper ... a brazen vessel, urn."⁷ The Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament identifies chalkos in 13:1 as "a brazen musical instrument."⁸

Several scholars have proposed that when Paul used the word chalkos, he was referring to the acoustic vases at a Corinthian theatre.

The first century B.C.E. Roman architect Vitruvius writes about how niches were constructed along the walls of the Roman theatres. Within these niches were placed bronze vessels intended to serve as resounding jars for a sophisticated acoustic system which in turn "tuned in variant scales with minutely different divisions of octaves, thereby narrowing the gap between the chromatic resonant frequencies."⁹

Many theatres boasted of having triple rows of scales, while poorer communities could only afford "resounding jars" made out of fired earthenware. The theatre in Corinth did have bronze containers at one point in time, but under the Roman governor Lucius Mummius, Corinth was forced to auction off the bronze containers in the second century B.C.E. in order to raise funds for Rome. Though there is no record that the "resounding jars" were replaced, according to Harris, in mentioning the "noisy gong"¹⁰, Paul may be

referring to the grand acoustic system that Corinth once had.¹¹

Plato used the word chalkos as a metaphor to compare the dull, endless and empty speeches of certain orators to that of the sound of a brazen vessel¹²:

Ask them the smallest thing supplementary to what they have said, and like a gong which booms out when you strike it and goes on until you lay a hand on it, so our orators at a tiny question spin out a regular Marathon of speech.

Plato, Protagoras 329a

But Paul states in 13:1 that if he lacks love he has become (gegona) a "noisy gong."¹³ Paul is using the perfect tense of the Greek verb gignomai -- "to become."¹⁴ I would suggest that Paul (like Plato) is using the word as a metaphor rather than referring to a Corinthian acoustic system. There is no evidence to link the phrase "noisy gong" with a Corinthian theatre. But with the use of the word gegona there is a connection. Paul does not use the phrase "I am" to refer to himself. Rather, Paul is criticizing the Corinthian Community by placing himself within the context. Paul uses this same format in Romans 7. In Romans 7: 14-25 Paul describes the ascetic battle between the body and the spirit. Paul states that he is a "wretched man" and wonders who will save him (verse 24-25). Now Paul knows the answer to the question of who will save him (Paul answers his own question in verse 25). And he uses "I" within these verses to place himself within the Romans' question of why one does do evil. Paul places himself within this context in order to demonstrate the error of the Romans in thinking that the law was sin (verse 7).

Similarly Paul states in 13:1 that he is a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal in order to demonstrate (by placing himself in the situation) the improper conduct of the

Corinthians with regard to the gifts of tongues and prophecy. Just as Plato uses the word to refer to orators who keep on talking, so Paul may be using the word chalkos to refer to those within the Corinthian Community who are speaking in tongues, and are rambling because they do not have love.¹⁵

B) kumbalon alazon

Within the letters of Paul, the Greek phrase kumbalon alazon occurs only once. The NRSV translates this phrase as a "clanging cymbal." The word kumbalon means "a cymbal", and is derived from the word kumbos (which means "a hollow vessel").¹⁶ The word "clanging" is used to translate the Greek participle alazon ("uttering a loud cry: the battle-shout, war-cry").¹⁷

Several scholars propose the idea that when Paul uses kumbalon, he is referring to the musical instruments used by the mystery cults. And according to K. L. Schmidt, the words tumpana¹⁹ and kumbalon are often found together.²⁰

The cymbal was an instrument made of bronze and ranged in size from three to six inches. It was played only by women, and for a time limited to cultic use,²¹ where it became a "symbolic chalice" in the worship of Cybele.²² Within funerary art, there are some depictions of burial rites for members of a Bacchic (Dionysius) cult showing the "recurrent appearance of the tympanon (tumpana) and the cymbala (kumbalon) of the maenads."²³

The instruments used by the cults were often used to produce an ecstatic frenzy which helped bring about the celebration of the mystery.²⁴

The Greek geographer Strabo (64/63 B.C.E. - C.E. 25) describes how music was used

in the mystery cults. The cultic music which "includes dancing as well as rhythm and melody, at the same time, by the delight it affords and by its artistic beauty, brings us in touch with the divine ..." ²⁵ Strabo also describes some attendant of Dionysius ²⁶

... holding in his hand the bombyces, ²⁷ toilsome work of the turner's chisel, fills full the fingered melody, the call that brings on frenzy, while another causes to resound the bronze-bound cotylae; ²⁸

The Jewish historian Josephus (37-100 C.E.) describes how the Assyrians were under an obligation to use "the sound of cymbals and timbrels ... in order to appease the anger of the gods for their violation of his holy ark." ²⁹

The noun hē alalagē (related to the participle alalazon) is defined as a loud cry. An example of this is a battle-shout or war cry. ³⁰

But Bacchides drew his army out of their camp ... And when he had thus put out his army in order of battle, and was going to join battle with the enemy, he commanded the trumpeter to give a signal of battle, and the army to make a shout (alalaxasan), and to fall on the enemy.

Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 12. 426-427. ³¹

The word alalazon is also used to express a lament or sorrow. In the Gospel of Mark, the word alalazon is used to describe the uttering of loud pain of bereavement over the death

of a child:

When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly (alalazontas). When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep" The child is not dead but sleeping.

Mark 5: 38-39. ³²

But the participle alalazon is also used in reference to giving a ritual cry. In Euripides' The Bacchae, the chorus of followers of Dionysus listens to the cries of Dionysus (who is dressed incognito³³) asking for the help of Dionysus as he is held within prison.

Dionysus (from within)

Ho!

Hear me! Ho Bacchae!

Ho, Bacchae! Hear my cry! ...

Chorus

Look there!

- Above the pillars, how the great stones gape and crack!
- Listen. Bromius cries (alalazetai) his victory!

Euripides, The Bacchae,
lines 576-578; 590-593.³⁴

Thus far, this section has demonstrated that the word kumbalon was a cymbal used in the mystery cults and that the participle alalazon was an uttering of a cry to express the shouts of battle, sorrow and a ritual frenzy. But some questions still remain: First, if the phrase "a noisy gong" was a metaphor, is the phrase "a clanging cymbal" also a metaphor? Second, if the words tumpana and kumbalon often occur together, why is the word tumpana not used in 1 Corinthians 13:1? Is there a parallel elsewhere for the use of kumbalon and alalazon together?

With regard to the use of kumbalon as a metaphor, the Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder (C.E. 23-79) wrote that Tiberius Caesar once referred to Apion the philologist as "the world's cymbal" (cymbalum mundi), though he might rather have been thought to be a drum, advertising his own renown.³⁵ Tiberius uses the instruments (the cymbal and the drum) as a metaphor to show how Apion likes "to blow his own trumpet."³⁶

But is the "clanging cymbal" in 1 Corinthians 13:1 a metaphor? I would suggest that it is a metaphor. In 13:1, Paul states that he is a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." The "or" (ἢ) in this statement implies a connection and comparison between the two phrases/metaphors. Paul may have not been directly influenced by Pliny the Elder's text, but what Pliny's quote does do is demonstrate that the word "cymbal" was used as a metaphor during the time of Paul;³⁷ and that Paul's mixed metaphor may be used to denote a person who was ululating useless nonsense in order to be noticed.

Schmidt suggests that the term "clanging cymbal" is used to refer to an "empty-headed and boastful prattler."³⁸ Though I agree with this term, I would suggest that there are two elements to be added to this definition. First is the concept of shouting. Since Paul uses the participle alalazon ("uttering a loud cry"), the idea of "shouting" useless nonsense may be implied. And secondly, the concept of the mystery cults may also be implied. As stated above, musical instruments (like the cymbal) were used to help induce an ecstatic state in mystic rites. This ecstatic state sometimes also included speaking in a foreign tongue. For example, we are told that a man by the name of Mys visited the temple Ptoiüs near Acraephia. There at the temple the prophet delivered the oracle to Mys in a foreign language³⁹ instead of Greek.⁴⁰ And at Delos, a chorus of maidens (through a divine presence) were known "to imitate the dialects and chatterings of all men."⁴¹ Therefore, Paul may be using the phrase "a clanging cymbal" to recall to the readers the phrase "speak in the tongue of men and angels." For Paul, the Corinthians were a group of people who were "speaking in tongues" in order to boast about themselves. And Paul uses the term "a clanging cymbal" to compare them to ranting cult members. The Corinthians are similar

to cult members because he uses the word kumbalon -- an instrument associated with the frenzied rituals of some mystery cults.

But from where would Paul have derived such a phrase? Several scholars believe that Paul was inspired by Psalms 150:5:

Praise him with clanging cymbals (kumbalois alalagmou);
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!⁴²

This passage may be the closest parallel we have to suggest the link between kumbalon and alalazon. There are hardly any occurrences of kumbalon being connected with alalazon.^{42a} But the passage in Psalms is not the best parallel. The main problem with this passage is that it describes a person using cymbals, in order to make a noise that will praise God. It is not a passage which uses the phrase as a metaphor, rather it is a passage of a musical celebration.

C) mysterion

Since we have examined the phrases "a noisy gong" and "a clanging cymbal", how do these phrases relate to the word mysterion?

As already stated, the phrases "a noisy gong" and "a clanging cymbal" are metaphors. They are metaphors that describe how the Corinthians have taken the gift of speaking in tongues and misused it to portray a group who are constantly rambling and shouting an unintelligible dialect (Paul uses the first person singular, but the reader assumes that he means the Corinthians to whom he is writing). The noise that is created from their boastful actions is similar to that of cultic worship.⁴³

In 1 Corinthians 12:2 Paul addresses the Corinthians regarding the idols they once

worshipped which could not speak. He calls them pagans who "were enticed and led astray" (anegēsthe apagomenoi). Some scholars suggest that this is a reference to the background of some of the Corinthians who might have experienced the ecstatic speech of the Dionysus cult.⁴⁴ These scholars do make a good point, because in the following verse, Paul gives examples (implied spoken by the Corinthians) of what not to say when one is speaking by the Spirit of God": "Let Jesus be cursed!"⁴⁵

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul points out another problem with the practice of the Corinthian Community: after someone speaks in tongues, the Corinthians do not follow it up with an interpretation. Paul tells the Corinthians that if they speak something that is not intelligible, they are "speaking into the air" (14:9). And if an outsider is with them, the outsider will believe that the one who is speaking the babble is out of their mind (14:23). As a result, Paul advises the community to give an interpretation of the glossolalia ("speaking in tongues") in 14: 3-5, 24.

Because of this confusion (the misuse of the gift of tongues) by the Corinthian Community, Paul gives them a series of guidelines to follow, in order to maintain the peace and organization of the glossolalia (verses 14: 26-36). If not, that which is spoken is comparable to the frenzied speech of the cult.

But how does the word mysterion fit into the concept of glossolalia? I would suggest that the mysterion is that which is spoken in tongues. In 14:2, people are unable to understand those who are speaking in tongues because they (those who are speaking in tongues)" are speaking mysteries in the Spirit." The speakers are projecting a language that is only comprehensible by interpretation. And it is a process that has the result of

building up the church (14: 3-5).

What Paul is doing is contrasting the worship of Christians with that of pagans. Paul demonstrates that speaking in tongues and prophesying builds up the church, while the ecstatic speech of the mystery cults was often associated with madness (mania).⁴⁶ And for some of the Corinthians, the gods that they once worshipped never spoke to them (12:2). In turn, Paul presents them with an opportunity to communicate with God.

But this communication (mysterion) with God is meaningless without an interpretation/prophesy. Paul places the gift of tongues on a lower level than the gift of prophecy.⁴⁷

In Daniel, there is a similar occurrence. In chapter 4 the diviners and enchanters are unable to give King Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of his dream. But it is Daniel who is able to interpret the meaning of the dream because no mystery was too difficult for him (4: 1-9). Likewise, the writings of the Qumran Community describe a process in which the community interpreted the prophecies (mysterion) of some prophets⁴⁸ and interpreted them so that the prophecies related to the community. Hence, there is a relation between the mystery (mysterion) and the interpretation (peser). But it is the interpretation that takes precedence.

Our examination leads to the conclusion that the mysterion in 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2 was spoken by the gift of speaking in tongues. But this gift does not stand alone. The mysterion is accompanied by prophecy (interpretation). When Paul uses the word mysterion, the word "prophecy" is also linked with it: "And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries ..." (13:2); "For those who speak in a tongue ... speak

mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (14: 2-3).

In addition, the mysteries of 13:2 and 14:2 are also linked to the mystery cults. In 13:2 the mysterion is connected with the metaphor of "a clanging cymbal" -- a metaphor to describe a shouting cultic prattler; and in chapter 14, Paul's ordered presentation of the glossolalia is in contrast to that of the mania in cultic ecstatic speech.⁴⁹

IV Jewish and Hellenistic Influences

A) Ean tais glōssais tōn anthrōpōn lalō kai tōn aggelōn

What did Paul mean in 13:1 when he wrote that he may speak in the tongues (glossais) of angels (aggelōn)? Jewish sources relate that angels had their own language, and a person could speak this language by way of the Spirit.⁵⁰ In the ancient Jewish work, The Testament of Job, a story describes how the three daughters of Job received their inheritance. Each received a charismatic sash which gave them a unique gift.⁵¹ One daughter named Hemera, "spoke ecstatically in the angelic dialect, sending up a hymn to God in accord with the hymnic style of the angels" (48:3). Another daughter named Kasia, spoke "the dialect of the archons" (49:2). And the last daughter spoke "the dialect of those on high ... the dialect of the cherubim, glorifying the Master of virtue by exhibiting their splendor" (50: 1-2).

James H. Charlesworth doubts that Paul was influenced by these above verses. Charlesworth points out that in 1 Corinthians 13:1 Paul does not use the word "dialect" but rather "tongues" (glossais).⁵² Charlesworth offers another explanation for the tongue of angels. In the Testament of Job 38:1 the author poses the question, "Why then should I not

“speak out the magnificent things (ta megaleia) of the Lord?” Now since Paul uses the word glossais instead of “dialect,” and Luke uses the words lalountōn and ta megaleia to describe the glossolalia at Pentecost (Acts 2:11), both Paul and Luke “may have been aware of some tradition linking the glossolalic praise of God with angelic hymnody.”⁵³ Therefore, Charlesworth asserts that Luke, Paul and the Testament of Job are closer together at this point.

I do not believe that the text 38:1 is the best possible parallel to 1 Corinthians 13, since it is a text that describes one who is speaking about God and not in an angelic dialect. I would suggest that the references in chapters 48-50 are a closer parallel. The absence of the word glossais still must be taken into account. But, as Charlesworth points out, Paul must have been aware of some link between the glossolalia and the angelic dialect.

B) ta mysteria panta kai pasan tēn gnōsin

In 1 Corinthians 13:2, Paul states that if he had prophetic powers, and understood “all mysteries and all knowledge” (ta mysteria panta kai pasan ten gnōsin) it would be useless unless he had love. Still, the question remains, what was the influence behind the phrase “all mysteries and all knowledge”?

Raymond E. Brown suggests that the phrase “all the mysteries” is a reference to the “sum of religious knowledge attainable on earth.”⁵⁴ In Enoch, the author(s) believes that he has looked upon “all the secrets in heaven” (41:1).

And the angel Michael ... led me out into all the secrets of mercy; and showed me all the secrets of righteousness. He also showed me all the secrets of the extreme ends of heaven and all the reservoirs of the stars and the luminaries -

The author(s) of Enoch describe how fallen angels revealed mysteries to people on earth. But in Enoch, these fallen angels did not know all of the mysteries.

You were (once) in heaven, but not all the mysteries (of heaven) are open to you, and you (only) know the rejected mysteries.

Enoch 16:3⁵⁶

Though the author(s) believed that they had viewed all the mysteries, it is only the Elect One who understood and knew all the mysteries.

In those days, (the Elect One) shall sit on my throne, and from the conscience of his mouth shall come out all the secrets of wisdom,

Enoch 51:3⁵⁷

Within the writings of the Qumran Community it was the Teacher of Righteousness who had all of mysteries revealed to him by God through the writings of the prophets.

... the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets.

Commentary on Habakkuk, VII. 4-5.

But what of the parallel between “mysteries” and “knowledge.” Joseph Coppens proposes a couple of parallels. Coppens suggests that a parallel to 1 Corinthians may be found within the writings of the Qumran Community.

In the mystery of Thy Wisdom
Thou has opened knowledge to me,
and in Thy mercies [Thou hast unlocked for me]
the fountain of Thy might.

The Thanksgiving Hymns, XII. 13-14.⁵⁸

In view of this evidence, I would suggest that the references in Enoch offer a more likely parallel than do the ones from the writings of Qumran Community. The passages from the writings of the Qumran Community do demonstrate a connection between “the mysteries” and “knowledge”, but it is unlike Paul. In the Thanksgiving Hymn, it is because of the mysteries that one is able to have knowledge open to him or her. But in 1 Corinthians 13:2 the mysteries and knowledge are on the same level. There is no evidence of one being higher than the other.

In the passages of Enoch, the concept of “all” is present - though the relating concept of “all knowledge” is not present with mysterion. But what the passages of Enoch do demonstrate is that the mysteries of God are numberless (63:3). The mysteries for Paul are also unlimited. And if Paul believed that he could understand all the mysteries he would have stated so. But for Paul and Enoch, no person is able to comprehend all of the mysteries. In 1 Corinthians 13:2 Paul states that “if (ean)” he understood “all mysteries and all knowledge” but did not have love, he was nothing. Paul uses the “if” (ean) in 13:2 to express the idea that hypothetically one may know “all mysteries and all knowledge”; but for Paul it is only God and the Spirit who may know “all mysteries and all knowledge.” For it is the Spirit who is able to search out the “depth of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).⁵⁹

V MYSTERION ANALYSIS

As has just been stated, there is a connection between “all the mysteries” in 13:2 and the “depth of God” in 2:10. But is this the only connection?

With 1 Corinthians 14:2, Paul states that those who are speaking in tongues are

"speaking mysteries in the Spirit." This same idea is found in 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16. Paul tells the Corinthians that the spiritual/mature are able to speak wisdom (2:6). And this wisdom that they speak is "secret" (mysterion) and "hidden" (2:7). But it is only through the Spirit that they are able to speak these things (2:13). Hence, it is within 2: 6-16 that Paul gives a general outline of the process of the mysterion, but it is within chapter 14 that Paul expands upon the communication of the mysterion by describing how the Spirit teaches the mysterion.

Continuing on in verse 2:13, not only does Paul tell the Corinthians about speaking, but he also mentions the important role of "interpreting spiritual things." As we have already stated, Paul follows the Jewish concept of linking the mystery with the interpretation (peser). Here Paul once again links the concept of the mystery with the interpreting of that which was spoken. As in 14:5, Paul encourages the Corinthians not only to speak in tongues but also to prophesy (to interpret what has been spoken).

But who are able to prophesy? Those who do prophesy within the church are called "prophets" (prophētai -- verse 14:29, 32, 37). These prophets are required to follow the rules set out by Paul (14:37). And these prophets are greater servants because they are able to prophesy.⁶⁰ As such, the role of the prophet is to dispense the mysteries. As Barrett points out, these mysteries are "hidden truths which others are not permitted to share."⁶¹

These mysteries are only to be shared with the mature believers. The "speaking in tongues" is a sign for the non-believers (14:22). But it is the interpretation of the glossolalia that is reserved for the believers -- the mature. Hence, the apostle/prophets are stewards who are not permitted to share the mysterion with those who are non-believers

(unspiritual) and sometimes to those who are infants.

As stated in chapter 4 of this thesis, Paul views the Corinthian community as a group who are still infants (secondary mature). Though they are mature enough to realize the importance of Jesus, they are still infants who can receive only some of the mysterion. In 14:20 Paul states that he does not wish the Corinthians to be children in their thinking but rather thinking adults (teleioi) who are infants (nēpiazēte) in evil.⁶² Paul returns to the contrast of "mature" and "infants" in 14:20. He hopes that the Corinthians would strive to become more mature instead of remaining as infants who "build up themselves" rather than build up the church (14: 3-5).

Now, if an unbeliever hears the prophecies and is "reproved" by them (14:24), the unbeliever will worship God and "the secrets (ta krupta) of the unbeliever's heart will be disclosed" (14:25). This same idea can be found in 1 Corinthians 4: 1-5 (chapter 5 of this thesis). In verse 4:5 it is the Lord who will disclose those things that are hidden in the hearts of all. Though the context is different (verse 4:5 is in relation to the final judgement), what is important is the fact that Paul once again uses the concept of the secrets of the heart in relation to the mysterion.

One final connection between these mystery verses is the eschatological element. In 1 Corinthians 13: 9-10, Paul states that the prophecies are "only in part: but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end." As William Baird suggests (with regard to 1 Corinthians 13:2), "the secret wisdom revealed in Christ did not fully manifest itself till the future."⁶³ The mysteries which are made known by prophecy will only be known in part and will only be made known fully during the last days. As a result, "all the

mysteries" may be known by God and the Spirit, for the mature are not able to understand "all the mysteries"; since they only know the mysteries in part.

Therefore, with regard to the mysterion within 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2, it has been demonstrated that the phrase "a noisy gong" is a metaphor (influenced by Plato to describe a person rambling when they are speaking in tongues). The phrase "a clanging cymbal" is also a metaphor (with Hellenistic influence) which describes a shouting cultic prattler. These metaphors which are used to describe the misuse of speaking in tongues demonstrate that the mysterion was spoken in tongues. But it was a gift that was different from the mystery cults. It was a gift that was not chaotic. It was a foreign tongue that must be organized.

The mysterion was only spoken by the prophets to the mature. Paul hoped that the Corinthians would learn to think as the mature (teleioi) so that they might hear more of the prophecies. But one could not prophesy "all the mysteries", rather, partial mysteries that would be made fully manifest at the last days.

The next chapter will continue this eschatological theme in connection with a mystery regarding the end times.

Endnotes

¹ Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), p. 626.

² *Ibid.*, p. 627.

³ "Knowledge" (verse 13:2); "faith" (verse 13:2); "prophecy" (verse 13:2, 8, 9); "tongues" (verse 13:8). William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 290.

⁴ John Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 140.

⁵ C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 299.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 299, 314-315. Conzelmann states that this chapter is "a self contained unit." Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. MacRae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 217 n* [sic].

⁷ Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 776.

⁸ Also in Revelation 18:12, "all articles of costly wool, bronze (chalkou), iron ..."; in Matthew 10:9, "or copper (chalkon) in our belts"; Mark 6:8, "no money (chalkon) in their belts"; Mark 12:41, "putting money (chalkon) into the treasury."

⁹ William Harris, "Echoing bronze," Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, LXX (October, 1981), p. 1184.

¹⁰ Harris uses the translation "echoing bronze."

¹¹ Harris, "Echoing bronze," p. 1184.

¹² William W. Klien, "Noisy Gong or Acoustic Vase? A Note on 1 Corinthians 13:1," New Testament Studies, XXXII (1986), p. 287.

¹³ "I am a noisy gong" -- NRSV.

¹⁴ Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 399.

¹⁵ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 300. Carl R. Holladay, "1 Corinthians 13: Paul as Apostolic Paradigm," in Greek, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe, ed. by David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 92 n. 44.

¹⁶ Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 399.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30. The Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament also adds the definition of "to tinkle ring." A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, Ltd.), p. 6.

¹⁸ Todd K. Sanders, "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13:1," New Testament Studies, XXXVI (1990), p. 615. Johannes Quasten, Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity, (Washington D. C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), pp. 36-38.

¹⁹ In Liddell and Scott, the word tumpana is defined as a drum used in the worship of Cybele (Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon), p. 721.

²⁰ K. L. Schmidt, "Kumbalon," in Theological Dictionary of the new Testament, vol. 3, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 1037.

²¹ Warren D. Anderson, Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 185. Sanders states that during Roman times, the kumbalon was used by street musicians and in social life (Sanders, "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13:1," p. 615). Anderson states that the kumbalon originally was used in cultic worship, but became "secularized as rhythmic dance accompaniments for light entertainment" (Warren D. Anderson, Ethos and Education in Greek Music: The Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], p. 10). But the question remains with both of these scholars, "When did the cymbal become secularized?"

²² Anderson, Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece, p. 185. Burkert states that within the worship of Meter, the "metragyrtai performed with cymbals and tambourines, being 'possessed by the divinity'" (Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987], p. 35).

²³ Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, p. 23, (brackets added).

²⁴ Wayne House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth," Bibliotheca Sacra, (April/June, 1983), p. 140.

²⁵ Strabo, The Geography of Strabo, X. 3.9.

²⁶ Ibid., X. 3.16. Also, see Strabo, X. 3.13. The Christian rhetorician Firmicus Maternus (died after 360 C.E.) wrote about the mystery cults' musical frenzy, "I have eaten from the tambourine and have drunk from the cymbal and I have thoroughly learned the secrets of religion" (Eduard Lohse, The New Testament, trans. by John E. Steely, [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976], p. 240. Walther Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, p. 98, 165 n. 44).

²⁷ The "bombyces" (bombycas) is a reed-flute. Horace Leonard Jones, The Geography of Strabo, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 107 n. 1.

²⁸ The "cotylae" (kotylais) literally is a word for small cups (kotyliis -- Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 390) but here it is used to describe a kind of cymbal. Jones, The Geography of Strabo, p. 107 n. 2.

²⁹ Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, V. 385. Sanders, "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13:1," p. 614.

³⁰ See footnote # 17.

³¹ Also see Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews 6. 191; 8. 283; 12. 372. Peterson, "Alalazō," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 227.

³² Sanders, "A New Approach to 1 Corinthians 13:1," p. 615.

³³ Euripides, The Bacchae, lines 4-5.

³⁴ Dodds suggests that the word alalazetai is a reference to the ritual cry back at line 577. E. R. Dodds, Euripides Bacchae, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 151.

³⁵ Pliny the Elder, Natural History, preface 25. Schmidt, "Kumbalon," p. 1038.

³⁶ H. Rackman, Natural History, The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 16 n. b.

³⁷ Liddell and Scott make the point that the Latin word cymbalum comes from the Greek word kumbalon. Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 399.

³⁸ Schmidt, "Kumbalon," p. 1038.

³⁹ The foreign language was Carian.

⁴⁰ Herodotus, The Histories, 8. 135.

⁴¹ Walter Burkert, Greek Religion, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 110.

⁴² Conzelman, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 221. Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 291.

^{42a}In Euripides' Helen, the chorus states, "Change with wild singing (alalai) ... the immortals took the death-voice of bronze ..." (lines 1344-47 -- the "voice of bronze is reference to cymbal -- Anderson, Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece, p. 122). There is a relation between kumbalon and alalazon, but it is a weak connection for a parallel with Paul: the passage only alludes to kumbalon; it is not a metaphor; and it does not relate to the mystery cults.

⁴³ Orr and Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 294. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 300. Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, p. 142. William Baird, The Corinthian Church: A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture, (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 146.

⁴⁴ Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 205 n. 12. John Painter, "Paul and Pneumatikoi at Corinth," in Paul and Paulism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett, ed. by M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson, (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 242-243. Dionysus had a temple in Corinth at the Sacred Glen. Oscar Broneer, "Paul and Pagan Cults at Isthmia," Harvard Theological Review, LXIV (1971), p. 182. House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions at Corinth," p. 138.

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:3, "... no one can say `Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

⁴⁶ Burkert, Greek Religion, p. 110.

⁴⁷ Conzelman, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 222.

⁴⁸ Though the prophets wrote down the mysteries, but they did not understand the mysteries.

⁴⁹"In the pagan glossolalia, no thought was given to the harmony of participants in group worship. Only the individual experience was important." (House, "Tongues and the Mystery Religions at Corinth," p. 146). Paul states in 14:33, "... for God is a God not of disorder but of peace."

⁵⁰ Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 630.

⁵¹ When Job wore these sashes, disease left his body and he saw things both present

and future (verse 47: 6-9).

⁵² James H. Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. I (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985), p. 866 n. f.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 858 n. a.

⁵⁴ Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)," Biblica, XXXIX (1958), p. 441.

⁵⁵ Also see Enoch 52:2; 61:5; 63:3; 68:5. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)," p. 442 n. 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 442 n. 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 443 n. 3.

⁵⁸ Also see QH 2.13. Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran," in Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis, ed. by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), p. 138.

⁵⁹ See chapter 4, section IV, C.

⁶⁰ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 316.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316.

⁶² "In respect to evil be like infants, but in your thinking be mature" (verse 14:20b -- New American Bible).

⁶³ Baird, The Corinthian Church, p. 146.

Chapter 7:

Paul's Use of the Word Mysterion in 1 Corinthians 15:51

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

I INTRODUCTION

In order to examine the Jewish and Hellenistic influences that can be found in relation to the use of mysterion of 1 Corinthians 15:51, an examination of the words and phrases that surround the word mysterion is necessary.¹ With regard to these words and phrases the following questions will be addressed: How and why is the word "listen" (idou) used within 15:51? What reading should be used in 15:51 within regard to the placement of the word "not" (ou)? What is the role of the trumpet? How does Paul contrast the "perishable" with the "imperishable"? And finally, why is the idea of the body becoming imperishable and immortal considered a mystery? From this analysis, the last part of the chapter will attempt to illuminate connections that may exist between this verse and the previous "mystery verses" that have been examined.

II WORDS AND PHRASES

A) idou

The first word to be examined in this chapter is also the first word in verse 15:51 -- "Listen" (idou). The word idou is an aorist middle imperative singular of the verb horaō ("see").²

When Paul used the word idou he was doing so in order not only to add emphasis to what he was about to say, but also to draw special attention to what was being said.³ Whenever Paul uses the word idou (2 Corinthians 5:17; 6: 2, 9; 7:11; 12:14; Galatians 1:20), with the exception of Romans 9:33 (used in quoting Isaiah 28:16), it is always used to add emphasis. Paul is adding emphasis to the word mysterion that follows -- "Listen, I tell you a mystery!" Paul wanted to draw the reader's attention to what he was about to say.

Nowhere else within the letters of Paul does he draw so much attention to what he is going to say about mysterion.

David E. Aune claims that not only is the word idou an introduction to the reference to mysterion, but it is also the prelude to the introduction of an oracle. As Aune points out, a prophetic oracle has three basic parts: an introduction; the first strophe (three lines); and the second strophe (three lines).

<u>Oracle</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 15: 51-52</u>
Introduction	Listen (idou)
↓	↓
First Strophe	We will not die ... at the last trumpet.
↓	↓
Second Strophe	For the trumpet ... we will be changed.

The first strophe is the oracle, while the second strophe (which is introduced by the word "for" [gar] -- in verse 15:52) is a symmetrical counterpart. The second strophe is part of the oracle by the fact that each line of the first strophe has a "synonymous parallelism."⁴

Introduction	Listen, I tell you a mystery
--------------	------------------------------

a	We will not die,
b	but we will all be changed,
c	in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.
a ¹	For the trumpet will sound,
b ¹	and the dead will raise imperishable,
c ¹	and we will be changed.

But the oracle that Paul uses within 15:51 is different from a traditional oracle, in the sense that Paul's oracle is in the first person plural ("We will not die ..."; "We will be changed"). This difference therefore puts doubt on 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52 being a part of the prophetic oracle speech.

Nevertheless, Aune does provide two strong points to support the idea that 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52 is in fact an oracle. First, it does not seem likely that the speaker of the oracle could be God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, since it does not seem possible that in the last days the trinity would be also changed in a twinkling of an eye. And second, with regard to the first person plural, Paul is making himself a part of the oracle, for he himself does not want to be left out of this event.⁵

As a result, Aune provides what he considers to be the original form of the oracle/mysterion:

Behold! I tell you a mystery!

All shall not sleep,
but all shall be changed,
In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye,
at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet shall sound,
and the dead shall be raised imperishable,
and all shall be transformed.⁶

Therefore, argues Aune, Paul uses the word idou to draw the attention of the Corinthians. He is letting the Corinthians know that what he is about to say is very important. What Paul introduces to the Corinthians is an oracle. And by using "we" in the oracle, Paul is stating that he also includes himself as being part of the oracle.

B) pantes ou koimēthēsometha, pantes de allagēsometha

Paul states in 15:51 that "We will not all die, but we will all be changed" (pantes ou koimēthēsometha pantes de allagēsometha). The placement of the negative ou is controversial because of the syntax of verse 51. The phrase pantes ou koimēthēsometha, may be translated as "None shall sleep." Many of the ancient manuscripts have provided several different alternatives to this problem:

- 1) pantes (men) ou koimēthēsometha, pantes de allagēsometha B (A)
- 2) pantes (men) koimēthēsometha, ou pantes de allagēsometha (N) C
- 3) pantes (men) ou koimēthēsometha, ou pantes de allagēsometha P⁴⁶ (A^c)
- 4) oi pantes men koimēthēsometha, oi pantes de allagēsometha A*
- 5) pantes (men) anastēsometha, ou pantes de allagēsometha D*⁷

The second alternative would be translated, "We will all die, but we will not all be changed." This alternative wording, however, does not take into account the idea of Paul's understanding of the end times. Rather this alternative suggests the idea that the end times will take place later on in time when all those who wish to be saved are dead; Paul, however, believed that the end times would occur during his own lifetime.⁸ The third

alternative wording is a simple mistake made by adding an additional negative.⁹ The fourth alternative was created by the second century C.E. Christian heretic Marcion, and long remained unobserved by scholarship.¹⁰ The last reading suggests that everyone will be resurrected, except the wicked who will not be changed at the final judgment.¹¹ Such a reading also does not coincide with Paul's belief of the end times. In 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17, Paul refers to this same eschatological event without saying that all will be raised, for in 4:16 we read the "dead in Christ" will be raised, not all the dead.

This leaves alternative #1 to be examined. Several scholars have suggested (and I would agree) that the phrase pantes ou should be translated as if it were ou pantes - "Not all (of us) shall sleep."¹² In 2 Corinthians 7:3 Paul does a similar thing, placing the negative with the verb and thereby negating another part of the sentence ("I do not say (ou legō) this to condemn you").¹³

Therefore, Paul states and believes that this eschatological event will come about soon, for he uses that "we" to include himself in this event. And this event is one which will include both the dead and the living "in Christ" (not as some of the other alternatives have suggested where all will die). And all of those who are changed (verse 15:51) are those (the living and the dead) who have been taken up to the clouds "to meet the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17).

C) salpigni

The word "trumpet" occurs three times in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 14:8 Paul uses the trumpet as an analogy to compare the distinct sounds of the trumpet to that of speaking in tongues. In chapter 15 the word occurs twice: "at the last trumpet" (salpigni) --

verse 51; and "For the trumpet (salpisei) will sound" -- verse 52).

In ancient times, trumpets were made out of iron or bronze and were long, straight metal instruments with one end broadening out into a bell.¹⁴ Trumpets were not used so much as musical instruments,¹⁵ but rather, as instruments for battle.

The trumpet was used in the military to give signals. The trumpet was used to signal an attack,

Then the Tyrrhenian trumpet-blast burst forth; like fire as the signal for the fight; they ran a dreadful race at one another ...

Euripides, The Phoenician Women,
lines 1377 - 1379.¹⁶

Bacchides was on the right wing. Flanked by the two companies, the phalanx advanced to the sound of the trumpets; and the men of Judas also blew their trumpets.

1 Maccabees 9: 12-13¹⁷

It was also used to add force to the charge of the soldiers.¹⁸ The trumpet signalled the threat of invasion¹⁹ and the end of battle.²⁰

But unlike the Greeks, the Jews had a religious reason for using the trumpet within the army. Before a battle, the Jews employed the trumpet, along with prayer, to ask for God's help.

When Judah turned, the battle was in front of them and behind them. They cried out to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the people of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the people of Judah shouted, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

2 Chronicles 13: 14-15²¹

But the trumpets were not limited to use within the army. The trumpets are also

used in religious rituals.²² Within the Greek festival Anthesteria, during the Day of Choes, a trumpet was blown from the Thesmotheteion to give the signal for everyone to start drinking from their wine vessel.²³ The trumpet was also used within the festival for Dionysus Bougenes (the "cow's-son") at Argos. The trumpet signalled the coming of the god from out of the river Lerne.

While among the Argives Dionysus bears the name "born of a bull," and they summon him with trumpets from the water after throwing a lamb into the deep for the Gate-Keeper, but they cover the trumpets with thyrsus-rods.

Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, 35.²⁴

The Jews used the trumpets during the rituals of burnt offerings,

Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David of Israel. The whole assembly worshipped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

2 Chronicles 29: 27-28.²⁵

The trumpets were also used at the dedication of the temple.²⁶ And they were also used to announce the start of a feast.²⁷

Thus far, we have examined the word "trumpet" (salpigni) and shown that it was used as a signal within the army and worship. But how does this relate to 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52?

I believe the word "trumpet" in 15: 51-52 is used to show that the eschatological event would be signalled by a trumpet. But this signal is not used to announce a military

attack or the start of some ritual worship; rather, the trumpet signals the eschatological event of the dead and the living being changed. This eschatological trumpet is different from the seven eschatological trumpets in Revelation 8: 6-10:11,²⁸ by the fact that the seven trumpets refer to eschatological plagues rather than an eschatological transformation.

D) aphthartoi and phtharton

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul contrasts the imperishable body (aphthartoi) with that of a perishable body (phtharton). As Paul states in 15: 53-54, the perishable body will be changed to an imperishable body.

The Present Body

perishable (verse 42, 53)
dishonour (verse 43)
weakness (verse 43)
physical (verse 44)

The Resurrected Body

imperishable (verse 42, 53)
glory (verse 43)
power (verse 43)
spiritual (verse 44)²⁹

Gerald Borchert suggests that this contrast between the perishable body and the imperishable body was used by Paul to demonstrate some of the features that the resurrected body might possess.³⁰ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor follows this same line of thinking and proposes that the imperishable body is a "mirror image" of the perishable body. The perishable body is limited since it is corrupt, susceptible to sickness and deficient as to what it can and cannot do.³¹

The idea of viewing the natural/perishable body as something lesser than the heavenly/imperishable body is not foreign to Paul. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5: 1-10 that an eternal body (Paul uses the analogy of a tent) is waiting for them in heaven (5: 1-4). And according to Paul, it is this present earthly body that keeps one from the Lord (5: 6-8).

Paul even takes an ascetic approach to the body. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul states that he punishes his body and enslaves it. Paul follows this theme of self-discipline in order to teach his body to reject sin and to become an "instrument of righteousness."³²

Therefore, the perishable must be changed. A mortal body is corruptible and limited. A mortal body is what keeps a person from God (according to Paul). Paul viewed the resurrected/imperishable body as the opposite of the mortal/perishable body that needed to be changed. As Borchert and Murphy-O'Connor have pointed out, the imperishable body had qualities that were righteous and not a burden.

E) mysterion

Our purpose in examining the above words and phrases will be made clear, for the following section will demonstrate that these words and phrases were used by Paul to define and structure his use of the word mysterion.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51 when Paul uses the word idou, he uses this word in order to attract the reader's attention. He does this because he is about to reveal to the readers something special. What Paul does is reveal a mysterion to the Corinthians -- "Listen, I tell you a mystery!"^{32a}

Within an oracle format (though Paul uses "we" in order to include himself in the oracle) Paul introduces the mystery. The mysterion that Paul reveals to the Corinthians is a mysterion that entails two concepts: the concept of time and the concept of a resurrected body.

It is first an eschatological event. Paul uses the future tense to describe how the trumpet will sound (salpisei) the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the

perishable body into an imperishable body. This trumpet is a signal, a command by the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16) for this event to occur. And this event will occur within a brief moment, "in the shortest possible time to 'cast' a glance"³³ -- "... in a moment (en atomiō),³⁴ in the twinkling" of an eye (en hripiē)."

It is during this brief moment that the change from the perishable to the imperishable will occur (according to the mysterion). This is the second concept of the mysterion; the transformation to the imperishable body.³⁵ And as 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states, "the dead in Christ" and all of those "who are left, will be caught up in the clouds ... to meet the Lord" at the sound of the trumpet.

Hence 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 should be taken together. 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 describes the "when" (a general time frame -- it is an eschatological event that Paul believes will occur shortly) and the "why" (the contrast between the perishable and imperishable bodies). And 1 Thessalonians describes the "where" (in the air and clouds).

But since 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17 does not use the word mysterion, can its subject be classified as a mystery?

I believe it can, based on two factors. First, 4: 15-17 is similar in content to 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 (as demonstrated above). And second, the phrase "we declare to you by the word of the Lord" (Touto gar humin legomen en logoi kuriou) implies the mysterion. In 1 Corinthians 2: 6-7, Paul states that "among the mature we do speak wisdom" (Sophian de laloumen en tois teleiois), "God's wisdom" (theou sophian -- verse 7). Therefore, within both cases there is the concept of a group ("we") declaring to another

group words of wisdom. Within 2: 6-7 the wisdom of God is the mysterion, while in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 the wisdom ("the word of the Lord") is told to the Thessalonians. And this description is the mysterion of 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58.

III JEWISH AND HELLENISTIC INFLUENCES

What were the influences that helped to shape the meaning and use of mysterion? This is the main intent of this thesis, to explore the question of whether Paul's use of the word mysterion was influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources. This section will help to answer that question.

A) idou

As stated above, the passage 15: 51-55 is an oracle. Aune notes that the three line symmetrical form is quite frequent within Jewish literature.

Behold,
he will arrive with ten million of the holy ones in order to
execute judgment upon all. He will destroy the wicked ones
and censure all flesh on account of everything that they have
done, that which the sinners and the wicked ones committed
against him.

1 Enoch 1:9

. . . there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus ... who began on a sudden to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!"

Josephus, The Wars of the Jews,
300 - 301.³⁶

Not only was an oracle used with such structure in ancient Jewish literature, but the word idou (hinnéh in Hebrew³⁷) was used to introduce a prophetic oracle.³⁸ And John

Collins makes the point that one of the elements involved in the description of a vision (one of the medium of a mysterion) is the use of the word "behold" (idou).³⁹

Lo (idou), your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

See (idou), I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

Malachi 3:1.

Paul may therefore have been influenced by Jewish sources in regard to the way he introduces the concept of mysterion through the use of idou.

B) salpigni

As discussed above, the trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15:52 was a signal. But this signal did not relate to any military or worship use, rather, it was a trumpet that signalled an eschatological event. This leaves us with the question, "Are there any references within Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources to suggest a link between a trumpet and an eschatological event?"

This link can be found within Jewish sources. Within the Dead Sea Scrolls, trumpets were to be used to call out different battle formations and signals for a war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.⁴⁰

The Priests shall sound the two trumpets of Sum[mons for the gates of] war to open fifty shields and the foot-soldiers shall advance ... the trumpets shall sound to direct the slingers ... the Priests shall sound for them the trumpets of retreat ... the trumpets for battle array ... the six trumpets of massacre ...

The War Rule, 7:15 - 8:10⁴¹

Though there is this connection between the trumpet and an eschatological war, the parallel is not very close. First, it is the priests who blow the trumpet, while in 1 Corinthians 15:52 the trumpeter is not mentioned.⁴² And second, the context is different. The Dead Sea Scroll passage is about a war, while 1 Corinthians describes how the trumpet is used to signal a change from a perishable body to an imperishable one, during the second coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians).

I would suggest that Zechariah 9:14 is a closer parallel to 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55:

Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow go forth like lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

Though the prophecy is different, there are two important similarities: 1) it is God who blows the trumpet; 2) there is the arrival of the "Lord."

Therefore, though there is not an exact parallel to the trumpet signalling a change in one's body, the image of a trumpet being blown by God to signal the appearance of the "Lord" is definitely attested in Jewish literature.

c) aphthartoi and phtharton

The mysterion in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55 relates to the changing of the perishable body (phtharton) to the imperishable (aphthartoi) /resurrected body. The Corinthian community may have found the concept of a resurrected body strange, while some of the Jews may not have.

To some Greeks the resurrection of the body was impossible since the body was part

of the physical world.⁴³ Herodotus tells the story of an assassin named Prexaspes who was sent to kill a man by the name Smerdis. He was successful, but a plot was devised to replace Smerdis with his brother who looked like Smerdis. When Cambyses (the person who ordered Prexaspes to kill Smerdis) heard that Smerdis was still alive he confronted Prexaspes. Prexaspes responded and said, "I did what you told me to do, and buried him with my own hands. If dead men rise from their graves, you may believe ... [but] I can promise you that from Smerdis at least you will never have anything more to fear."⁴⁴

To the Greeks the resurrection of the dead could also be viewed as an isolated miracle.

Presently it was reported over every land and sea that Sclepius was discovering everything he wished to heal the sick, and that he was raising dead men to life.

Pausanias, Description of Greece,
2.26.5.⁴⁵

Some Jews (the Sadducees and Samaritans) rejected the concept of the resurrection of the body.⁴⁶ But other Jews (such as the Essenes and the Pharisees) believed in the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁷

W. D. Davies suggests that the Jewish concept of resurrection developed out of the idea that death was the result of sin. The resurrection of the body involved the "doctrine of survival," one which included the reunion of the body (an "embodied life") with the soul.⁴⁸

For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead ... Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin.

2 Maccabees 12: 43-45.⁴⁹

Therefore, the use of mysterion in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 draws up on two different Jewish aspects: first, the influence of the Pharisees concerning the resurrection of the body; and second, the concept of sin. As stated above, Paul (who was a Pharisee) tells the Corinthians that the reason why the perishable body must be changed⁵⁰ is because of sin. Thus mysterion follows the Jewish notion that the body may be reunited with its soul.

d) 1 Corinthians 15: 54-55

There is no real debate as to the influence and source for 1 Corinthians 15: 54-55. Paul quotes two different phrases: "Death has been swallowed up in victory"; 1 Corinthians 15:54 is a quote from Isaiah 25:8 ... "he will swallow up death forever"; and the phrase, "Where, o death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" is from Hosea 13:14 --- "O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your destruction?"⁵¹

IV Mysterion Analysis

In previous chapters it was demonstrated that the word mysterion was linked with eschatology. As stated above (in this chapter) the mysterion that is revealed in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 is an eschatological event.⁵² But, are there any other links between 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 and previous "mystery verses"?

In 1 Corinthians 15: 20-23 Paul talks about the resurrection of the body at the coming (parousia)⁵³ of Jesus. After this event, Jesus will destroy "every ruler and every authority and power" (verse 15:24). C. K. Barrett suggests (and I would agree) that there is a link between 15:24 and 1 Corinthians 2:6, 8.⁵⁴ In 2:6 Paul states that the rulers of this

age will perish, while the same idea is found in 15:24 with the destruction of every ruler and power. And, as is the case with verse 2:6, 8, the "rulers" are cosmic powers.

Leander E. Keck makes the point that the rulers will not be annihilated but subjected.⁵⁵ French L. Arrington suggests the opposite, that the powers will be eradicated.⁵⁶ Now Paul states in 15:24 that Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to God after Jesus "has destroyed" (katargēsēi) all the rulers and powers. The word katargēsēi is in the passive tense, and should be translated "to be abolished."⁵⁷ Therefore, Paul believed that the rulers would be eradicated (as Arrington suggests) and not just subjected.

Though Barrett suggests a link between 15:24 and 2:6 and 8, he believes that the use of mysterion in 15: 51-58 is different from previous "mystery verses." The mysterion of 15: 51-58 is in the hands of God and is "not a secret essential to the understanding of the Gospel."⁵⁸

But it is similar. In 1 Corinthians 2: 6-7 Paul states that the mysterion is hidden in God, and it was God who decreed the mysterion before the ages. Therefore, if the mysterion is hidden and decreed by God, then the mysterion of 15: 51-58 must also be included with all of the wisdom that is spoken. And, if 15: 51-58 is in the hands of God, it must have been decreed by God.

What is important at 15: 51-58 is that Paul does reveal a mystery to the Corinthians. In previous verses Paul had criticized the Corinthians and called them "infants" (3:1; 14:20). The Corinthians are the secondary mature who occasionally are revealed a mystery.

Therefore, Paul reveals an eschatological mysterion to the Corinthians (a group of secondary mature). As though addressing a Jewish audience, Paul reveals this mystery

in an oracle using a Jewish symmetrical structure. This mysterion describes how a trumpet command (Jewish and Hellenistic influence) will signal an eschatological event (Jewish). This event is the changing of the perishable body to an imperishable/resurrected body. The Greeks within the Corinthian community may have found the concept of the resurrected body strange. But for the Jews within the community the concept of the resurrected body would not be strange if they were influenced by Essene or Pharisaic thinking. And the concept of a resurrected body is found throughout the Old Testament⁵⁹ and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.

The next chapter will look at the final occurrence of the word mysterion within the undisputed letters of Paul.

Endnotes

¹ As with chapter 5 (1 Corinthians 4:1) of this thesis, the question as to the authenticity of 1 Corinthians 15:51 is not in debate.

² "Idou" in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 173. Liddell and Scott state that idou comes from eidon (Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990], p. 327.

³ C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 380. The Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts - 1 Corinthians, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 393. Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980, p. 354.

⁴ David E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 251.

⁵ Ibid., p. 251.

⁶ Ibid., p. 251.

⁷ Hans Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, ed. George W. Mac Rae, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 288 n.1.

⁸ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 381.

⁹ Ibid., p. 380. Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 289 n.1.

¹⁰ Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 289 n.1.

¹¹ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 381. Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 288 n.1.

¹² Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 380. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, p. 424 n.26. Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 354.

¹³ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p.380. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, p. 424 n.26.

¹⁴H. Lichtenberger, "Salpigx," in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. , (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 225. Friedrich, "Salpigx," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 7, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 72.

¹⁵ Friedrich, "Salpigx," p. 75.

¹⁶ Also see Xenophon, Anabasis, 4.2.7 (salpigx); 4.3.29 (salpiktēs). Friedrich, "Salpigx," p. 74.

¹⁷ Also see Job 39: 24-25; 1 Maccabees 4:19. Friedrich, "Salpigx," p. 79.

¹⁸ Thucydides, 6.69.2 (salpiktai); Plutarch, Crassus 23.9 (salpigxin); Joshua 6:20; Judges 7: 18-23; 2 Chronicles 13: 14-15; Jeremiah 4:19; 1 Maccabees 5:31. Friedrich, "Salpigx," pp. 74, 79.

¹⁹ Jeremiah 4:5; 6:1, 7; Hosea 8:1; Amos 3:6; Ezekiel 33: 3-6; Nehemiah 4:12; Friedrich, "Salpigx," pp. 78-79.

²⁰ Xenophon, Anabasis 4.4.22 (salpigni). Friedrich, "Salpigx," p. 74.

²¹ Also see 1 Maccabees 3: 50-56; 4:40; 5:33; 2 Maccabees 15: 25-27.

²² The trumpet was used to clear a path for a procession (C. Kerényi, Dionysus: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life, trans. Ralph Manheim, [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976], p. 174). At Pompeii there is a painting of a trumpeter at the temple of Isis (Johannes Quasten, Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity, trans. Boniface Ramsey, [Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983], p. 42). The god Pan was known as the trumpeter. Borgeaud suggests that the object that Pan would carry was not a club but rather a trumpet on the basis that: 1) it was too regular a shape to resemble a club; and 2) it was held in a position that did not depict the concept of hitting, but rather, it was held in a gesture of making an offering (Philippe Borgeaud, The Cult of Pan in Ancient Greece, trans. Kathleen Atlas and James Redfield, [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988], pp. 137, 245 n.32).

²³ Steven H. Lonsdale, Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 123. Walter Burkert, Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth, trans. Peter Bing, (Berkeley and Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 220. Kerényi, Dionysus, pp. 174, 312.

²⁴ Kerenyi, Dionysus, p. 180. Quasten, Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity, p. 17.

²⁵ Also see Number 10:10; Sirach 50: 16-17.

²⁶ Also see 2 Chronicles 5: 13-14.

²⁷ Also see Psalms 81:3; Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1. The Day of Atonement was sounded by a trumpet to "proclaim the liberation of all the country's inhabitants" (Leviticus 25: 8-10a). Friedrich, "Salpigx," pp. 79-80. Lichtenberger, "Salpigx," p. 225.

²⁸ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 381. Conzelmann, Hermeneia: 1 Corinthians, p. 291. Gerald L. Brochert, "The Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15," Review and Expositor, LXXX (1983), p. 412.

²⁹ Jerome Murphy O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, (Wilmington Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), p. 147. John Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 174.

³⁰ Borchert, "The Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15," p. 411.

³¹ Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, pp. 147-148. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 373.

³² See Romans 6: 12-19. Barret, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 218.

^{32a} To paraphrase Paul, "What I am about to tell you is very important since it regards a mystery."

³³ "Hripē" in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. III, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 212.

³⁴ The word atomos means "not able to be cut, indivisible" (See Plato, The Sophist 229d) but when the word "in" (en) is used with atomos, the phrase takes on the element of time (Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 113).

³⁵ Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, p. 176.

³⁶ Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, pp. 251, 424 n.27.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 250. "Idou," Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 173.

³⁸ Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, p. 250.

³⁹ Also see chapter #3. John J. Collins. Hermeneia: Daniel, ed. Frank Moore Cross, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 55.

⁴⁰ Friedrich, "Salpigx," p. 82. Lichtenberger, "Salpigx," p. 225. The battle plans have been predetermined and predestined by God. And both opponents are equal in power. But, it is God who will distrust the balance of power since the battle was in "Thy hands" (I QM 18:15).

⁴¹ Also see 1 QM 3: 1-2, 16: 2-13; 17: 10-15.

⁴² In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 the trumpet of God is blown.

⁴³ Borchert, "The Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15," p. 410.

⁴⁴ Herodotos, 3.62. Also see Aeschylus, The Eumenides, verse 648, and Aeschylus, Agamemnon, verse 1381, "Who can raise the dead with words?"

⁴⁵ Also see Plato, Symposium, 179c. Oepke, "Anistēmi," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. I, ed. By Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 370.

⁴⁶ Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 18.16. Josephus, The Wars of the Jews 2. 165. Oepke, "Anistēmi," p. 370. W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1948), p. 300.

⁴⁷ Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, 2. 10-11; 2.163. Oepke, "Anistēmi," p. 370. Ruef, Paul's First Letter to Corinth, p. 171.

⁴⁸ Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, p. 299.

⁴⁹ Also see 2 Maccabees 7: 10-13. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, pp. 299 n.6, 300 n.1.

⁵⁰ Arrington suggests that Paul drew his concept of the type of changed body from several apocalyptic sources. 1 Enoch 62: 15-16 states that the righteous "shall eat and rest and rise with the Son of Man ... they shall wear garments of glory. These garments of yours shall become garments of life from the Lord of the Spirits." Also see 1 Enoch 108: 11-12; 2 Ezra 2:39, 45 (French L. Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, [Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977], p. 168 n.118). But is this a close

parallel? I do not believe so. First, the Son of Man in Enoch will rise with the righteous. According to Paul, Jesus will meet those in Christ in the air. Secondly, Paul does not use the word "garments" in any of his letters. And lastly, the concept of "glory" in 15: 40, 42 is used to express a contrast between the sin of the body and the righteousness of the imperishable body (Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, p. 148).

⁵¹ William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 352. Borchert, "The Resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15," p. 412. Murphy-O'Connor, 1 Corinthians, p. 151. Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 169.

⁵² K. Luke, "The Technical Term *raza*," Christian Orient, IV (September, 1983), p. 120. Beker calls the mysterion of 15:51 a "realized eschatology." It is a mysterion that describes the end of history, but at the same time it is incalculable. J. Christiaan Beker, Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 51.

⁵³ W. Radl suggests that the Christian concept of the parousia was influenced by Hellenistic literature (W. Radl, "Parousia," in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. III, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991], p. 44). Oepke demonstrates that the Jewish concept of the parousia is more probable. 1 Enoch combines the Son of Man with the notion of the parousia (1 Enoch 38:2; 49:4; 51:3; 52:9; 62: 5-7; 69: 27-29; 71: 16-17). Oepke, "Parousia," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 5, ed. By Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 86.

⁵⁴ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 357.

⁵⁵ Leander E. Keck, "Paul and apocalyptic theology," Interpretation, XXXVIII (July, 1984), p. 237.

⁵⁶ Arrington, Paul's Aeon Theology in 1 Corinthians, p. 168 n. 115.

⁵⁷ Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 359.

⁵⁸ Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 380.

⁵⁹ 1 Kings 17: 17-21; 2 Kings 4: 18-37; 13: 20-21; Job 19: 25-29; Psalm 73: Isaiah 52:10; Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Oepke, "Anistēmi," p. 369.

Chapter 8:

Paul's Use of the Word Mysterion in Romans 11:25

So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

Out of Zion will come the
Deliverer; he will banish
Ungodliness from Jacob.
And this is my covenant
with them, when I take
away their sins.

Romans 11: 25-27

I INTRODUCTION

The word mysterion occurs only once within the letter to the Romans.¹ As within the previous chapter (that looked at 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52) Paul describes a mysterion. But within the mysterion of Romans a few questions arise: What is the purpose in having the “hardening” of only part of Israel? Did Paul have a specific number in mind when he mentions the “full number of Gentiles?” And finally, does the mysterion imply a new covenant, or does it enforce the original covenant? From this, an examination of the Jewish and/or Hellenistic influences on the mysterion will commence, while the last section will look at any connections between this mysterion and any other “mystery verses” previously examined.

II WORDS AND PHRASES

A) hoti pōrōsis apo merous tōi Israēl

The mysterion of Romans 11: 25-26 states that “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” (hoti pōrōsis apo merous tōi Israēl). Two questions arise from this phrase: first, “why only a part of Israel?” and second, “what is the purpose in having Israel being hardened?”

Joseph A. Fitzmyer suggests that the phrase the “part of Israel” is referred to in 11:7. In 11:7 Paul states that for Israel some are part of the elect, while “the rest were hardened” (epōrōthēsan). For Fitzmyer, these “others” (hoi loipoi -- “the rest”) are not part of the Jewish Christian elect.²

Richard Batey follows the same line of thinking as Fitzmyer, but instead gains

support from another verse. In 2 Corinthians 3: 12-18 Paul compares the Jewish people of his time to those during the time of Moses. Moses puts a veil over his face so that the Jewish people may not gaze upon “the end of the glory that was being set aside” (verse 3:13). Paul believed that this (metaphorical) veil was still blinding the minds of Israel (“But their minds were hardened” [epōrōthē]). The veil was lifted (according to Paul) “when one turns to the Lord” (verse 3:16).³

Thus far, for Paul there is a distinction among Jews; those who have accepted the Gospel (“the elect” [hē eklogē] – verse 11:7) and those who are “hardened” because a veil blinded their mind (2 Corinthians 3: 12-18).

But why were some of the Jewish people’s minds still hardened? According to Paul, their minds were hardened for a purpose. In 11:28 Paul states that Jews rejected the gospel which became an advantage for the Gentiles.⁴ It is this advantage that leads to the opportunity for Gentiles to obtain salvation.⁵ And for Paul, turn about is fair play. At one time it was the Gentiles who were disobedient towards God (verse 30). But now it is Israel who is disobedient (verse 33), therefore giving the Gentiles an opportunity to receive the mercy of God.⁶

From our examination it has been shown that some Jews have accepted the gospel (“the elect”) but those Jews who have not, have been hardened for a purpose. This purpose was to give Gentiles an opportunity to receive God’s mercy.

B) to plērōma tōn ethnōn

In 11:25 the mysterion states that the hardening of Israel would remain until “the full number of Gentiles (to plērōma tōn ethnōn) has come in.” But how many Gentiles are

to come in so that the hardening of Israel might cease?

Leon Morris suggests the idea that “the full number” refers back to 11:12 and “how much greater riches will their (the Jews) fullness bring.”⁷ As a result of this connection with verse 12, Morris proposes the idea that “the full number” should be taken as “fullness”; and this “fullness” is “the fulfilment of God’s purpose in bringing Gentiles into His kingdom.”⁸

I do not believe that this is a correct interpretation of the phrase “the full number.” The word plērōma is a Greek word used to describe “a full measure ... a ship’s complement ... a completing.”⁹ The word is used to denote a complete sum. It is not used (as Morris proposes) as “a hope” for the completion of God’s will. As Barrett points out, God may have a designated number intended for the Gentiles.¹⁰ I believe that this interpretation of Barrett’s is correct. The mysterion that Paul tells the Romans is one that includes a pre-determined number. The word “full” does not mean every single Gentile who was ever born, for if that was the case, the mysterion would be suggesting the acceptance of immoral conduct.¹¹

Johannes Munck does not believe that “the full number” refers to a specific number. Munck suggests that the “fullness of the Gentiles” must signify the goal that the totality of the Gentile world ... that the gospel should be preached to them, and that they should hear and believe.”¹² Munck believes that predestination (a specific number) was a concept alien to Paul’s theology.¹³ But as we have already shown in chapter 4, Paul did believe in predestination. In Romans 8: 28-30 Paul states that God “foreknew” and “predestined” some. Therefore, the idea of God having a specific number would not have been foreign

to Paul's thinking.

In conclusion, it has been determined that the mysterion described in Romans is a specific number designated by God. Though no reference is made as to what that number would be, it is a number that includes the complete moral elect.

C) pas Israēl sōthēsetai

The mysterion within Romans states that after "the full number of the Gentiles has come in," then the mercy of God will be given to Israel and "all Israel will be saved" (pas Israēl sōthēsetai). But how will Israel be saved? Will Israel be saved by God, or will they be saved as a result of accepting the gospel?

There are two different schools of thought on the matter of Israel's salvation: the theological and christological.

The theological explanation proposes the idea that Israel will be saved independently from Israel accepting the gospel (those who have been hardened -- some Jewish people have accepted the gospel -- the "elect" in 11:5). The Deliverer (verse 26) of Israel will not be Jesus, but God.¹⁴ According to the theological explanation God will maintain the original covenant. The mysterion does not create a new covenant, it enforces the original covenant. Verse 27 does not use a future tense¹⁵ and state that "this will be my covenant with them"; rather, the passage is in the present tense maintaining the covenant that has been in place.

The theological explanation also points out that according to the mysterion, God is one who does not go back on a promise. Romans 11:29 states that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."¹⁶ Elsewhere in Romans Paul suggests this idea. In Romans 11:1

Paul states that God has not rejected the people of Israel, "By no means!"¹⁷ And in Romans 9: 4-5 Paul describes how the people of Israel were adopted by God and given certain privileges (which "God blessed forever" -- verse 5).¹⁸

Therefore, according to the theological explanation, God has not rejected the people of Israel nor has God rejected the covenant made with Israel. Israel has an independent plan of salvation and deliverance. As Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher point out, God is the deliverer of Israel, but Jesus is "the Savior of the Gentiles."¹⁹

Within the christological explanation, there are two different solutions.

The central aspect of the first christological explanation is the coming of the Deliverer ("Out of Zion will come the Deliverer" -- 11:26). Those scholars who support this explanation suggest that the coming of the Deliverer is a reference to the parousia (the eschatological coming of Jesus). At the parousia, Israel is supposed to receive its salvation from Jesus.²⁰ But Israel does not have to accept the gospel in order to have their sins taken away.²¹

The second christological explanation is strictly christocentric. The second explanation suggests that the salvation of a person is strictly dependent upon Jesus. It is through the justification by faith that one receives salvation. Hence, even Israel must respond to the gospel. Joseph A. Fitzmyer states that the theological explanation is "to militate against his (Paul) whole thesis of justification."²² There is for Paul only one way to salvation, and that is through Jesus.²³

E. P. Sanders suggests that the theological explanation is the result of scholars trying to make some of the "ancient authors relevant for the modern world."²⁴ Sanders suggests

that there are not two different paths of salvation. In Romans 11: 17-23 Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to describe the path of salvation. Sanders makes the point that there is only one tree, and therefore, there is only one pathway to salvation. Both Gentiles and Jews must depend upon faith in order to obtain salvation.²⁵

But which of the explanations is more probable? I do not believe that the first christological explanation is valid because it is based on speculation. Scholars are interpreting the Deliverer on an assumption. They are assuming that the Deliverer is Jesus. But, one can assume that the Deliverer is God. Therefore, the first christological explanation is not the most probable solution because it is inconclusive.

With regard to the second christological explanation, 11:23 leads to some doubt as to it being a probable solution. In verse 23 Paul states that Israel (a broken branch -- verse 19-20) will be grafted back onto the olive tree by God. Now, if Israel was grafted back onto the tree by Jesus, this would give support to Sanders' idea. But, it is God who grafts Israel to the tree, therefore suggesting the possibility that the salvation of Israel will come from God and not Jesus.

Therefore, I would suggest that the theological explanation is the most probable explanation. Israel will have a separate salvation from the Gentiles. The mysterion demonstrates that it is God who will save Israel and graft them back on the "olive tree." As Paul and the mysterion state, God has not rejected Israel. Israel has only been hardened for a purpose -- to help bring about the salvation of the Gentiles.

D) mysterion

We have taken the time to examine several phrases connected within the mysterion

of Romans; we have done this in order for us to understand better the mysterion.

In 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55, Paul relayed a mysterion to the Corinthians. Paul does the same thing in Romans 11: 25-32 and describes a mysterion to the Romans.²⁶

In 1 Corinthians 15, the mysterion described the event of the believers of Christ receiving an imperishable body. But in Romans there is some debate as to the central theme of the mysterion.

Some scholars have defined the mysterion in a way that is too vague. F. F. Bruce defines the mysterion as being "God's purpose for Israel."²⁷ This definition is limited because the mysterion also describes the role/purpose of the Gentiles.²⁷ C. K. Barrett defines the mysterion as "God's mercy."²⁸ But this definition leaves the reader with the questions, "towards whom is God's mercy directed?" and "why are they receiving the mercy of God?" Johannes Munck describes the central content of the mysterion as "the hardening of Israel is limited."²⁹ Though only part of Israel will be hardened, Munck does not include a reason why (within his definition) the hardening has occurred.

Raymond Brown and John Paul Heil both define the mysterion as a plan of salvation.³⁰ Ernst Käsemann does not believe that a "plan of salvation is a correct definition. Rather, the mysterion according to Käsemann, is a "salvation event ... which is concealed and awaits its disclosure."³¹

Though I would agree with Käsemann that the mysterion is a salvation event and awaits its disclosure, I do not believe the mysterion is concealed. If it were concealed then Paul would not have known about the mystery, and he would not have told the Romans about the mysterion.

I would define the mysterion in Romans 11 as the salvation event of both the Jews and the Gentiles. The mysterion is not a plan (as Brown and Heil argue) because “a plan” implies the idea that the action is in the process of being implemented. It is an event that describes the salvation of both the Jews and the Gentiles. As we have stated above, a hardening “has come over” part of Israel. Some of the people of Israel have accepted the gospel, but those who have been hardened are those who have rejected the gospel. But because of this hardening, it has allowed the Gentiles an opportunity to experience God’s mercy and receive salvation. Those who have been hardened will cease to be hardened when the complete predetermined number of Gentiles have been saved. And they (the hardened) will be saved by God, because God does not go against a promise (according to the mysterion).

Therefore, according to the mysterion, the mystery is a salvation event by two different Saviours and by two different means: Jesus is the Saviour of the Gentiles through the justification by faith; and God is the Saviour of the Jews because of the covenant.

III JEWISH AND HELLENISTIC INFLUENCES

In the previous section we have examined and defined the mysterion in 11:25, but now in this next section we will focus on the main intent of this thesis, to examine the Jewish and/or Hellenistic influences on Paul’s mysterion.

A) hoti pōrōsis apo merous tōi Israēl

The word “hardened” (pōrōsis) originally was a medical term used to describe the process by which a bone fracture fused back together by forming a callous. The word pōrōsis would then be used metaphorically to describe the action of making something

dull or insensitive.³²

The word pōrōsis only occurs twice within the LXX. In Job 17:7 the word pōrōsis is used to translate the Hebrew word כַּחַח (“to become weak”). The author of Job uses the word pōrōsis to describe how Job has been overcome by grief.³³

Though the word pōrōsis only occurs twice in the LXX, the concept of having one’s heart hardened by God is not uncommon in the LXX. In the book of Exodus, the mention of Pharaoh’s heart being hardened by God is made fifteen times.³⁴ In Deuteronomy 2:30, God hardened the heart of Sihon, King of Heshbon, causing him to go to battle against Israel.

I believe the closest parallel to the mysterion of Romans 11 is from Isaiah 6: 9-10. As we have stated in chapter 3 of this thesis,³⁵ the prophet Isaiah was viewed as being taken to the heavenly counsel whereupon he received an oracle and was instructed to proclaim it to the people (Isaiah 6: 1-9).³⁶ The oracle (mystery) that Isaiah received was one regarding a people who have been hardened so that they may not understand.

“Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.” Make the mind of this people dull,³⁷ and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.³⁸

As we have stated above, the mysterion in Romans 11 makes the claim that part of Israel has had their hearts temporarily hardened “until the full number of Gentiles has come in” (Romans 11:25). Isaiah 6: 9-10 follows a similar path: Isaiah received a “mystery” from God; this mystery is regarding the hardening of a group’s hearts; and there is a time period connected with the mystery.³⁹

The idea of connecting Romans 11:25 with Isaiah 6: 9-11 is supported by the fact that the author of the Gospel of John uses Isaiah 6:10 to show how the Jews rejected Jesus and they could not believe because of the prophecy of Isaiah.⁴⁰

Therefore, the idea of the hardening of Israel's (those who have not accepted the gospel) heart in 11:25 is a reference to Isaiah 6: 9-10. Isaiah received the oracle from the heavenly counsel (a medium for receiving a mysterion), and it is an oracle with a timed hardening. But not only does Paul use Isaiah 6: 9-10 to describe Israel's rejection of the gospel, the author of the Gospel of John does so as well.

B) pas Israēl sōthēsetai

The phrase "all Israel" (pas Israēl) occurs 148 times within the LXX. Fitzmyer suggests that of these 148 times, the phrase "all Israel" is usually used to refer to the historical and ethnic Israel of that time. But in Malachi 3:22⁴¹ the phrase is used in an diachronic sense to refer to all generations. And this, according to Fitzmyer, is how Paul uses the phrase -- in a diachronic sense.⁴²

But, within Malachi 3:22 there is no reference to the salvation of Israel. Fitzmyer and other scholars look to another Jewish source for a parallel. In the Yerushalmi Sanhedrin, the phrase "all Israel" is connected with the promise of an eschatological event: "All Israelites have a share in the world to come"⁴³ But just as the mystery cults believed that no immoral persons have a share in the afterlife, so too does the Yerushalmi Sanhedrin have exceptions: "an Epicurean;" "those who violate the covenant;" those who do not believe the Torah is from heaven; a heretic; etc.⁴⁴

But the problem with using verse 10:1 of the Yerushalmi Sanhedrin as a parallel

with Romans 11: 25-26 is the fact that the Yerushalmi Sanhedrin was written sometime during the fourth or fifth century C. E. Therefore, the parallel between the Yerushalmi Sanhedrin and Romans is an anachronism.

This leaves the question as to, "which passage influenced Paul's thinking on the concept of the salvation of all Israel?" I would suggest that the closest extent parallel we have is Malachi 3:22 because the phrase is used in a diachronic sense. But with regard to content (the salvation of all generations) there is no known parallel.

C) Romans 11: 26-27

There is little question as to the source of Romans 11: 26-27. Paul combines two different quotes: The first three lines, "Out of Zion will come a Deliverer ... And this is my covenant with them," are from Isaiah 60: 20-21a,

And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who
turn from transgression,

The last line, "... when I take away their sins," is from Isaiah 27:9,

And this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin:⁴⁵

IV MYSTERION ANALYSIS

Like 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55 Paul relays a mystery to the Romans in 11: 25-32. David Aune proposed the idea that the mysterion in 1 Corinthians 15 was an oracle which exhibited a symmetrical structure. Aune proposes the idea that the mysterion found in Romans 11 is also an oracle.

Though Paul does not use the word idou, Paul does give an introduction to the oracle, "I want you to understand this mystery" (verse 25). The first strophe (verses 25-

26a) consists of three lines which is “an unconditional announcement of salvation.”

A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved.⁴⁶

The second strophe is not introduced by the word gar, but is introduced by “as it is written” The oracle uses “as it is written” to set the reader up for the oracles’ justification of and reasoning behind the first strophe. We have come across a similar format in the writings of the Qumran Community. The writings of the prophets were interpreted (pesharim) by the Teacher of Righteousness and the interpretations were made relevant to the community.⁴⁷ Here the mysterion of Romans 11 does the same thing: the passages from Isaiah 60: 20-21a and 27:9 are interpreted to express the relevance of carrying out missionary work towards the Gentiles.

Aune follows the idea expressed by Bent Noack that Paul softens the statement made in 9: 6-8 (that not all Israel are true Israelites) by including the salvation of all Israel in Romans 11: 25-26. And according to Paul, “the wrath of God has come upon them (Israel) forever!” (1 Thessalonians 2:16). Hence, Noack proposes the idea that 11: 25-26 was a revelation that came to him while he was dictating Romans 11.⁴⁸

Though Noack’s conclusion is intriguing, I believe that it is flawed. Paul realized at the beginning of Romans 11 that not all of Israel will be saved. Though there are some who will be saved (the elect) there still remained the remnant. If this was a spontaneous revelation Paul would not have mentioned the hardening of the heart in verse 18. Also, Paul does not believe that the wrath of God will be on Israel forever. This is a misinterpretation by Aune and Noack. In 1 Thessalonians 2:16 Paul states that the wrath

of God had come upon Israel “at last” (eis telos). The wrath is not final, but it has finally come upon Israel.

In the “Mysterion Analysis” section of chapter 6, it was shown that the mysteria are found within “the depth of God” and as in Enoch the mysteria are numberless. In Romans 11 this same idea is expressed. In Romans 11:33a Paul states that the knowledge and wisdom of God is unfathomable. Paul expresses this point to demonstrate that the mysterion he just revealed to the Romans was one of many mysteries hidden in God. To some (and maybe even to Paul) this mysterion seemed strange, but God’s judgment (according to Paul) is unsearchable (verse 33b).

Finally, within each “Mysterion Analysis” section the element of eschatology has been present. And with Romans 11: 25-26 the eschatological element is also present.⁴⁹ Within verse 26 the future tense is used (“will be saved” -- sōthēsetai; “will come” -- hēxei). But I believe the mysterion in Romans 11 is only partly an eschatological event. The mysterion of 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55 was an eschatological event that was anticipated and the early church was waiting for it to come about. But in Romans 11: 25-26 the mysterion was already in effect because the hardening had already come upon part of Israel. What is eschatological about the mysterion of Romans 11: 25-26 is the idea that sometime in the future Israel will be saved when the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

In conclusion, it has been shown that Paul viewed Israel as two separate groups; those who believed in the gospel, and those who rejected the gospel, and as a result their hearts were hardened. But this hardening had a purpose, allowing the full predetermined number of Gentiles to receive the gospel. And after this number has been reached, God

(not Jesus) will save those whose hearts have been hardened; because God made a covenant with the people of Israel which he will not break (according to the mysterion).

Since this mysterion revolves mainly around the salvation of Israel (though the mysterion also expresses the salvation event of the Gentiles) the influence on the mysterion is mainly Jewish. The mysterion was influenced and inspired by Isaiah 6: 9-10, and the interpretative style of the mysterion (found within the Qumran literature) gained its support from passages from the book of Isaiah.

Endnotes

¹ The word mysterion does occur within Romans 16:25, but it is not an original part of the letter to the Romans. For a discussion on the placement of Romans 16: 25-26 see the appendix.

² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 621.

³ Richard Batey, "'So All Israel Will Be Saved': An Interpretation of Romans 11: 25-32," Interpretation, xx (April, 1966), pp. 218-228.

⁴ The NRSV translates 11:28 as "... they are enemies of God for your sake;" It is Barrett who translates this verse as, "As far as the present results of the preaching of the Gospel go, they are enemies - for your advantage." C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, (London: A and C Black, 1991), p. 207.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207. Karl Herman Schelkle, The Epistle to the Romans, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 185. Daniel J. Harrington, "Israel's Salvation According to Paul," The Bible Today, xxvi (September, 1988), p. 305. H. Kramer, "Mysterion," Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. II, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 447.

⁶ Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 208. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, p. 627. John Paul Heil, Romans - Paul's Letter of Hope, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1987), p. 79.

⁷ Leon Morris uses the NIV.

⁸ Leon Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p. 420.

⁹ Liddel and Scott Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 565.

¹⁰ Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 206. Schelkle, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 185.

¹¹ We have come across this similar point in chapter 2. Some Greeks were skeptic about the soteriology of the mystery cults. These skeptics criticized the cults for giving the promise of an afterlife to those who would commit murder and other immoral acts. But the mystery cults (in their defense) believed that in order for one to keep their promise of

an afterlife one had to maintain a moral conduct. In Romans 11:25 “the full” does not mean everyone, but rather, “the full number of elect” who try to maintain a proper “Christian” life.

¹²Johannes Munck, Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 135.

¹³ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁴ Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, p. 619.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 619.

¹⁶ Shirley C. Guthrie, “Romans 11: 25-32,” Interpretation, xxxviii (July, 1984), p. 287. Heil, Romans, p. 79.

¹⁷ Guthrie, “Romans 11: 25-32,” p. 287.

¹⁸ Heil, Romans, p. 79. Harrington, “Israel’s Salvation According to Paul,” p. 305.

¹⁹ Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, Paul, Rabbi and Apostle, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), pp. 50-51.

²⁰ C. F. B. Cranfield, The International Critical Commentary: The Epistle to the Romans, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark Limited, 1979), p. 577. Lloyd Gaston, Paul and the Torah, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987), pp. 147-148.

²¹ Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 420.

²² Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, p. 620.

²³ Ibid., p. 620. Craig Cooper, “Romans 11: 25-26,” Restoration Quarterly, xxi (1978), p. 91. Reidar Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11: 25-27,” Journal of the Study of the New Testament, xxxviii (February, 1990), pp. 89-90.

²⁴ E. P. Sanders, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 193.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 195.

²⁶ As within 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells the mysterion in the form of an oracle. This point will be explored in more detail in the “Mysterion Analysis” section.

²⁷ F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 220.

²⁸ Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 205.

²⁹ Munck, Christ and Israel, p. 132.

³⁰ Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I). " Biblica, xxxix (1958), p. 446. Heil. Romans, p. 78.

³¹ Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, London: SCM Press Ltd., p. 1980. G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pp. 816, 822-23.

³² Cooper, "Romans 11: 25-26," p. 187. K. L. And M. A. Schmidt, "Pōrōsis," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. V, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pp. 1025-1026. Mark 6:52 states, "but their hearts were hardened" (all ēn autōn hē kardia pepōrōmenē). The hardening of the heart of Jews also occurs in 8:17, "Are your hearts hardened?" (pepōrōmenē). The hardening of the heart of Jews also occurs in 8:17, "Are your hearts hardened?" (pepōrōmenēn echete tēn kardian humōn).

³³ Schmidt, "Pōrōsis," p. 1026. The other reference is in Proverbs 10:20.

³⁴ Exodus 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8.

³⁵ See chapter 3, pages 53-54.

³⁶ In chapter 3 it was shown that one way in which a person received the mysterion was to be taken to the counsel of God.

³⁷ The NIV translates this passage as "Make the heart of this people calloused;"

³⁸ Also see Isaiah 63:17.

³⁹ In Isaiah 6:11, Isaiah asks God "How long, O Lord (will the hardening occur)?"

⁴⁰ See John 12: 37-42, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart (kai epōrōsen autōn tēn kardian)."

⁴¹ In the NRSV the verse is 4:4.

⁴² Fittzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, p. 623.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 623.

⁴⁴ Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 10:1 [A - 1F], in The Talmud of the Land of Israel, vol. 31, trans. Jacob Neusner, (Chicago and London: The Chicago University Press, 1984), pp. 308-309.

⁴⁵ Kasemann, Commentary on Romans, p. 314. Heil, Romans, p. 79. Munck, Christ and Israel, p. 137. Batey suggests Isaiah 60: 20-21a and 27:9, but he also adds Psalms 14:7 as an additional possibility (Batey, "So All Israel Will Be Saved'," p. 225.

⁴⁶ David Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 252.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 252.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 252. Bent Noack, "Current Backwater in the Epistle to the Romans," Studia Theologica, XIX (1965), p. 165.

⁴⁹ Batey, "So All Israel Will Be Saved'," p. 224. Harrington, "Israel's Salvation According to Paul," p. 305.

Conclusion

The general intent of this study was to examine the word mysterion as it occurred within Romans and 1 Corinthians. Within this framework two main questions were addressed: first, what are the connections between the "mystery verses?"; and second -- based on an examination of mysterion within each chapter -- was the use of the word influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic sources? The answers to these questions will provide a better understanding of who Paul was.

From an examination of the first question, it was shown that there was a hierarchical structure inherent within the concept of mysterion. The mysterion was hidden within God, but the mystery is revealed through the events and life of Jesus. It is the Spirit who reveals to the mature (through the gift of tongues and prophesy) the mysterion. But the Spirit only reveals the mysterion to those who have the gift of tongues and prophecy (the apostles and prophets). Only on occasion does the apostle/prophet reveal the mysterion to those of a lesser maturity (the secondary mature). Though Paul considered the

Corinthians "infants" (3:1 – secondary mature), he did reveal to them a mystery (15: 51-55).

Another element that connected all of the "mystery verses" was the idea of an eschatological dimension.¹ When a mysterion is revealed it is a partial revelation. The mysteria are to be fully realized at the end times. And when Paul does reveal a mysterion to the people to whom he is writing, the mysterion describes an eschatological event. In 1 Corinthians 15: 51-55 Paul described an end time event where the dead and alive in Christ are to be changed from perishable to imperishable bodies. In Romans 11: 25-32 Paul described the soteriological event of the Gentiles and God's promise of salvation for the Jewish people, which will come about (according to the mysterion) in the future when the "full number of Gentiles" has been saved.

With regard to the second question, it was concluded that within each of the "mystery verses" (with the exception of Romans 11: 25-32²) the mysterion exhibited both Jewish and Hellenistic influence. This conclusion should not come as a surprise. Paul was a complex person. As it was stated in chapter 1, Paul was a Jew, a Pharisee, a Roman citizen, and an inhabitant of the Hellenistic city Tarsus. There were many different cultural influences that would have shaped Paul's thinking and intellectual development. Therefore, to assume that Paul was only influenced by one factor is contrary to his life and experience.

As we have observed, Paul's use of mysterion is hierarchical. And within this hierarchical structure, the concept of mysterion reflects a three-tiered structure:

apostle/prophet



mature



secondary mature

Furthermore, Paul's use of mysterion reflects his character and was influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic sources.

Where Do We Go From Here

This thesis has focused its attention on the occurrence of the word mysterion as it is found within the undisputed letters of Paul. But it is also interesting that Paul uses two other mystic words, memuetai³ ("secrets" -- Philippians 4:12) and arrēta ("things that are not to be told" -- 2 Corinthians 12:4) within his letters. The question that arises from the occurrence of these two words is: are these two words linked with the previous "mystery verses" already examined, and are they also under by both Jewish and Hellenistic influences?

In Philippians 4:12, Paul states that he has "learned the secret (memuetai) of being well-fed, of going hungry, of having plenty, and of being in need." The word memuetai only occurs once in the undisputed letters of Paul. Most scholars agree that Paul borrowed the word memuetai from the mystery cults.⁴ And most are in agreement that Paul was using the term as a metaphor⁵ in order to describe how he was initiated into life by

learning the hardships that it offered.⁶

But how does the use of this word relate to other "mystery verses?" In chapter 3 of this thesis it was demonstrated that the word mysterion was a Greek mystic term that was used to translate two Jewish words -- raz and sôd. In chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis it was demonstrated that the idea of the word sôd (secular secrets of a person that are revealed) was present in the letters of Paul; but this concept of sôd (for Paul) is present in the Greek word krupta. And throughout this thesis the mysterion that has been examined is one that relates to raz (secrets revealed by the divine).

But what is the connection with Philippians 4:12? I would suggest that neither raz nor sôd are connected with memuemai. The word memuemai in Philippians 4:12 neither demonstrates secrets revealed by the divine, nor personal secrets. Paul uses the word memuemai to describe the initiation into life itself. Philippians 4:12 is devoid of any divine presence, and the secret is not hidden, rather it is learned. But Philippians 4:12 does raise the question: does Paul view the initiation into the secrets of life as similar to the process of being initiated into the mysterion?

The word arrêta only occurs once within the disputed letters of Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12:4 Paul describes how a person he knew was taken up to paradise⁷ where the person "heard things that are not to be told (arrêta), that no mortal is permitted to repeat." The word arrêta was used within the mystery cults to describe certain things which are to remain hidden from the uninitiated.⁸ Now as we have observed in chapter 3 of this thesis, the idea was expressed that the author(s) of Enoch used the medium of being transported to heaven to receive the mysterion. This idea is quite similar to 2

Corinthians 12:4 and Paul's acquaintance being taken up to the third heaven to hear unutterable things. But Paul does not use the word mysterion as does the author(s) of Enoch. Therefore, is there a distinction between arrēta and mysterion? Are there secrets which are inexpressible (arrēta) and are there those secrets which are expressible (mysterion)?

The questions raised from Philippians 4:12 and 2 Corinthians 12:4 are questions that might be addressed in another paper. But what these questions do demonstrate is that the discussion of Paul's use of the term mysterion is not complete and must continue to be examined.

Endnotes

¹G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 822.

²In chapter 8 it was demonstrated that Romans 11 was influenced mainly by Jewish sources. Even the word "hardening" (pōrōsis) which was used in Greek medicine was found to have a close parallel with Isaiah 6: 9-10. But this is not surprising since the main focus of the mysterion within Romans 11 was the salvation of Israel.

³The words mysterion and memuemai (from the verb myein) both are derived from the root my. F. F. Bruce, New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), p. 151.

⁴G. Bornkamm, "Mueō," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 828. Bruce, New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians, p. 150. Ralph P. Martin, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 177. F. W. Beare, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1959), p. 153. The word memuemai is defined as "to initiate into the mysteries" (Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990], p. 454).

⁵See Epictetus 4.1.140. Günter Wagner, Pauline Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries, (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 274.

⁶Beare, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, p. 153. Martin, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, p. 177. Bruce, New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians, p. 150.

⁷The terms "paradise" (12:4) and "the third heaven" (12:2) are the same terms. C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1973), p. 310. Victor Paul Furnish, The Anchor Bible: 2 Corinthians, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), p. 526.

⁸Barrett, A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 311. Furnish, The Anchor Bible: 2 Corinthians, p. 527. Bultmann, The Second Letter to the Corinthians, trans. Roy A. Harrisville, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), p. 222. See Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, 360 F; Euripides, The Bacchae, line 472. Herodotus, The Histories, V. 83.

Appendix

Romans 16: 25-27

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith - to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 16: 25-27 (NRSV)

The conclusion was made that the word mysterion was neither Jewish nor Hellenistic, but rather, it was a meeting place of the two different types of literary influences. But is this also true for Romans 16: 25-26? The purpose of this appendix is once again to explore the idea of how the use of the word mysterion (in this case it is Romans 16: 25-27) was influenced by Jewish and/or Hellenistic concepts. But one cannot phrase the thesis of this appendix by asking the question, "How was Paul influenced by

Jewish and/or Hellenistic concepts when he wrote Romans 16: 25-27," because the authenticity of the Doxology of Romans (16: 25-27) is in doubt.

This chapter will first set out to indicate the issue of the authenticity of the Final Doxology of Romans by looking at the different placements of the Doxology within Romans, the structure of the Doxology and also its language and style. The second half of this appendix will examine and investigate the relationship that verses 16: 25-27 hold within Romans as a whole; that is to say, this chapter will probe the question of whether the concept of mysterion is in contradiction to other verses in Romans, particularly Romans 11: 25-26 (as treated in chapter 8).

This verse is placed within the appendix and not singled out as a new and separate chapter because its authenticity is contested by the majority of modern scholarship. But if this verse is disputed, then why not also include the other verses found within the disputed letters of Paul? There are several reasons for including this verse in the thesis. First, this thesis is limited by time and space to the references to the word mysterion as found within the undisputed letters of Paul, though this could be a topic for a doctoral thesis. And second, this Final Doxology will help to demonstrate and give support to the conclusion of this thesis that there are common threads running through the "mystery verses" found within the undisputed letters of Paul.

I Authenticity

Why are these last three verses in Romans placed in a realm of doubt? What is it that makes them so doubtful? The verses' authenticity is placed into question because of its position with Romans, its structure, and its language and style.

A) Position

Several ancient manuscripts have placed Romans 16: 25-27 after 14:23 or after 15:33, while others place verse 24 after verse 27.¹ There are several theories proposed by scholars to account for the placement and positioning of the Final Doxology. There are the theories which suggest that the Doxology was created by Marcion, or the Doxology was a small scrap of a letter added to a collection of Paul's letters, or lastly, the Doxology was a letter sent specifically to Ephesus.

Some scholars suggest the possibility that Marcion edited the original version of the letter to the Romans by excluding chapters 15 and 16 because of its context,² therefore creating the position of the Doxology after 14:23.

The problem Marcion had with these final chapters was with the references to the Hebrew scriptures: 15: 3-4 refers to Psalm 69:9; 15:8 "the promise of the patriarchs" ; 15:9 refers to Psalm 18:49; 15:10 refers to Deut. 32:43; 15:11 refers to Psalm 117:1; 15:12 refers to Isaiah 11:10; 15:16 "in performing the priestly service ..."; and 15:21 refers to Isaiah 52:15. The context of these two chapters did not fit well with the beliefs of Marcion and his views of Christianity. Marcion (died ca. 160 C.E.) believed that the central theme of Christianity was love. But Marcion viewed the Old Testament and its laws as being the opposite of what Jesus preached. The God of the Old Testament was not a God of love (according to Marcion), rather the God of the Old Testament was one who demanded justice and punishment - "an eye for an eye". The God of the Old Testament was a god who was cruel and placed such men as Saul and David in high positions in order to enforce the severe will of God. As a result of these views, Marcion created his own Bible, The Antitheses,

which included only the Gospel of Luke, and 10 of Paul's letters (which did not include the Pastorals).³

Since Romans 14:23 has an abrupt ending with no real concluding statement, Dodd makes the suggestion that an editor may have created the doxology in order to give Romans "a more fitting close."⁴ Though Dodd does not believe that the Marcion theory is the only reason for Romans being cut short (he believes that Paul did write 1-16), he suggests the possibility that it may have been other editors that we do not know about who cut the letter short; or, the papyrus roll may have been accidentally cut off.⁵

Another theory suggests that when Paul's letters were being collected, Romans 1-15 was one of the last in the collection and all that remained was Romans and a few short pieces of scraps. Romans 16 and the Final Doxology was this conglomerate of scraps. Therefore, the editor(s) added these last few remaining pieces to the end of Romans.⁶

The third theory suggests that when Paul wrote the letter (1-15) it was not specifically addressed to the Romans, but rather, it was a general form letter. Chapter 16 was a separate letter that was supposed to go to Ephesus. Käsemann dismisses this two letter theory by stating the discrepancies of why would only one church be informed by Paul's travel plans, and also, why would Paul agree to having the letter sent to Ephesus, since Rome was in the opposite direction.⁷

And the names of the people that are mentioned within chapter 16 are also in some debate. Scholars who believe that chapter 16 is part of the original letter to the Romans, suggest that Paul would have known so many people in Rome because, on the one hand, he was either sending specific greetings to members of the church he knew, or on the other

hand, Paul was in communication with the churches that were established in the East who were constantly sending messengers.⁸ These points are debated by scholars because it is quite unlikely that Paul would have known so many people in a place where he had never been to visit. Also, the Jewish and Hellenistic names point more to people living in Ephesus, rather than in Rome.⁷

B) Structure

The general layout of the Final Doxology is also inconclusive. There is some doubt as to its authenticity because there are key elements which are missing from the general conclusion of Paul's standard letter.

Within a standard Pauline conclusion there are 4 main components which are usually present: a) the peace wish; b) greetings; c) a holy kiss; d) a closing grace benediction.¹⁰ None of these elements is found within 16: 25-27. They are rather found within chapters 15:33 to 16:20. But, in order to be consistent with the previous section on authenticity, it must be mentioned that general scholarship makes the claim that the possibility exists that the original conclusion found at the end of chapter 15 was edited in order to make room for the addition of chapter 16.¹¹

Within 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, and Philemon, Paul always ends his letters with relatively the same phrase "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." - (1 Cor 16:23); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor 13:13); "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen" (Gal 5:18); "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Thess 5:28); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with

your spirit" (Phil 4:23) - the grace benediction. This ending is not found within Romans 16: 25-27. Rather, the letter ends with "... to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen." The grace benediction within Romans is found in 16:20, and in Romans the phrase is "The God of peace be with all of you. Amen."

C) Language and Style

When scholars have read the Final Doxology, they have questioned its authenticity on the basis that the vocabulary used and the way that the vocabulary is used do not comply with or compare to the undisputed letters of Paul.

Within the above section (structure) the point was made that Paul did not end his other letters with the statement "to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen" There are several instances where the ascription of glory to God is found both within the undisputed and the disputed letters of Paul (Gal 1:5; Phil 4:20; Eph 3:21; 1 Tim 1:17). The author uses this word in order to make the claim that it is God who is the source of this revelation which is to follow and who is the author of the salvific plan.¹² Käsemann does not believe that the Doxology was written by Paul. Neither the placement nor the grammar helps to support its authenticity. Käsemann points to the fact that the final statement in the Doxology is an anacoluthon. The words "to whom be the glory" does not clearly point "to whom" it is being addressed. The glory may be addressed "to the only wise God" or to "Jesus Christ."¹³ It is almost as if the editor and/or creator of this verse added in the "through Jesus Christ" to demonstrate that the prophetic writings originated with God, but were demonstrated through Jesus Christ. Jesus was the mediator between God and humans.

In order to establish the validity of what is to be written, the word kata (according to) is tacked on to the phrase "my gospel." Here the author of the Doxology is trying to stress the point that there is authority to what he/she is about to say concerning the mysterion, and "that this message is a legitimate expression of the gospel" which is expressed through "the proclamation of Jesus Christ."¹⁴ All of this is written to help reinforce what is stated in Romans 2:16. In Romans 2:16 Paul writes "... according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all." Here there are explicit parallels between Romans 2:16 and 16: 25-27. First, there is the use of the phrase "my gospel." Second, the connection between God, Jesus and all is made. Lastly, the verse centers around a mystery being disclosed - "the secret thoughts" of everyone are known by God who will judge them.

With our examination of the language found within the Final Doxology, Barrett makes the point that the expression toū aiōniou theou (the eternal God) is not found in any of the undisputed letters of Paul, nor anywhere else within the New Testament.¹⁵ Barrett also makes the suggestion that the phrase monō (to the only) occurs only at 1 Tim 1:17 and Jude 25 when linked with the word "God." But there is no parallel in the New Testament with connecting monō sophō theō (to the only wise God). This is a completely new and unique language creation.¹⁶

J. K. Elliott makes the claim that the Final Doxology did not come from Paul on the basis that the phrase kata apokalupsin mysterion does not occur anywhere else within the letters of Paul. The noun apokalupsin is not qualified, unlike the other occurrences where it is.¹⁷ Also, the verb sesignmenou is the only passive occurrence of the verb signō in

Paul.¹⁸

Käsemann also makes the point that in verse 27 the phrase "the obedience of faith" pertains to the ta ethnē (Käsemann translates this word as "nations") and its eventual conquest by Christian beliefs. Käsemann believes that the parallel for this phrase can be found in the hymn of

1 Tim 3:16.

He was revealed in flesh,
vindicated in spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among Gentiles,
believed in throughout the world,
taken up in glory.¹⁹ NRSV

D) Conclusion

The debate still continues within scholarship to find the answer as to the origins and placement of the Final Doxology. One theory has made the claim that the Doxology was placed at the end of chapter 14 because of Marcion's editing of Romans. Another theory was proposed to suggest that the Doxology was a scrap piece of one of Paul's letters which was tacked on at the end of Romans. Finally, one theory suggests that Romans (1-16) is actually two letters - one written to the people in Rome (1-15), and one written to the congregation in Ephesus (16).

The structure of the Doxology is in doubt because it does not follow the standard Pauline conclusion (the original may have been lost or edited). And the language and style come into doubt because there are words and phrases that can only be found within the disputed letters of Paul. But if support can be found within the section of language and

style it is in the fact that some parallels can be drawn between the authentic letter of Paul and the Doxology, therefore, suggesting that the Doxology was placed with Romans because it fit the theme of Romans and gives the epistle an appropriate closing.²⁰

Of these theories, which one would be the most palatable? The Marcion theory is a possible solution to the shortening of the letter to the Romans. But, it does not seem possible that someone from the Marcionite circle created the Final Doxology. The Doxology's key element with regards to the mysterion is the prophetic scriptures. Why would someone add the element of the Old Testament into the edited version of Romans, if it was the element of the Old Testament itself that they were trying to take out? Käsemann makes a sound argument against the theory that there were two letters sent to Ephesus, though it may be possible that a scrap of writing was added to the end of the collected letters of Paul. I would say that the Doxology was placed at the end of Romans and/or created for a fitting closing. The outcome of this statement will be demonstrated when the next section looks at the comparison between 16: 25-27 and the other verses found in Romans.

II Romans as a Whole

What is interesting about the Final Doxology is that it was placed within Romans. Here are three verses which may or may not be part of the original letter, but the Doxology still is able to fit demonstrably within the context of the original letter, even if the Doxology's structure, language and style place it as doubtful. The Doxology does not act as a concluding summary of the letter to the Romans. Rather, it is a climactic closing to many of Paul's ideas, but not all of the letter's key ideas.

In Romans 1: 19-20, Paul talks about how God is not hidden from the world but "is plain to them." God is one who has made "His eternal power and divine nature ... understood and seen through the things He has made." Between 1:19-20 and 16:25-27 there appears to be a contradiction. On the one hand there is the statement that God has made the divine nature known since the beginning of creation. On the other hand you have the Final Doxology stating that the mystery has been kept hidden for many ages and is now only being revealed. Is this a contradiction? I would argue that this is not a contradiction because of the fact that the subject of the revelation is different. At the beginning of Romans Paul is talking about the nature of God and the divine power as it has been seen through the things found in nature. In other words, there is a difference (according to the author of the Doxology) between general revelations (things that are common within everyday life) and specific revelations which must be withheld until the time is appropriate.

The author of the Doxology is not focusing on the subject of the nature of God, but rather on much deeper theological matters. For the author, there is a difference in revelation. There are some things that are always made apparent (Romans 1: 19-20) and there are things that are only revealed through time - these latter things are of a more theological nature: salvation (Romans 11: 25-26); the end times (1 Corinthians 15:51); and the interpretation of prophetic writings (Romans 16: 25-27; 1 Corinthians 13:2; 14:2).

But when is the appropriate time for the mysterion to be revealed? For Paul the key moment that the revelations of the mysterion are made known is found within the everyday life of Jesus.

The mysterion in verses 16: 26-27 is linked with the "proclamation of Jesus Christ" and is made known to the followers through the "revelation" of the mystery. It is through this revelation that the followers are better able to understand Jesus Christ, and, therefore, are able to proclaim the message of God. The "prophetic writings" were once viewed as a mystery, but they are no longer viewed this way because of the command of God. The hidden mystery of the scriptures is revealed through Jesus.²¹

But what are the influences on Paul that may have helped and contributed to the idea of a "withheld (hidden) mysterion"? Some scholars suggest that Romans 16: 25-27 describes God's overall plan of salvation.²² Ernst Käsemann is correct in suggesting that this passage is a part of the "counsel" tradition found within Jewish literature and the Qumran Community.²³ The relationship between the Jewish concept of a "counsel" (discussed in chapter # 3) and the mysterion of 16: 25-27 are similar in four areas:

- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|----------|
| 1) | a vision | - | "revelation of the mystery" | - | verse 25 |
| 2) | hidden | - | "kept secret for long ages" | - | verse 25 |
| 3) | study scriptures | - | "through the prophetic writings" | - | verse 26 |
| 4) | God gives | | "command of the eternal God" | - | verse 26 |
| | interpretations | - | | | |

In the Final Doxology, the author mentions the fact that this is "my gospel." A parallel for this may also be found within Jewish literature. Within the Wisdom of Solomon, the author tells the readers that Wisdom's mysteries will be revealed to them, but to listen and "Be instructed then by my words, and you will be profited" (6:25).²⁴

The members of the Qumran Community believed that the prophet Habakkuk

received the prophetic message but he did not understand it. It was only later on through the Teacher of Righteousness that the Community was able to realize its "true" meaning and see how the prophetic message was related to them.

... and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but he did not make known to him when time would come to an end. And as for that which He said, that he who reads may read it speedily, "interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets."

Commentary on Habakkuk 7: 1-5²⁵

Though the author of Romans does not make mention of the Teacher of Righteousness, the roles of the Teacher and Jesus are quite similar. Both are viewed as the key to the understanding of the Scriptures hidden for ages. Both are the ones chosen by God to reveal the Scriptures. And both are the figures around whom the mystery centers.

As stated above, the mysterion of Romans 16: 25-27 can be seen as a link with the Jewish concept of the mysterion being hidden but now revealed. The author supports this concept of the secrets being revealed to the Gentiles of what the prophetic writings meant by linking the word mysterion with the word "disclosure (apokalupsin)" (disclosure of the mystery), and "being made known (gnopisthentos)" (modifying mysterion).²⁶

As one can see, there are many different Jewish elements of the word mysterion found within these three verses (25 - 27): a revelation which was hidden for many years; a revelation connected with the prophetic writings of the Jewish scriptures; and a revelation which is only revealed as a result of the event of an important figure. For the author the mystery was revealed to the Gentiles at the command of God (verse 26) by His revealing the hidden message (verse 25) of the prophetic writings (verse 25) in order that

they may be able to proclaim the "Good News" of Jesus.

Another influence to consider when one reads the Doxology in light of the times of Paul, is the fact that the Doxology appears to have an apostolic theme running through it. When the author states that the mysterion is "now disclosed, through the prophetic writings," this sounds similar to the writings of the Gospel in which the prophecies were being fulfilled by Jesus and His actions.

In Luke 4: 14-30 there is the story of Jesus entering the synagogue, reading Isaiah and declaring, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (verse 21).²⁷ In Matthew there are several occurrences where the author states that, "This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet ..." (Matthew 8:17).²⁸ Here we have quite similar parallels. In both cases the key element to the revelation and the fulfillment of prophecy is the use of scripture.

Therefore, whoever wrote the Final Doxology may have been familiar with both Jewish literature and the apostolic movement. Though this is not to say that all these influences were a definite factor, it is apparent, nevertheless, that there are similarities which must not be overlooked or dismissed. There is a correlation and interconnection of the concept of a mystery being revealed through prophecy both with the Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Qumran Community and the Gospels, where a divine presence has allowed for the release of revelations.

But if this mysterion shows threads of Jewish influences within its workings, how would this relate to Romans 11:25?

The two uses of mysterion are not contradictory to one another, they are similar,

and yet different. They are similar in the sense that they both make reference to prophetic writing, and also, they both link the salvation of the Gentiles with the mysterion: "until the full number of Gentiles have come in" (11:25) and "is made known to all the Gentiles" (16:26).

The mysterion found within both verses differs in its presentation. Within Romans 11: 25-27 the mysterion that is presented is specific. Paul is actually mentioning what the mystery is and what it is all about. But within 16: 25-27 the mysterion is not told. Rather, 16: 25-27 is a general statement describing the process of the fulfillment of the mysterion and the result of revealing a mystery "to bring about the obedience of faith" (verse 27).

Even if Paul did not write this Doxology, the author was keeping in line with the Pauline theme of the concept of mysterion. There are many characteristics that are parallel to those in other occurrences of the word mysterion within the undisputed epistles of Paul:

1. kept secret for long ages (1 Cor 2:7)
2. from God (1 Cor 2:7)
3. linked to revelation (1 Cor 2:10)
4. linked to prophecy (1 Cor 14:2, 15:51; Romans 11:25)

Paul's mysterion is hierarchical. Romans 16:25-27 also expresses this point. In 1 Corinthians 2:7 the mysterion was described as being hidden within God and predetermined by God "before the ages." This same idea is found in Romans 16: 25-27. The author of Romans describes how the mysterion "was kept secret for long ages," and it is "disclosed" by God. In 1 Corinthians 2:10 it is through the Spirit that the mysterion is revealed. In Romans 16:25, though the Doxology does not mention the Spirit, the

concept and the process of the mysterion being revealed are present. This process of revelation comes about through the gifts of tongues and prophecy (1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2), and by the use of interpretation (peser). In 1 Corinthians 15: 54-55 and Romans 11: 26-27 Paul uses biblical texts in order to add support to the mysterion that was revealed. In Romans 16: 25-27, the Doxology states that not only is the mysterion revealed, but it is also made known "through the prophetic writings."

We have talked thus far as to the Jewish influence on the word mysterion as it is found within 16:25, but are there any Hellenistic influences running through the Doxology?

Shortly before this Doxology, Paul makes mention of the fact that "The God of Peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20). NRSV

R. E. Witt makes the suggestion that Romans 16:20 may have come about as a result of the powerful influence that the cult of Isis had on Rome. Within the mystery cult Isis was considered to be the Queen of Peace, and it is one of the followers of Isis - an author by the name of Apuleius - who writes a hymn about Isis describing her as the one who "treads down Tartarus."²⁹

But is one reference to a Hellenistic god/goddess sufficient enough to constitute a connection with Romans 16:20 and finally to Romans 16: 25-27? It is a rather weak link. Within each culture's theology there is a god/goddess associated with peace. In Rome an altar was erected to the personification of Peace (Pax).³⁰ In Greek mythology Themis gave birth to Eirene (peace).³¹ And within the Hebrew Bible the word peace is used in a variety of forms:

- 1) a peace offering - Ex 18:23, 20:24; Lev 3: 1-9, 7: 11-37; 1 Sam 10:8, 11:15; 2 Chr 19:1, 29:35;
- 2) a peace that is political - Josh 9:15; Judg 4:17; 1 Sam 7:14; 1 Kings 5:12; 2 Chr 19:1; Eccl 3:8.
- 3) God gives and takes away peace - Ps 29:11; Is 26:12, 48:22, 57:21; Jer 23:17; Ezek 13:16.
- 4) God of peace - Is 9:6.³²

Paul, on the other hand, does not use peace within the context of religious ceremonies or politics. Rather, for Paul "peace" comes from God and it is a title of God.

- 1) from God - Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; Philem 3 - all of these verses are part of the introduction of the epistle.
- 2) with God - Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 1:11, 13:11; Phil 4:9.
- 3) equated with the Gospel - Rom 3:17, 10:15; 1 Cor 16:11.
- 4) God of peace - Rom 15:33, 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23.

From looking at the different instances of "peace" used by Paul, it does not seem likely that Paul would have been borrowing from the cult hymns of the time. Paul does not link peace with any sort of religious rituals or political treaties. For Paul, peace is only connected with God or as a gift of God. If Witt or other scholars were able to make additional connections, then the case might be looked at more closely. But Witt's thesis falls short on two accounts: first, even though the followers of Isis had a great temple built

during the reign of Caligula, just a few years before the letter of Romans was written,³³ this does not give validity to the idea that there is a strong connection between Isis and Paul; second, there is a major problem with Witt's use of the quotation by Apuleius. Apuleius wrote the hymn in the second century C.E.³⁴, and to support the idea that both Paul and Apuleius borrowed this quotation from an old traditional hymn of the Isis cult might be relying on an anachronism.

Nevertheless, this chapter has set out and demonstrated that even though the authorship of the Final Doxology is in question, there are parallels and links with the other instances of the word mysterion which cannot be dismissed. Whoever wrote the Doxology not only had an understanding of how Paul uses the word mysterion, but also had an understanding of how Jewish literature treated the term.

Endnotes

¹ Paul W. Meyer, "Romans" in Harper's Bible Commentary, ed. James L. Mays, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 1167.

² T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans - and Others," in Romans Debate, ed. Karl P. Donfried, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), pp. 7-11. C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 11-12, 262-263. C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1960), pp. XVI-XVII.

³ Clyde L. Manschreck, A History of Christianity in the World, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), pp. 31-32.

⁴ Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. XVII.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. XVII.

⁶ Ernest Best, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 173. Roy A. Harrisville, Augsburg Commentary on the new Testament: Romans, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), p. 250.

⁷ Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1980), p. 422.

⁸ Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), p. 456. Karl Herman Schelkle, The Epistle to the Romans, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), p. 261.

⁹ Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 257.

¹⁰ Calvin J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context, third edition, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 754.

¹³ Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, p. 423. F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 284. John Knox and Gerald R. Cragg suggest that the framework of the Final Doxology is similar to Eph. 3: 20-21. John Knox and Gerald R. Cragg, The Interpreter's Bible: Acts and Romans, vol. XII, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al., (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 668.

¹⁴ Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, p. 424. Barrett express the point that the authenticity of this verse is in doubt due to the use of the genitive which is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 257.

¹⁵ Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 263.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁷ See Romans 8:19; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 12:1; Galatians 1:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; Acts 1:1. J. K. Elliott, "The Language and Style of the Concluding Doxology to the Epistle to the Romans," Zeitschrift für Aelteren Kirche, LXXII (1981), pp. 125-126. Barrett points to the fact that the last phrase first suggests an ascription of Glory to God, but instead the author forgets the dative and ascribes the glory to Jesus. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, pp. 262-263.

¹⁸ Elliott, "The Language and Style of the Concluding Doxology to the Epistle to the Romans," p. 126.

¹⁹ Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, p. 427.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 427. Knox and Cragg, Interpreter's Bible: Acts and Romans, p. 668. Nygren, Commentary on Romans, p. 457.

²¹ C. K. Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 263. T. Fahy, "Epistle to the Romans 16: 25-27," Irish Theological Review, XXVIII, pp. 238-239. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans, p. 753. Knox and Cragg, Interpreter's Bible: Acts and Romans, p. 668.

²² John Koenig, "From Mystery to Ministry: Paul as Interpreter of Charismatic Gifts," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXXIII (Spring and Summer, 1978), p. 172. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Anchor Bible: Romans - A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), p. 753.

²³ Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on the Romans, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1980), p. 425.

²⁴ Also see Enoch 37: 3-4 for a similar parallel.

²⁵ See Commentary on Habakkuk 2: 1-10; 8: 1-5. Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, fourth edition, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1995).

²⁶ G. Bornkamm, "Mysterion," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, A-N, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 821.

²⁷ Also found in Matthew 13: 54-58 and Mark 6: 1-6.

²⁸ Other occurrences of this phrase within Matthew are 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:18; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 24:34; 26:54, 56; 27: 9, 35.

²⁹ R. E. Witt, Isis in the Graeco-Roman World, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 263.

³⁰ Paul Mackendrick, The Mute Stones Speak: The Story of Archaeology in Italy, second edition, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), pp. 201-214.

³¹ C. Kerenyi, The Gods of the Greeks, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 102.

³² James Strong, Abingdon's Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984).

³³ Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 6.

³⁴ Apuleius (ca. 123 - after 161) wrote the Metamorphoses. Luther H. Martin, Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 16. For a detailed discussion of Apuleius see Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

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