

THE MEANING OF ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΑ IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14:2

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ABSTRACT

Mystery (μυστήριον) is a quasi-technical, very important theme in the New Testament. This article aims to shed some light on the meaning of this concept in 1Co 14:2. The author defines mystery as “a part of the wise and sovereign plan of God about the eschaton, which is partially present in the Old Testament but still hidden, being revealed according to the will of God only through special revelation.” After presenting four dissonant interpretations on the subject, the author contends for the concept above in 1 Co 14:2. The novelty in the article is the concept of mystery as being revealed through tongues, while at the same time its content remains veiled when the discourse is not interpreted.

KEYWORDS

1 Corinthians 12-14; Mystery; Gift of tongues.

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Gladd, in his doctoral dissertation on μυστήριον in 1 Corinthians, says that “any scholar who has attempted a systematic treatment of the Pauline μυστήριον stumbles at 1 Cor 13:2 and then really begins to falter around 14:2.”¹ Raymond Brown called 1 Cor 14:2 “a very difficult passage”, but also says that it is “not very important for the Pauline *mysterion*”.² G. K. Barker, after

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¹ Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 191.

² Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term “Mystery” in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 47. Also quoted in Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 191.

commenting other occurrences 1 Cor, says that “it is even more difficult to determine the force of mystery in 14:2.”³ The meaning of μυστήρια in 1 Cor 14:2 is laconic, indeed. Mystery appears in the plural, it is not defined, and relates to a phenomenon that is a colossal matter of dispute itself, the gift of tongues.

The fact that the sense of mystery is elusive did not prevent scholars from proposing variegated meanings for mystery in 1 Cor 14:2. A. E. Harvey, for example, defends that *mysterion* in the New Testament is used sometimes with the Semitic background of *raz/sôd* and in other instances with influence of the Greek concept linked to the religions of mystery. The Semitic mystery, in Harvey’s conception has the idea of a mystery destined to be revealed, while the Greek conception involves something never to be spoken about or showed, but to initiate.⁴ Among the Semitic uses in the NT, Harvey lists Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1-10; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 6:19; Col 1:26; Thess 2:7, and the instances in Revelation (1:20; 17:5, 7). Among the NT uses of mystery with at least a little influence (“some echo”) of the Greek notion Harvey presents the use in the gospels (Matt 13:2; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10); 1 Cor 4:1; 14:2; Eph 5:32, and 1 Tim 3:9, 10.

About 1 Cor 14, after considering that the Corinthian “hearers and readers may have been particularly well placed to pick up allusions to pagan institutions,” Harvey affirms that there are Greek overtones in this instance because the mysteries referred in the text are spoken in tongues, making impossible the public understanding.⁵ G. W. Barker seems to agree with Harvey since he affirms that 1 Corinthians 14:2, together with 4:1 and 13:2 presents a polemical use, “against certain developments within the Christian assembly.”⁶

Another position is that Paul is using a non-technical aspect of mystery. Thiselton, for example, says: “Elsewhere Paul often uses this Greek word to denote what was once hidden but has now been disclosed in the era of eschatological fulfillment (cf. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 15:51). However, every writer uses termi-

³ G. W. Barker, “Mystery,” in Bromiley, G. W. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 453.

⁴ A. E. Harvey, “The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible,” *JTS* (1980) 31, 330. In another page Harvey defines the Semitic concept as “a secret design, known only to God, which is due to be revealed to certain privileged individuals” (329).

⁵ Harvey proposes the following translation for 1 Cor 14:2: “he speaks only to God, for no one (else) hears (understands), even though in the spirit he is divulging mysteries!” Harvey, “The use of mystery,” 332.

⁶ G. W. Barker, “Mystery,” in G. W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 453. Barker contends that the New Testamental use of mystery is a kind of development of the Hellenistic usage. He defines *mysterion* in the NT as “the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God, which, though hidden from human reason, are being disclosed by God’s revealing act to those for whom such knowledge is intended.” He also emphasizes that, although revealed, mystery keeps being a mystery because of its dependence on God’s act of disclosing it. (452)

nology in context-dependent ways that may modify a more usual meaning, and Paul's usual meaning cannot make sense here without undermining his own argument."⁷ Thus, he agrees with Blomberg that mysteries in 1 Cor 14:2 simply refer to something that "no one understands."⁸ Fee also agrees and presents the argument that mysteries in the common sense "would scarcely need to be spoken back to God."⁹ Ciampa aligns himself with this understanding making clear that mysteries in 1 Cor 14 are the result of revelation, but the person who speaks them does not understand:

In marked contrast, those who speak in tongues are not given any special understanding of mysteries (at least not as part of that particular gift), but the ability to speak them to God... In fact, not only are they expressing content, but it is Spirit-inspired content of the type that a prophet could only dream of comprehending!¹⁰

Finally, a very specific interpretation is defended by Gladd who says that 1 Cor 14:2 "probably refers to an individual participating in angelic worship, similar to the situation at Qumran in the songs of sabbath sacrifice".¹¹ Bockmuehl defends this same interpretation.¹²

There are, therefore, different ways to understand mysteries 1 Corinthians 14:2: (1) a Greek conception of mysteries as secrets related to pagan religions; (2) the non-technical use of mystery referring to something not understandable;

⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000), 1085.

⁸ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 236. See also C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 100; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 281. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 101-102.

⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 656. Calderón also agrees with this interpretation: "Sin embargo, en armonía con el uso más general del término por Pablo, quizá deba entenderse como verdades o realidades profundas que la persona solo comparte con Dios y que otros, incluso cristianos, no entienden." Carlos Calderón, "Comentário Exegético a 1 Coríntios 14 (Primera de dos partes)," *Kairós* 43 (2008), 47.

¹⁰ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 671.

¹¹ Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 2009, 265.

¹² "But if Paul in 1 Cor 14:2 refers to the charismatic worshipper conversant in 'tongues of angels' (13:2) as one who 'speaks mysteries' to God in his spirit, it seems a reasonable working hypothesis to locate such notions – at least in Paul's mind – in the realm of Jewish apocalyptic and early mysticism (cf. on 2 Cor 12:1ff. below). The apostle is asking those who gaze upon the heavenly mysteries to respect the edification of the church and to limit their use of this gift in corporate worship to those instances when the meaning can be intelligibly communicated (and thus fully revealed) to all congregation." Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 170.

(3) mysteries as things hidden but now revealed just to the one who speaks; and (4) mysteries as the content of the angelic worship.

Thus, in what follows, I aim to clarify the use of mystery in 1 Cor 14:2 in the following steps: (1) I will investigate the Pauline use of the term mystery in all its occurrences; (2) and analyze 1 Cor 14:1-5 with special reference to the relation between mystery and the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Because of restraints of space I will proceed with this analysis in an introductory manner and keep my focus solely on Paul.

1. MYSTERY IN PAUL

The first occurrence of mystery in the Pauline letters in canonical order is in Romans 11:25: “Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”.¹³ Beale and Gladd affirm that the mystery here is the reversion of the expectation that Gentiles would come to the Lord through the Jews.¹⁴ This position is exaggeratedly narrow. There are more hidden things than the order of salvation in Romans 11. I agree with Schreiner that “the partial hardening and future salvation of Israel *are part of the* content of the mystery that has previously been hidden but is now revealed” (italics mine).¹⁵

Rom 11:25 opens a concluding paragraph to the section that started in chapter 9. Paul deals with the hardening of the Jews, God’s anger, rejection, and sovereignty, the salvation of the Gentiles through Christ because of the hardening of the Jews, and finally the salvation of the Jews through Christ because of the jealousy of the Gentiles. Paul presents all as God’s intended and hidden-for-long-time plan, i.e., the mystery of Rom 11:25.¹⁶

In Rom 16:25-26 Paul again uses the mystery in a concluding statement and a very compact one. The revelation of the mystery is used as a measure in which God will strengthen the Romans. Firstly, mystery is equalized in a

¹³ All biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless informed otherwise.

¹⁴ G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 88.

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 821.

¹⁶ Santos sums it up by saying: “In this passage, the mystery is that: a) Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in, and b) all Israel (i.e. the remnant and the Gentiles) will be saved.” Daniel Santos, “The Meaning of Mystery in Romans 11:25,” *Fides Reformata* 17 (2012): 45-59. I think Santos is right in his reading of the text, but in the interpretation of “all Israel” as referring to the church. With Murray I think it refers to ethnic Israel: “Both elements are clearly expressed: the hardening of Israel is partial not total, temporary not final, ‘in part’ indicating the former, ‘untill the fullness of the Gentiles be come in’ the latter. The restoration of Israel was implied in verse 24 but not categorically stated. Now we have express assurance. The word ‘mystery’ is itself certification of the assurance which divine revelation imparts”. John Murray, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 92-93.

parallelistic way with “my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” Secondly, it is said that it was kept secret for long ages. Thirdly, it has been disclosed, and fourthly it has been made known to all nations.¹⁷

In Romans, then, mystery is a summarized way to speak about God’s sovereign plan in the history of salvation as it has its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, its centripetal center. This plan is both revealed and concealed in the Old Testament and is exposed by God through Paul. It can refer specifically to God’s plan of hardening the Jews, followed by the salvation of Gentiles, followed by the salvation of the Jews or more broadly to the gospel that Paul preaches (the great subject of Romans).

There are five occurrences of mystery in 1 Corinthians (2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2, and 15:51) and one which is text-critically disputed (2:1).¹⁸ My literal translation for 1 Cor 2.1-2 is “And even I, when I went to you, brothers, I went not according to superiority of word or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God. For I judged not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and this one crucified”.¹⁹ Here, Paul qualifies the mystery as being “of God,” opposes it to “superiority of word or of [human] wisdom” and, then, explains it in verse two as Jesus crucified.

The next occurrence happens in 1 Cor 2:7. The main concept of 2 Cor 2:6-10 is not mystery, but wisdom.²⁰ Paul opposes the concept of wisdom of his age with “θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην.” The ESV translates it as “hidden wisdom of God in a secret” and the NIV as “God’s wisdom, a mystery”.²¹ Gladd favors the interpretation “wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery” (NET).²² Bockmuehl understands this occurrence in the light of Qumran as referring to “God’s eschatological design for the salvation of His people.”²³ He also says that this mystery is related to salvation through the

¹⁷ See Grant R. Osborne, *Romans* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 417.

¹⁸ We will consider 1 Cor 2:1 as having a reference to mystery based in the defense present in Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 123-126. See also Raymond F. Collins and Daniel J. Harrington, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 118.

¹⁹ My literal translation of GNT, 4th ed.: Κάγω ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον οὐ καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον.

²⁰ 15 occurrences in 1:17—2:13.

²¹ See commentaries on the text and translations in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 241ss.

²² Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 123-133. “The mystery is the exalted, kingly Messiah affixed to the cross” (156). Carson also defends that “ἐν μυστηρίῳ” is qualifying “σοφίαν” instead of “τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην”. D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New”. In D. A. Carson, Peter Thomas O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 417.

²³ Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 161.

cross still to be completed.²⁴ Mystery, I think, is the way in which the wisdom of God is hidden. This wisdom in mystery was foreordained before the ages, was related to Christ as Savior, and was revealed by the Spirit. What is mystery, then, in Corinthians 2? I agree with Gladd that in this chapter mystery is a specific reference to the crucifixion of the king Jesus.²⁵

Many commentators see the meaning of mystery in the next occurrence, 1 Cor 4:1, in which Paul presents himself as οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ, as referring to the gospel revealed in Jesus Christ.²⁶ But these judgements are based more on the content of mystery in 1 Corinthians 2 than on the text itself. That is the problem with the occurrences of mystery in 1 Cor 4:1; 13:2 and 14:2. They are the only Pauline occurrences in the plural and they do not have much in the context to explain their content. In the next section we will deal with these instances.

First Corinthians 15:51-52 is another instance which has a clear definition of a specific mystery. “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed.” Garland says correctly that in this text “the mystery is not that the living and the dead will be on a pair with one another at the parousia, but that both the living and the dead will undergo the prerequisite transformation so that they can attain incorruptibility and immortality.”²⁷ Gladd presents as an error the proposal that just the transformation of the living without the dead is the mystery referred by Paul.²⁸

Mystery appears six times in Ephesians. O’Brien defends the first (1:9) as being the most important.²⁹ In this text Paul defines the revelation of the mystery as the way in which God lavished upon the Ephesians the riches of his grace “in all wisdom and insight”. This mystery made known according to the purpose set forth in Christ was a plan for the fullness of time. This plan and will was the unification of all things in heaven and earth in Christ.³⁰

²⁴ Ibid., 165-166.

²⁵ Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 123-153.

²⁶ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 100; Richard L. Pratt and Max E. Anders, *I & II Corinthians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 60; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 170; Craig Blomberg, *I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 29.

²⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 743.

²⁸ Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 249-254.

²⁹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 110.

³⁰ “The mystery which God has graciously made known refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe (‘all things’) in Christ as the focal point.” O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 112. In this same tone, Hoehner comments: “In summary, believers have experienced the abundance of God’s grace in the redemption of Christ and in provision of all insight

Ephesians 3 presents one of the clearest texts about the mystery in Paul. The revelation of the mystery is equalized with the stewardship of God's grace. The way Paul gained knowledge of the mystery was through revelation and because of that Paul has insight into the mystery of Christ (Christ as content). This mystery was kept hidden from the prior generations, "but now" was revealed to the apostles and prophets through the Holy Spirit. Finally, in verse 6 Paul explicits what is the mystery: "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel". Note that considering what Paul said about the mystery in Eph 1:9, this definition is only part of the whole mystery.

Hoehner, after presenting an encyclopedia-like explanation of the term, says that "in Ephesians the mystery is that believing Jews and Gentiles now are one in the body of Christ". He contends the use in 5:32 is different from other instances in the letter.³¹ Beale and Gladd affirm that the mystery in Eph 5:32 is that the union of the first couple in marriage typologically represents Christ and the church.³² This is too narrow. Although this idea is part of the mystery, mystery in Eph 5:32 points to the fact that all marital union is made to reflect Christ and the church and only in doing that it finds real unity. In sum, in line with Eph 1.9, Christ is the one who sums up man and woman in marriage.

The last instance of mystery in Ephesians is in 6:19-20: "and [pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." After defining mystery in 3:6, Paul says: "Of this gospel I was made a minister". Although he does not use the term gospel in chapter one, he uses mystery in the context of defining redemption (1:7). Therefore, mystery of the gospel here refers to the same concept of chapter 3.

Mystery is a broad concept in Ephesians which speaks a about the unification of everything in and with Christ in the fullness of time: heavenly and earthly things, Jews and Gentiles, husband and wife, and Christ and the church. The mystery is well explained by Thielmann who affirms that in the due time "Christ will emerge as the organizing principle of all creation".³³

and wisdom. This wisdom and insight have made known to them the secret plan of God, namely, that at the fullness of time God will unite in his dear Son Christ all the things in heaven and on earth." Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 225.

³¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 432-433.

³² Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 181.

³³ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 67. Beale and Gladd put it nicely also: "The main focus of the revelation of the mystery is that Christ is the point of reintegration and restauration of the original cosmic unity and harmony that had been lost at the fall of humanity, a fragmentation that had affected not only earthly but also the heavenly realm." Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 150.

There is a double occurrence of mystery in Colossians 1. In the context Paul is again speaking about his ministry (stewardship from God that was given to me). Mystery in Col 1:26 is an explanation for the “complete understanding of the word of God” in the prior verse.³⁴ This mystery was “hidden for ages and generations but now is revealed to his saints”. In Col 1:27 Paul defines mystery: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Dunn incurs in illegitimate totality transfer when he affirms that in this text “the mystery of how the cosmos was created and holds together is personalized: ‘Christ in (each of) you’.”³⁵ As the context makes clear, Paul is highlighting the Gentiles as the ones to whom Christ became the hope of glory. Thus, mystery here is the salvation of the Gentiles through union with Christ.³⁶

In Col 2:2-3, Christ is the mystery: “to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Witherington III is partially right in his assessment: “So, the secret is less a set of ideas than a person and what God has done, is doing and will do through that person, Jesus Christ.”³⁷ The secret is both.

Similar to the last occurrence in Ephesians, Paul asks the Colossians (4.3-4) to pray that God open a door for the word, which would be an opportunity to declare the mystery of Christ. There is here, again, an intimate relationship between the mystery, the word of God, and Paul’s ministry.

Hence, in Colossians the mystery is the full comprehension of the Word of God that was hidden but is now revealed to the saints, being both a concept that Paul wants to preach and an existential relationship with Christ, the hope, and the personified mystery.³⁸

There is only one instance of mystery in 2 Thess (2:7): “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.” Paul’s focus is still the end of time, but now he

³⁴ Not just for the word of God. Contra Margaret Y. MacDonald and Daniel J. Harrington, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 80, and Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 155.

³⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 122.

³⁶ Bockmuehl prefers the translation “Christ among you” instead of “Christ in you”. He sees two levels of identification of mystery in Colossians 1–2: (a) the word of God, meaning the gospel and its proclamation, and (b) the salvation of the Gentiles. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 185-186.

³⁷ Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 147.

³⁸ “Full knowledge of ‘the mystery of God’ i.e., the sum of God’s salvific purposes, is equivalent to full knowledge of Christ who resides in heaven and with whom the believer’s future life of glory is already stored up.” Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 193.

presents a negative aspect of it.³⁹ Again, the explanation of Beale and Gladd is more narrow than it should be: “the revealed mystery is that the prophecy of Daniel is beginning unexpectedly because the latter day foe has not yet come in bodily form, yet he is already inspiring his ‘lawless’ works of deception and persecution.”⁴⁰ Green, on another hand, completely misses the point when he says that mystery is related with “secret and sacred rites of various religions of that era, and it is likely that Paul had some such cult in mind”.⁴¹ Weima interprets the text as “the mystery which is lawlessness” and adheres to the interpretation of mystery as something that was secret but it is now revealed. He stresses that even revealed, it is still hidden in his operation and not completely possible of understanding, even for those who have access to the revelation.⁴²

There are two instances of mystery in 1 Timothy, both in chapter 3. The first (1 Tim 3.9) is a laconic one affirming that the deacons are supposed to “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The second is in 1 Tim 3.16 and is called “μέγα... εὐσεβείας μυστήριον”, which should be confessed. The creedal statement that follows is the definition of this mystery of godliness: “He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory.” Beale and Gladd point that exist two parts in the mystery as presented in 1 Timothy. First, “that Christ functions as God and is now the object of personal faith and trust.”⁴³ The second part of the mystery is that “Christ’s resurrected existence would not assume the body of old earthly existence, but would be fashioned after a new body far more glorious.”⁴⁴ This conception, although bringing important insights to aspects of the mystery in 1 Timothy, is not exactly how Paul uses the term. Tower is nearer of the Pauline use when he defines: “Here the term mystery describes the apostolic faith in Pauline terms as the revelation of salvation in Christ as proclaimed in his gospel.”⁴⁵ Broader still is the definition of Knight III: “the revealed truth of the Christian faith”.⁴⁶ About the second reference to mystery he says that it means “the revelation of Jesus Christ in which Christian existence has its origin.”⁴⁷

³⁹ Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 215.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 317.

⁴² Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), Kindle edition, 13041. Weima quotes Witherington III on this. Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 222.

⁴³ Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 249. Italics original.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 255.

⁴⁵ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006), 264.

⁴⁶ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 169.

⁴⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 277.

What is the result of this introductory analysis?

Mystery receives a few complements in Paul, being defined as “τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ” (1 Cor 2:1), “μυστηρίων θεοῦ” (1 Cor 4:1), “τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ” (Eph 1:9), “τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ” (Eph 3:4), “μέγα” (Eph 5:32), “μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου” (Eph 6:19), “τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ” (Col 2:2), “τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ” (Col 4:3), “μυστήριον... τῆς ἀνομίας” (2 Thess 2:7), “τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως” (1 Tim 3:9) and “μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον” (1 Tim 3:16).

Besides that, that are times in which Paul clearly presents the content of the mystery. In Rom 11:25 the mystery is that “a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”. In 1 Cor 15:51-52, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 shall be changed.” In Eph 1.9-10 the mystery is defined as “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth”, in Eph 3:6 as “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” and in 5:32 as “Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν”. In Col the mystery is defined as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27) and in 2:2 just as “Christ”. The last direct definition we have of the mystery in Paul is in 1 Tim 3:16: “He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” These definitions should prevent us from defining mystery as only the hidden part of the revealed knowledge, as does Beale and Gladd, although the exercise is valid.

Carson presents the characteristics of mystery in Paul as being related to revelation, hidden in the Torah, dealing with theodicy, focusing “primarily on the justification of God in the gospel of a crucified Messiah (1 Cor 2:6-10; cf. 2 Cor 4:3-18), but also in revelation concerning the divine reasoning behind the hard-heartedness of Israel (Rom 9–11),” and with an eschatological dimension.⁴⁸

Mystery is a technical term in Paul. The standard definition of mystery as hidden but now revealed is not precise. Since the context speaks many times about the revelation of the mystery, this means that for Paul the revelation is not part of the concept of mystery, but what God can make to make the knowledge of the mystery available to his saints. Without revelation the mystery is wrapped in hiddenness and ignorance.⁴⁹ Even present in the Old Testament

⁴⁸ Cason, “Mystery and Fulfillment”, 414-415.

⁴⁹ The terms used by Paul to speak about revelation of the mystery are: ἀποκάλυψις (Rom 16:25; Eph 3:3), φανερώω (Rom 16:25; Col 1:26; Col 4:4), and γνωρίζω (Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9; 3:3; Col 1:27), γινώσκω (1 Cor 2:8), ἀποκαλύπτω (1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5; 2 Thess 2:6, 8), λέγω (1 Cor 15:51; Col 4:3-4), φωτίζω (Eph 3:9). The expression Paul uses in Colossians is worthy noticing as the result of the revela-

and revealed in the New Testament, the mystery still carries the idea of continuous hiddenness.⁵⁰ The mystery is part of the eschatological plan of God.⁵¹ The work of Christ is the center of the mystery.⁵² The Spirit is the main person responsible for its revelation.⁵³ The mystery is connected with the wisdom of

tion of the mystery: “εις πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ”. In Rom 16:25 the target of this revelation are “πάντα τὰ ἔθνη”. The recipients of this revelation in Ephesians 3:5 are “τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι” and in Eph 3:10-11 the church is the medium through which the wisdom of God is publicized “ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις”. In Col 1:26 the mystery is revealed “τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ”. In other occurrences, the mystery is revealed to those brothers and sisters. The expressions used to speak about hiddenness and ignorance are: ἀγνοέω (Rom 11:25); “χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου” (Rom 16:25); ἀποκρύπτω (1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26); “ἦν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν” (1 Cor 2:8); “Ἄ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπᾶσιν αὐτόν Ἄ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπᾶσιν αὐτόν” (1 Cor 2:9); and “ὁ ἑτέρας γενεᾶς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων” (Eph 3:5).

⁵⁰ Revealed in the Old Testament: in Rom 11:25-27 Paul connects the mystery to Isa 59:20-21 and Jer 31:33-34 using the formula “καθὼς γέγραπται”. In Rom 16:25-27 Paul says that now the mystery has been revealed through the “γραφῶν προφητικῶν”. In the context of 1 Cor 15:51, Paul quotes Isa 25:8 and Hos 13:14 introducing it formally with “τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος” (cf. 1 Cor 15:54-55). For a deeper view on this matter and more occurrences, see Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*. On the aspect of the mystery as being still hidden even after revealed, Beale and Gladd comment: “The term mystery appears to possess two levels of hiddenness: ‘temporary hiddenness’ and ‘permanent hiddenness.’ By ‘temporary hiddenness’ we mean the partially hidden nature of revelation that is undisclosed over a period of time that eventually gives way to a final, more complete form of revelation. ‘Permanent hiddenness,’ on the other hand, is more concerned with the ongoing hidden nature of mystery. Even when the revelation has reached its completed state of disclosure, the fuller meaning of the revelation remains elusive to some individuals.” Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 60. See also Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 432.

⁵¹ The aspects of the mystery related to eschatology and God’s sovereignty are commonly interconnected: Rom 11:25-27 shows this characteristic in the context, but also in the use of the expression “πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν”. Rom 16:25 uses the expression “φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν”. 1 Cor 2:7 focuses more on the sovereignty: “ἦν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν”. Eph 1:9-10 presents both aspects: “κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἦν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν”, 3:5 uses the eschatological “ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη” and 3:9-11 “μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ πάντα κτίσαντι... κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἦν ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν”. In Col 3:25-26, “τὸ μυστήριον” is an appositive to “τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ” and God is the one who reveals it “νῦν δὲ”. For this reason, the mystery is called mystery of God a few times.

⁵² It is evident that Christ is the center of the concept of mystery in the definitions and when the mystery is defined as mystery of Christ. There are other evidences also: In Rom 11:25 Christ is “ὁ ῥύόμενος”. In 2 Cor 2 the crucifixion has a special focus (1 Cor 2:2; 8). In 1 Cor 15 Christ is the one in whom believers have victory (1 Cor 15:57). Ephesians affirms that the purpose of the ages was made in Jesus Christ (Eph 3.11). In Col 2:3, after being defined as the content of the mystery, Christ is presented as the one “ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοί”. Christ is the one who “ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τὴ ἐπιφανεῖα τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ”.

⁵³ 1 Cor 2.1-10; 13-14; and Eph 3:5 make this point clear.

God which he wants to share with his servants.⁵⁴ It is in this sense that Paul connects himself to the mystery of God.⁵⁵

Therefore, mystery in Paul is a part of the wise and sovereign plan of God about the eschaton, which is present in part in the Old Testament but still hidden, being revealed according to the will of God only through special revelation. In the next section we will analyze how this definition can help our understanding of mysteries in 1 Cor 14:1-2 and how this text can illuminate our comprehension of mystery.

2. FIRST CORINTHIANS 14:1-5⁵⁶

Paul starts this pericope with an imperative that connects it with the prior chapter, in which love is presented as a καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν (far excelling way, 1 Cor 12:31). 1 Corinthians 12–14 forms a section that uses the ABA structure, which is very common in 1 Corinthians.⁵⁷ This first verse of chapter 14, indeed, connects the whole section presenting “pursue the love” (chapter 13) and “*eagerly desire the spiritual [gifts]*” (chapter 12) as parallel ideas.⁵⁸ The μᾶλλον δὲ (but specially) introduces what Paul mainly

⁵⁴ In 1 Cor 2 there is a clear opposition between the “σοφία ἀνθρώπων” (1 Cor 2:5) on one side and “θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην” (1 Cor 2:7) and “σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου,” on the other (1 Cor 2:6). In Eph 3:10 mystery appears related to “πολυποικίλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ”. On the other hand, Rom 11:25-27 presents the opposite side of the wisdom of God as “ἐαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι”.

⁵⁵ In Rom 16:25, Paul equates mystery with “εὐαγγέλιόν μου”. In 1 Cor 4:1 he calls himself an “οἰκονόμος μυστηρίων θεοῦ”. In Eph 3:2 Paul quotes “τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, [ὅτι] κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον”. In Eph 6:19-20 Paul presents himself as an “πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει” of “τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου”. In Col 1:25, Paul is the “διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ” and in 4:2 he asks the Colossians to pray that he can “λαλῆσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ”.

⁵⁶ My literal translation of the text is: “1 Pursue the love, eagerly desire the spiritual [gifts], but specially in order that you might prophesy 2 for the one who speaks in tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one listens, but in spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But the one who prophesies to men speaks edification, exhortation and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in tongues edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 But I want that all of you speak in tongues, but even more that you prophesy. But greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues unless he interprets in order that the church receives edification.”

⁵⁷ José Enrique Aguilar Chiu, *1 Cor 12-14: Literary Structure and Theology* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2007). It is also worth noting that 12.31 and 14.1 form an inclusio to chapter 13. See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1987), 654. See also Camille Focant, “1 Corinthiens 13: Analyse Rhétorique et Analyse de Structures,” in R. Bieringer, *The Corinthian Correspondence* (Leuven: University Press, 1996), 199-245.

⁵⁸ Speaking about the second imperative of the text, Fee comments: “What must be emphasized is that this imperative is now to be understood singularly in light of the exhortation to love that has preceded it. If the two imperatives are not kept together, the point of the entire succeeding argument is missed.” He also defines “τὰ πνευματικά” as different from “τὰ χαρίσματα” in the sense that the last is more generic and the first applies specifically to “utterances inspired by the Spirit”. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 654-655.

wants to tackle, that the spiritual gift of prophecy should be preferred to the gift of speaking in tongues.

This chapter clearly concerns the public worship and values the edification of all members.⁵⁹ In this context, the gift of prophecy should be preferred to tongues. The problem is that both these gifts have a hotly debated meaning.

The Pentecostal view of prophecy is that it comprehends “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, intelligible messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people.”⁶⁰ The Reformed position affirms that prophecy is “healthy preaching, proclamation, or teaching pastorally applied for the appropriation of gospel truth and gospel promise, in their own context of situation, to help others.”⁶¹ There are more views in the middle positions.⁶² In general I agree with Grudem’s proposal, which affirms that the New Testament prophecy was different from the Old Testament prophecy in the level of authority, being a message from God interpreted and announced by human and fallible efforts.⁶³ It is worth noticing that Paul starts 1 Corinthians 13 speaking about tongues and prophecy and it is impossible that he is using them there in a way completely disconnected with the realities of these spiritual gifts. He is using them hyperbolically, but even in his hyperbole it is possible to learn more about these gifts. Thus, we can understand 1 Cor 13 as teaching that the gift of prophecy in its full capacity (hyperbole) gives to the receiver understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge. It is possible, then, to imply that a partial gift of prophecy gives to the receiver some unders-

⁵⁹ Maybe exaggerating a little, Conzelmann says: “Thus, the gifts are evaluated in Corinth according to the intensity of the ecstatic outburst; in fact, even according to the degree of unintelligibility. The latter is considered to be an indication of the working of supernatural power. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 233-234.

⁶⁰ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 505. See also Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1995), 280.

⁶¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000), 1084. See also Simon Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 479-480.

⁶² “New Testament prophecy therefore included both conventional preaching, when the preacher had the sense of being gripped and convicted by the Spirit about his or her message, and more spontaneous, unpremeditated utterances.” Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1994), 212.

⁶³ “But the prophecy we find in 1 Corinthians is more like the phenomena we saw in extra-Biblical Jewish literature: it is based on some type of supernatural ‘revelation,’ but that revelation only gives it a kind of divine authority of general content. The prophet could err, could misinterpret, and could be questioned or challenged at any point. He had a minor kind of ‘divine’ authority, but it certainly was not absolute.” Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 74.

tanding of mysteries and/or knowledge. Paul also presents in 1 Cor 13:8-9 the temporary character of both prophesying and speaking in tongues.

It is essential to understand the phenomenon of speaking in tongues in order to make sense of mysteries in 1 Cor 14. Spiritual gifts are a manifestation of empowerment of the Spirit on the believer (12:4, 7, 11) that happens under the supervision of the Lord Jesus (12:5). The source of the power is God (12:6). Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the whole body of Christ. Therefore, nobody should feel shame or pride because of his or her gifts (12:14-26). There is a gradation of gifts and the higher ones are those which edify the church the most. Those should be eagerly desired (12:31; 14:1). Spiritual gifts should be evaluated and used in a context of love (1 Cor 13).⁶⁴

Variety of tongues (ἐτέρῳ γένη γλωσσῶν) is a spiritual gift along with the interpretation of tongues (ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν) (12:10). What Paul speaks about tongues? Tongues do not communicate to men because no one can understand and their content are mysteries (14:2). The one who speaks in tongues builds up himself (14:4) and it would be desirable that all speak in tongues (14:5).⁶⁵ The content of what is spoken in tongues, if translated, would build up the church (14:5). On the other hand, without interpretation, tongues are not intelligible, being like speaking in the air (14:9). Thus, the one who speaks in tongues should pray to receive also the gift of interpretation (14:13). Tongues is prayer in the Spirit without the use of the mind (14:14) and expressing gratitude (14:16-17). Paul speaks in tongues more than all Corinthians (14:18), but in the church he does not use it (14:19). Tongues are related to foreign languages (14:10, 21), but can also be related to the language of angels (13.1).⁶⁶ Tongues are a sign for unbelievers (14:22). They can be used in worship with

⁶⁴ “With love as their aim, it will prevent them from being zealous only for those gifts that will enable them to steal the show and outshine others”. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 631-632.

⁶⁵ Speaking about the self-building up of the one who speaks in tongues, Grosheide affirms that this edification is not related to understanding the contents, “but rather that the fact of speaking in tongues is edifying in itself” and he assumes that the reason is the assurance that the person has the Spirit. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 319. Kistemaker shows wisdom in his counsel about this subject: “Hence, no one is free to invade another’s religious privacy; prayer, whether spoken or unspoken, is a two-way street. God receives praise and thanks from the speaker and at the same time grants him or her comfort and encouragement”. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 480-481. That is no solid basis to defend that Paul’s remark about self-edification is derogatory. Contra Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 510.

⁶⁶ “On balance, then, the evidence favors the view that Paul thought the gifts of tongues was a gift of real languages, that is, languages that were cognitive, whether of men or of angels.” D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 83. Fitzmyer’s opinion that “the phenomenon cannot mean speaking in foreign tongues” is ill-defended. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 510. Conzelmann interprets tongues in relation to phenomena that happened in a few Greek religions. See Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 234.

orderliness (not everyone at the same time), by a few people (two or three) and only with interpretation (14:27-28). It is speaking with God (14:28) and should not be forbidden (14:30).

The teaching of our text, then, can be summarized in the following statement: The one who prophesies speaks in a clear way mysteries or knowledge to edify, exhort, and console the church. The one who speaks in tongues speaks mysteries, prays, and expresses thanksgiving to the Lord in a manner that edifies only himself, in spirit but not in mind, and without translation does not have utility for the edification of the church. Thus, prophecy should be preferred to speaking in tongues in the public worship.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

My definition of mystery in Paul is that it is a part of the wise and sovereign plan of God about the eschaton, which is present in part in the Old Testament but still hidden, being revealed according to the will of God only through special revelation. Mystery can be used to refer to the whole eschatological plan of God or just to parts of it.⁶⁸ It is to refer to those parts of the eschatological plan of God (hardening of the Jews, fullness of the Gentiles, revelation of the lawless, marriage) and other parts of the plan not revealed in the New Testament that the plural “mysteries” is used in 1Cor 4.1; 13.2 and 14.2. Instead of using a Greek concept, or simply meaning something secret, Paul is consistently using mystery in 1 Cor 14:2 (and 13:2).

Another important conclusion that we reach is that the spiritual gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues at least sometimes can have the same content, i.e., mysteries, with the difference that in the first one those mysteries are expressed in a way that the whole community understands.

Our analysis of the text also contributes to our understanding of mystery. Specially considering the gift of tongues, we learn that God will not necessarily reveal the content of his mysteries, even when these are verbalized.

⁶⁷ I do not think that there is enough basis in the text to propose a participation of the community in the worship of the angels, although I consider this an important subject for further studies. See footnotes 11 and 12.

⁶⁸ This idea agrees with Bockmuehl concept of mystery: “(i) ‘Mystery’ or ‘mysteries’ can refer collectively to the saving purposes of God, specially as these are summed up in the message of the gospel of Christ. This usage occurs in 1 Cor and more fully in Col; it is further developed in Eph and later writings. (ii) A mystery can at the same time denote one particular (sometimes detailed) aspect of God’s plan of salvation, especially as this relates to the eschaton.” Other uses would include particular doctrines (carefully con Bockmuehl, sidered because of being later writings) and mystical revelation of mysteries and angelic worship. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 226-227. The definition of Beale and Gladd is good, but still puts too much emphasis on the revelation of the mystery: “The revelation of God’s partially hidden wisdom, particularly as it concerns events occurring in the “latter days”. Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 20.

It is possible to infer, therefore, that there are other mysteries in the sovereign plan of God he did not reveal to his church. Mystery in Paul, therefore, is not necessarily something hidden that is revealed.

RESUMO

“Mistério” (μυστήριον) é um tema quase técnico e muito importante do Novo Testamento. Este artigo visa a lançar alguma luz sobre o significado desse conceito em 1 Coríntios 14.2. O autor define mistério como “uma parte do plano sábio e soberano de Deus acerca do eschaton, o qual está parcialmente presente no Antigo Testamento, mas ainda oculto, sendo revelado segundo a vontade de Deus somente por meio de revelação especial”. Após apresentar quatro interpretações dissonantes acerca do assunto, o autor defende o conceito acima em 1 Co 4.2. A novidade do artigo é o conceito de mistério como sendo revelado através de línguas, enquanto que ao mesmo tempo o seu conteúdo permanece velado quando o discurso não é interpretado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

1 Coríntios 12-14; Mistério; Dom de línguas.