An Exegesis of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, 1:3-8

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I. TRANSLATION

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the world's foundation that we might be holy and without blemish before Him, since in love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, unto the glorious praise of His favour with which He favoured us in the beloved one.

In whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, according to the riches of His favour which He lavished upon us, since in all wisdom and understanding He made known ....

II. TEXTUAL CRITICISM

V.3.

B lacks και πατηρ. The rest of the text witness is unanimous for its inclusion, thus maintaining the wording of a standard expression, see below.

V.4.

F and G have ΕΑΥΤΩ for ΕΝΑΥΤΩ.[1] Such a transcriptional error would be easy to make whether graphically or by faulty hearing.

V.6.

The reading ΗΣ is supported by P[46] ℵ[*] A B P 6. 33. 81. 365. 1175. 1739. 1881. 2464. *pc*, whilst ΕΝΗΙ is supported by H[2] D (F) G K L Ψ 104. 630. 1241. 1506. 2495. *Byz*. Clearly the former reading is basically only supported by Alexandrian witnesses, whilst the latter has a mixture including Byzantine, Western (D), and Alexandrian (Ψ 104). According to Metzger[2] the United Bible Societies editorial committee decided only by majority on the Alexandrian reading. Metzger gives two reasons, first the weight of external support, and second the fact that it is the more difficult reading, being a cognate accusative attracted to the genitive case. The first reason is based on the highly disputable presupposition that the Alexandrian witnesses are by far superior to all the rest. The second reason is valid, although the alternative reading does altogether solve the problem, namely that the (Egyptian Jewish) verb χαριτόω does not require nor idiomatically use the mention of χάρις, whether as a cognate object or prepositional clause. There is yet another factor at play here, namely, the fact that the Alexandrian text could be seen as a harmonisation to της χαριτος αυτου ης in vs.7b-8a. On balance I favour the majority reading as most probable.

After ηγαπημενω D[*] F G 629 it vg[cl] sy[h**] sa and Ambrosiaster read υιω αυτου. This addition may well be under the influence of such well known passages as Mt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; 9:7; Lk. 3:22; 9:35 (maj.) which all mention "son" (υιος) in conjunction with "beloved" (here αγαπητος).

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[1] Where the textual variants are close I have transcribed them in uncial form so that the reader may more easily detect how close the readings may stand in those mss.

[2] B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971) *ad loc.*

V.7.

H* D* Ψ 104. 2495 *pc* co read ΕΣΧΟΜΕΝ for ΕΧΟΜΕΝ. This poorly attested reading may have been induced by the parallel with ἐν ᾧ plus aorist in v.11.

P⁴⁶ ℵ B A have ΤΟΠΛΟΥΤΟΣ over against the far majority of mss which read ΤΟΝΠΛΟΥΤΟΝ. This brings us to the interesting question of the gender of πλοῦτος. Though there was a tendency in Koine Greek for first and second declension nouns to become neuter,[3] this was not common for the word πλοῦτος in the first century AD.[4] For example, of over 100 occurrences in the Septuagint, only one is neuter (Is. 29:2) and this is strongly contested in the text witness. Of twenty-two occurrences in the New Testament, fourteen are masculine (seven in the Pauline literature, Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:12 (2x), 33; Eph. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:17). The other eight occurrences (all Pauline: 2 Cor. 8:2; Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:8, 16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27; 2:2) are contested. The Alexandrian texts generally[5] support the neuter over against the majority which support the masculine. The one exception is Col. 1:27 where both the majority text and Alexandrian witnesses are divided.

What are we to say to this? The fact that only the neuter occurrences are textually contested would seem to indicate that there was no general trend on the part of the Alexandrian texts to change the masculine form to a neuter form. If this had been the case, we should have expected the other fourteen masculine occurrences to have also been contested textually. This fact is confirmed when we recall that the Septuagint witness in ℵ, A and B for πλοῦτος is almost unanimously masculine. The majority text, however, contests every case of a neuter gender for this word. Thus it would seem that a strong case could be made for the proposition that the majority text is here guilty of trying to harmonise all occurrences of πλοῦτος to the masculine form, i.e., to what was then regular Greek.

A 365 *pc* bo have ΧΡΗΣΤΟΤΗΤΟΣ for ΧΑΡΙΤΟΣ probably due to the influence of Rom. 2:4 as Nestle/Aland suggests, cf. Eph. 2:7.

III. FORM / STRUCTURE

After the opening salutation of vs. 1-2 Paul enters upon a lengthy blessing to God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 3-14). The opening line seems to have been a common Christian formula of blessing, see below. Its form is an adaptation of the Jewish בְּרָכָה, cf. Lk. 1:68-79. Compare the Septuagint εὐλογητός (for בָּרוּךְ) mostly of God, cf. Gen. 9:26; 14:20; 24:27; Ex. 18:10; Ruth 4:14; 1 Ki.[Sam] 25:32f; 2 Ki.[Sam] 6:21; 18:28; 3 Ki.[1 Ki.] 1:48; 5:7 (21); 8:15, 56; 2 Chron.2:12 (11); etc.

Jewish life in the first century AD was surrounded with such blessings. Before the daily recitations of the Shema morning and evening, blessings were to be said (*m.Ber*. 1:4). The well known eighteen blessings (also known as the *Tefillah*) were also to be said daily (*m.Ber*.4:3). In fact the pious Jew was taught to bless God in and for everything (*m.Ber*. 9:1-3). Blessings were a very serious part of daily piety (cf. *m.Ber*. 3:3; 4:1; 5:1). We may understand then that for the Christian Jew Paul it was especially important to render blessing to God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, for all the mercies of election and salvation contained in the divine Messiah Jesus.

This lengthy blessing comes immediately after the greeting and before the usual epistolary prayer (vs. 15 ff.), which it does not displace. If the address of this letter is taken as being to churches in Asia Minor generally, [6] then Paul may be seen as laying a firm foundation not only for

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[3]   J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek,* 4 Vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928-76) 2.125.

[4]   See H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones, and R. McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) who cite for the neuter only a few Pauline examples.

[5]   Occasionally one or other Alexandrian witness has the masculine, though never the earliest witness, P⁴⁶.

[6]   A common hypothesis based on the fact that several mss lack the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ as well as certain internal indications.

his prayer (1:15 διὰ τοῦτο), but also for the paraenetic advice to come later in his letter, urging the believers to put on the new man, the spiritual armour, and live up to the glorious salvation that they have been freely given in Jesus Christ. The style of the blessing is ponderous, filled with relative clauses, prepositional phrases, and genitival relations. It has been appropriately remarked that "die Überfülle des Stils spiegelt den Reichtum des Segens wider."[7]

IV. COMMENT
V.3.
Εὐλογητὸς κτλ

The first ten lexical units seem to have been a fixed formula of blessing. They are also found in 2 Cor. 1:3 and 1 Pet. 1:3. Other portions of these words show that references to Jesus Christ soon formed certain fixed patterns of expression. The nine lexical units after εὐλογητός also occur in Rom. 15:6, Col. 1:3 (maj.) cf. 2 Cor. 11:31.

The exact order τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is also common.[8] Note that the word order "Jesus Christ" as opposed to "Christ Jesus" almost always appears in conjunction with the title κύριος.[9] When however the preposition ἐν is used the order is reversed.[10] The only other exceptions are Phil. 3:8;[11] Col. 2:6; 1 Tim. 1:12 and 2 Tim. 1:2. The two titles 'lord' and 'Christ' are never juxtaposed, in other words, Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus and not of the Lord Christ. This shows that 'Christ' was never treated as a name, but retained its significance as a designator of 'the anointed one'.

When a plural pronoun is used in direct connection with κύριος and any other name of Jesus Christ, it always occurs immediately after the title κύριος.[12] This trend is not apparent when κύριος refers to God the Father, due to the fact that κύριος in reference to God the Father often functions as a substitute for God's personal name JHWH.[13]

Another common expression in the Pauline literature is ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.[14]

The high incidence of such fixed expressions in reference to Jesus Christ in the New Testament is surprising. The number of exceptions to those isolated here is little to nothing. Due to the fact that our text conforms completely at this point to expected word order, we ought not to seek any special emphasis in the word order itself.[15]

We ought not to understand this blessing in a subordinate way so as to deny Christ's divinity.[16] Is it true that the Father is also the God of Jesus Christ? Certainly Jesus Christ was not

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[7] N. A. Dahl, *Bibelstudie über den Epheserbrief* (Auslegung, 11) cited in P. T. O'Brien, "Ephesians I: An Unusual Introduction to a New Testament Letter," *New Testament Studies*, 25 (1978-79) 509.

[8] Cf. also Acts 15:26; Rom. 5:1, 11; 15:6, 30; 16:24; 1 Cor. 1:2, 7, 8, 10; 15:57; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 6:14, 18; Eph. 1:17; 5:20; 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:9, 23, 28; 2 Thess. 2:1, 14, 16; 3:6, 18; 1 Tim. 6:3, 14; Jas. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:8, 14, 16; Jud. 4, 17, 21 (without pronoun also Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:3; 6:11; 8:6; 2 Cor. 13:13). The Septuagint preserves the same syntactical order in Gen. 24:27 where we read: εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου μου Αβρααμ.

[9] Cf. also Acts 11:17; 28:31; Rom. 1:4, 7; 5:21; 7:25; 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:3, 9; 2 Cor. 1:2; 4:5; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 2:11; 3:20, 23; Col. 1:2 (maj.); 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:12; 3:12; Phlmn. 3, 25; Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:11; 2:20; 3:18; Jud. 25.

[10] Cf. Rom. 6:23; 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:31; Eph. 3:11.

[11] Part of the majority witness here has the order "Jesus Christ," but this is probably due to assimilation.

[12] Cf. also Acts 20:21; Rom. 1:4; 4:24; 5:21; 6:23; 7:25; 8:29; 16:18, 20; 1 Cor. 5:4 (2x); 9:1; 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:11, 13; 2 Thess. 1:8, 12; 1 Tim. 1:2, 12, 14; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2, 11; 2:20; 3:18 cf. 2 Tim. 1:8; Heb. 7:14; 2 Pet. 3:15; Jud. 25.

[13] Cf. Mk. 12:29; Lk. 1:16; Acts 2:39; 3:22; Rev. 4:11; 19:6.

[14] Cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2 (maj.); 2 Thess. 1:2; Phlmn. 3 cf. Eph. 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1. Two exceptions seem to be 1 Tim. 1:2; and 2 Tim. 1:2.

[15] It is to the exceptions rather than the rule that special exegetical attention ought to be given to word order.

averse to calling the Father his God, cf. Mt. 27:46; Jn. 20:17; Rev. 3:12. Therefore we should not artificially restrict the genitive construction here only to πατήρ, but also to ὁ θεός.[17]

ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς

Here follows the ground for the blessing which is frequently given in the form of ὁ + participle, which correlates to the frequent use of a participle in Hebrew blessing formulae.[18] Note that Paul includes himself as the recipient of blessing. The significance of the "us" is discussed further below. From v.13 it becomes clear that Paul wishes the Christians in Asia Minor to identify themselves with the same gospel of salvation that he himself has received.

ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ

The use of cognate constructions (here with εὐλογία) is quite common in Paul, cf. χάρις, χαριτόω in v.6 (also 1:19; 2:4; 4:1 *et al*). Here also we have syntactical chiasm (adjective, noun, adjective), although it is doubtful whether this is rhetorically conceived. The adjective πᾶς normally comes before the noun, and a restrictive adjective normally follows the noun (cf. Col. 1:9 where it also occurs with πάσῃ and πνευματικῇ).

Πνευματικός almost always refers to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. The word is not attested in the Septuagint. We are reminded that every blessing of salvation communicated to us by God through Jesus Christ comes by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ reigning in heaven communicates his gifts to the church (Eph. 4:7 ff.) via the Holy Spirit whom he has sent to us from the Father (cf. Jn. 15:26). We have been sealed with this promised Holy Spirit (v.13) who is the pledge of our inheritance (v.14). This fact is important for the understanding of the following words.

ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις

This could refer to spiritual things or gifts, but in every other case in Ephesians the reference is to "the heavenly places" (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).[19] Thus we would seem to have *prima facie* evidence for that rendering here also. This is confirmed when we read further that just as Christ was raised by God from the dead and seated in the heavenly places (1:20), so also we have been raised with him and seated in the heavenly places (2:6). That is, we have in principle our heavenly inheritance already in the possession of Holy Spirit (1:13-14). Thus we have been risen from spiritual death and made alive by the working of the Holy Spirit. Thus we now reign together with Christ battling the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (6:12), by being strong in the Lord, girding ourselves with truth, righteousness, the Gospel, the Word of God. We do this battling here on earth, but the war against evil is a spiritual war, against spiritual forces in heavenly places. As those chosen by God, called as holy ones, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places to undertake this battle. All this of course does not deny that we yet look forward to entering upon our full inheritance pledged to us by the Spirit, at the return of Christ.[20]

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[16] The Septuagint text of Gen. 24:27 cited in footnote 8 above shows that the inclusion of Jesus Christ in the blessing formula cannot be adduced as necessary evidence that Jesus is treated here as divine.

[17] Contra H. A. W. Meyer, in *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament: Vol. 7. Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Galatians and Ephesians*, transl. by G. H. Venables, Alpha Greek Library (Winona Lake, IN: Alpha Publications, 1884, reprint 1980) 311. D. H. Zanchius (*Commentarius in Epistolam Sancti Pauli ad Ephesios*, edited by A. H. de Hartog, Bibliotheca Reformata [Amsterdam: Joannem Adamum Wormser, 1888-9, first published 1594] 20) answers the problem of Christ calling the Father "God" by referring to his office as mediator: "Officium quoque indicat Christi, quia, quatenus Christus Mediator est, seu respectu officii, habet Deum, quo missus, & cui subjectus est" ("He also indicates the office of Christ, since, in so far as Christ is a Mediator, or in respect of the office, he has a God by whom he is sent and to whom he is subject.").

[18] See Septuagint Ps. 71:18 (Hebr. 72:18); 134:21 (Hebr. 135:21) and Ezra 7:27.

[19] Cf. A. T. Lincoln, "A Re-examination of 'The Heavenlies' in Ephesians," *New Testament Studies*, 19 (1973) 468-83.

[20] The discerning reader will note that I have not followed the conclusion of Lincoln's article. He does raise however pertinent questions concerning the meaning of our union with Christ, especially as that is expressed in Eph. 2:6.

ἐν Χριστῷ

All the above is of course only possible in Christ, that is, by the redemption through his blood (cf. v.7 f.). For the connection of the blessing of salvation with Christ see also Rom. 15:29 and Gal. 3:14.

It should be noted that right at the opening of this blessing we encounter God's work of salvation as a work of the Trinity. It is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, who has planned, accomplished, and applied our salvation.

The absence of the definite article here would suggest that Paul has the person Jesus Christ in view, rather than more specifically the office of the Messiah, though of course the two can never completely be separated. This fact may seen to be confirmed when it is noted that most of the time when "Christ" is used with the preposition ἐν without the article, it is in collocation with "Jesus," i.e., "in Christ Jesus."[21] By contrast, for instance, Eph. 1:10, 12, and 20 use ἐν with the definite article and clearly refer to the office of Messiah (cf. especially v.12 in reference to the Jewish hope in the Messiah).

V.4.

Καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου

Καθώς indicates that we here begin an enumeration of some of those "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ" referred to.[22]

The verb ἐκλέγομαι does not occur in the active voice in the New Testament, nor other early Christian literature.[23] Thus we must be careful in reading too much of the reflexive force of the middle into the general usage of this verb. It is nevertheless certainly true that God's whole plan of salvation, and thus also his election, is unto his own praise and glory (cf. v.6).

We should also note that the simplex λέγω "to pick up" does not occur (in any voice) in the Septuagint, New Testament, or early Christian literature. We should therefore also be careful in overstressing the significance of the prefix. That is not to say, however, that the prefix has no meaning, for we are certainly chosen *out*. But that aspect is not emphasized here by denoting what it is we are chosen out of (contrast Jn. 15:19). In English we might get the sense across by translating "just as he picked us out in Him."

Καταβολή refers here to the laying of a foundation.[24] It only occurs once in the Septuagint (2 Macc. 2:29) and not in a sense related to New Testament usage. The collocation καταβολὴ κόσμου occurs ten times in the New Testament, always referring to the creation-work of God, cf. esp. Heb. 4:3.[25] In the same way that the Father loved the Son before the world's foundation (Jn. 17:24, cf. 1 Pet. 1:20), so also he chose us. God's election of us at that time shows us that His plan of salvation had nothing to do with our own merits. This fact is emphasized strongly in this epistle, cf. 1:6; 2:5, 8 f. Note also that this election does not take place outside of Christ. For apart from His work of redemption we could not have been elected at all.

εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ

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[21] I omit an accurate count, but any careful scan of a concordance will bear this out.

[22] Compare the similar use of καθώς in Lk. 1:70.

[23] See W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (2nd ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958) *ad verbum*. The Septuagint has but few exceptions to this.

[24] Liddell/Scott *sub verbum* II.

[25] Cf. מִתְּחִלַּת בְּרִיתוֹ, Pesikt. 21, 145a; Midr.Est. 1:1 (82a) cited in F. Hauck, "καταβολή" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, translated by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 620-21.

Here we find expressed the purpose of our election. We have been elected to be holy and blameless before God, a holy people to serve and honour him (v.6). The way Paul phrases this implies a prelapsarian approach, i.e., the decree concerning election follows upon the decree concerning the fall into sin, since the purpose of election is saving and restoring *fallen* men and women in Christ.

The idea of being holy and blameless (literally "without blemish" ἀ—μώμους) reappears in 5:27 (cf. Col. 1:22; Jude 24) where Christ is said to have sanctified the church by the washing of the water of the Word that He might present her to Himself without spot (σπίλος), wrinkle (ῥυτίς), or any such thing, that she might be ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος. Clearly in both cases we are dealing with a metaphor referring to ethical purity. Although not explicitly the background here, we may think of the Old Testament requirement that anything presented in the temple (including the priests themselves) were to be perfect (תם or תמים = ἄμωμος in LXX) to be acceptable before God. So also Christ was the lamb without blemish or spot (ἄμωμος καὶ ἀσπίλος 1 Pet. 1:19) whose blood redeemed us that we might be accounted holy blameless. Again these predicates are not based on anything we did, but rather on Christ's work of redemption. We, in thankfulness, must strive to live up to them![26]

ἐν ἀγάπῃ

This could be taken either with the preceding or the following. Several factors indicate that the latter option is most likely. First, the sense seems to fit better with predestination unto adoption than stuck onto the end of the purpose of election. Second, if taken with the participle it would fit Paul's style, since he frequently precedes a participle with a prepositional phrase, cf. v.8b-9. Third, taken this way a chiasm is formed as the clause begins ἐν ἀγάπῃ … ἡμᾶς and ends ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ.[27]

V.5.

προορίσας ἡμᾶς

"Predestine," lit. to determine (ὁρίζω) beforehand (πρό). Paul now gives the reason for election as holy ones. We should be careful not to too neatly distinguish between "election before the world's foundation," and "predestination." The two expressions are coordinate referring to the same act. We should note that Paul, when speaking of God's predestination, does so in connection with the love of God. The caricature of the doctrine of predestination as coming from a stern, cool, calculating God, who is only concerned with equally cool and distant eternal decrees, is simply not true and not Biblical. Predestination must always be considered as an act arising out of the love of God for sinners.

εἰς υἱοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν

Paul uses the concept of adoption in several ways in his letters. In Romans 9:4 he counts "the adoption" as one of the blessings of the Israelites, yet in Galatians 4:1 ff. he regards the Israelites as sons under guardianship, who do not receive adoption until the (ceremonial Mosaic) law is taken away. Here, however, the amazing thing must be that Paul, writing to the churches in the area of Ephesus where he had worked so hard for a considerable period on this third missionary journey, can remark that those converted to God (including many Gentiles) were predestined to adoption! The adoption that in the course of redemptive history had for so long been especially the privilege

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[26] In this respect Chrysostom (*hom. 1 in Eph.*) veers far from the Biblical track when he suggests that God has elected us on the basis of the fact that we are holy and without blemish before Him! Ethical concerns notwithstanding, we ought not to twist Scripture in order to provide what we consider to be pointed application.

[27] I do not find the argument of F. Foulkes (*The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1956] 47) that elsewhere in the epistle (3:17; 4:2, 16; 5:2) ἐν ἀγάπῃ refers to man's love and not God's very relevant or convincing.

of Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4; Eph. 2:11 ff.)!²⁸ In love, God also had His redemptive plan for the Gentiles in which they are now the joyful partakers!²⁹ This redemptive plan could only take place, of course, through the mediatory work of Jesus Christ.³⁰ This work is to be expanded upon in v.7. Paul can never be held guilty of forgetting that God's salvation work is so completely wrapped up in the work of Christ. The addition of εἰς αὐτόν makes clear that God has adopted us to Himself. In a real sense then, the Gentile Ephesians (and we!) could call themselves "sons of God." As sons they are of course also heirs (cf. v.11, 14; Gal. 4:7).

κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ

We must take θέλημα here in the sense of "desire," "intention" rather than the more concrete sense of a reference to God's law here (cf. Col. 1:9). The word εὐδοκία (a predominately Christian Hellenism for εὐδόκησις) should be taken in the sense of "kind intention" (cf. Phil. 1:15 in opposition to φθόνος and ἔρις; 1 Thess. 1:11), and definitely not as "good pleasure" if that phrase is interpreted to mean "what seems good for me" without regard to others.³¹ In English, therefore, the translation "good pleasure" can lead to misunderstanding, since εὐδοκία in the New Testament always refers to an attitude that is kind or beneficent towards others.³²

V.6.
εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

My first thought was to treat this phrase as a Hebraism in the following sense: "to the praise of His glorious favour," however, the fact that the first two nouns are anarthrous and the last has the article would argue against this. Ἔπαινος, furthermore, often occurs in connection with the synonym δόξη, cf. Eph. 1:12, 14; Phil. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:7.³³ The phrase εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης occurs no less than three times in the opening blessing of Ephesians thus reinforcing the ultimate purpose of the wonderful redemptive plan of the Father, i.e., His own glory. Here more specifically Paul adds the noun χάρις to which he adjoins a circumscription explaining the relation of this χάρις to our redemption. We might therefore translate "to the glorious praise of His favour." I translate χάρις by the English word "favour" instead of the more ecclesiastically common "grace." The word "grace" is archaic English and really only a synonym for the much more common and readily understood "favour." It has been common in certain ecclesiastical circles to try and maintain an artificial distinction between "grace" as God's electing (redemptive) favour, and "favour" as the

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28 Whilst a legal institution of adoption did not exist in Mosaic or Rabbinic law, the concept of God's adoption of Israel is clear in the Old Testament, cf. Ex.4:22f; Dt.14:1; Jer.31:9; Hos.11:1. In fact one might argue that God's very establishment of the covenant relationship between Himself and those of His choosing (cf. Abraham etc.) was an act of adoption.

29 It is interesting to note that Paul uses terms of "qualifying" (ἱκανόω) and "transferral" (μεθίστημι) in Colossians (1:12-13) instead of adoption. The basic meaning is the same, but the metaphor is different.

30 The word order "Jesus Christ" always follows the preposition διά, Jn. 1:17; 10:36; Rom. 1:8; 16:27; Gal. 1:1; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 2:5; 4:11, cf. Rom. 5:1, 11, 17, 21; 7:25; 15:30; 1 Thess. 5:9; Tit. 3:6; Jude 25. Note that in Rom. 2:16 ℵ*ᵛⁱᵈ and B read "through Christ Jesus" against A and the vast majority of mss.

31 Contra G. Schrenk, "εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκία" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, transl. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 2.746 f. Note that Schrenk goes too far in equating εὐδοκέω with the meaning "to elect." He fails to distinguish between a common context or grammatical collocation in which a word may be found and the actual meaning of a word.

32 In other contexts the periphrasis "that which pleases" is warranted, but the point made remains the same. In our text the sense is not "what pleases His will" but "the pleasure of His will" in respect to us, i.e., our predestination to adoption. Zanchius makes the point well when he notes (*op. cit.* 37): "Non ait [i.e. Paul] simpliciter, juxta voluntatem. Nam etiam reprobos reprobavit pro sua justa voluntate: sed nos elegit juxta εὐδοκίαν voluntatis" ("Paul does not simply say, 'according to his will.' For God has also condemned the reprobate according to his just will: but He has chosen us according to the εὐδοκία of his will.")

33 In stating that δόξη is a synonym of ἔπαινος I do not wish to suggest that their meanings are identical, but merely that they overlap.

goodwill God has in general. This theological distinction is not mirrored by either English or Greek usage (χάρις is a very common word).[34]

ἐν ᾗ ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ

Here we see again how the doctrine of predestination must always be seen in connection with love. The Father's predestination of some to adoption is evidence of His favour toward them. They did not by any means deserve it. Again we see that such favour could only come in the beloved one, i.e., in the beloved Son of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, cf. Mt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; 9:7; Lk. 3:22; 9:35; Col. 1:13. Note that Paul may use the form ἠγαπημένος here (from ἀγαπάω) instead of ἀγαπητός as in the Gospels, due to the fact that he reserves the latter only to refer to brethren in the faith. However Paul does also use ἠγαπημένος to refer to brethren, cf. Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13. A better reason may be that the use of a form from ἀγαπάω reinforces the chiasm with ἐν ἀγάπη.[35]

V.7.

ἐν ᾧ

Here we begin a new clause and the first of a series of three clauses beginning with ἐν ᾧ referring to Jesus Christ (vs. 7-10; 11-12; and 13-14). The rest of this blessing is therefore concerned to show the relation of Jesus Christ to the electing redemptive work of God the Father. The third and final portion of this tripartite section of the blessing builds to climax by repeating ἐν ᾧ καί within its sentence (v.13). This exegesis article deals only with the first half of the first portion.

Although it is unusual to prolong a sentence with such lengthy relative clauses, it shows that Paul is eager to continue speaking about the Jesus Christ He has mentioned. The blessing therefore continues flowing forth all the way to v.14. This eagerness is adequately brought out by maintaining the relative in English, although I have added a full-stop for clarity. Whilst we do not get very smooth English, is Paul's Greek any smoother? [36]

ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ

According to F. Büchsel ἀπολύτρωσις does not suggest the idea of a ransom payment (λύτρον) in the New Testament.[37] The entry in the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* does not mention at all the idea of ransom in connection with this word group, preferring to stick to more general glosses such as "liberation"![38] There seems to be no real ground for this opinion, however. None of the occurrences in the New Testament demand another understanding of the word apart from that of redemption by payment of ransom, which is the only meaning provided by the dictionary of Liddell and Scott.[39] In Hebrews 9:15 the death of Christ is

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[34] It is debatable whether the distinction can be maintained with respect to Hebrew חסד and רצון.

[35] F. F. Bruce (*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984] 258 n.) notes with approval J. A. Robinson's suggestion (*Ephesians* [London: Macmillan, 1914²]) that the form may go back to the Septuagint rendering of Jeshurun (Dt. 32:15; 33:5, 26; and perhaps especially Is. 44:2) and indeed may have been a Jewish designation for the Messiah. I am not yet totally convinced of this, although the suggestion invites further study.

[36] See further J. van Bruggen, *The Future of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978) 100-102.

[37] "ἀπολύτρωσις" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, transl. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 4.354 ff.

[38] Edited by J. P. Louw, and E. A. Nida, *et al.*(second ed., New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).

[39] See also B. B. Warfield, "The New Testament Terminology of 'Redemption'" in *The works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981, reprint of edition from 1929) 2.327-72 and L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (third ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1965) 12, for the etymology. Morris correctly notes, however, that word usage must be the final determinant of meaning and not etymology. Warfield, despite the fact he lived before the "semantic revolution," also shows acute understanding. When stating that derivatives of λύτρον maintain the intrinsic significance of that word (i.e. ransom), he adds: "The case is not similar to that of such a word as, say, "dilapidated" in English which readily loses in figurative usages all

explicitly referred to as the ground of redemption. Further in Romans 3:24 we are said to have redemption "in Christ Jesus." Our text is most explicit, the ransom payment being the blood of Christ. It is true that other occurrences in the New Testament do not explicitly refer to a ransom, but that does not necessarily mean that the concept is not present. Also in other Jewish literature from the period the term could be used without immediate indication of ransom and yet imply as much.

The noun is used twice in the Epistle of Aristeas (dated third century BC to first century AD). Here Aristeas petitions king Ptolemy II of Egypt for the ἀπολύτρωσις (12, 33) of Jews captured by the king's father. That this term is used in its technical sense denoting redemption via the payment of a price is clear from the fact that several lines further the king is said to order twenty drachmas per slave to be paid to each slave-owner as compensation for their release (20, cf. 22). Josephus' report of the same incident places the term ἀπολύτρωσις in direct connection with the price: πλειόνων δ᾽ ἢ τετρακοσίων ταλάντων τὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως γενήσεσθαι φαμένων ταῦτά τε συνεχώρει (*Antiq.* 12:27).[40]

Philo uses the noun twice. In *De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia* (109) speaking of Abraham's bargaining for Sodom he says:

> ἄρχεται μὲν οὖν τῆς ἱκεσίας ἀπὸ τοῦ τῆς ἀφέσεως ἀριθμοῦ, πεντηκοντάδος, λήγει δὲ εἰς δεκάδα, τὴν τελευταίαν ἀπολύτρωσιν.[41]

Clearly here "the ten" are considered a ransom price ("number of release") for the ἀπολύτρωσις. The other instance in *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* does not explicitly mention a ransom price, but concerns an enslaved boy who will not submit to menial tasks and ἀπογνοὺς ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἄσμενος ἑαυτὸν διεχρήσατο.[42] The context of slavery would strongly suggest that the original meaning of ἀπολύτρωσις should apply here.[43]

The one case in the Septuagint (Dan. 4:34) also reflects release on payment of a price, in this case Nebuchadnezzar's payment via punishment for his sins.[44] The cognate verb is used twice, once in Ex. 21:8 for the redemption of a slave (Heb. פדה), and once in Zech. 3:1 (Heb. גאל, although the Septuagint misunderstands the passage here).[45]

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suggestion of its underlying reference to stones .... The bases of these words are foreign to English speech and do not inevitably obtrude themselves on the consciousness of every one who employs them. Λύτρον was a distinctively Greek word, formed from a Greek primitive in everyday use, according to instinctively working Greek methods of word-formation, carrying with them regular modifications of sense. No Greek lips could frame it, no Greek ear could hear it; in any of its derivatives, without consciousness of its intrinsic meaning. This is, of course, not to say that the word could not conceivably lose its distinctive sense. But in words of this kind the processes of such decay are difficult, and illustrations of it are comparatively rare; especially when as in this instance, the terms in question stand out on a background of a far more widely current use of their primitive in the broader sense." (340) Taking into account the time when this was first written (1917), and the kind of semantics becoming prevalent then, one can only laud the abilities of Warfield as an exegete. For a refutation of the (impossible) idea that the noun means only "redemption by receipt of ransom," see Morris, 42 f. This aspect is not indicated by the noun and must be determined by context.

40 "And although they said that the cost of the redemption would be more than four hundred talents, he conceded this."

41 "So then he begins his supplication from the number of the jubilee, fifty, and ends at ten, the final (number for) redemption."

42 "Despairing of ransom, he gladly killed himself."

43 According to Bauer *et al.*, *op. cit.* ἀπολύτρωσις was originally confined to this context, i.e., of buying back a slave or captive.

44 Contra Büchsel, *op. cit.* 352, cf. 354 n. Warfield, *op. cit.* 343 suggests that it goes back to Dan. 4:24 [*sic.* this should probably be 4:27] where the king is exhorted to redeem (λύτρωσαι) his sins with alms (ἐν ἐλεημοσύναις).

45 For a brief overview (in translation) of other uses of this rare noun in secular literature see Morris, *op. cit.* 16 ff., and also 40 ff. for a more general discussion of the word. A search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (version e), the *Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri* and texts of Inscriptions published by the Packhard Humanities Institute (version 7) did not reveal any more citations than those discussed by Morris. A more in-depth examination of the word group is given by B. B. Warfield, *op. cit.*. My discussion here is of necessity brief and based on my own study of the various texts. Note that there seems to be no standard way of indicating the ransom price for ἀπολύτρωσις. Heb. 9:15 uses a genitive absolute, Rom. 3:24 the vague ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Josephus a genitive of price, and our text διά with genitive.

With regard to the blood as payment we are immediately reminded of Lev. 17:11. Here God gives the reason for the prohibitions relating to blood. It is because the life of the flesh is in the blood which is given to make atonement on the altar.[46] The blood of Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrificial system, has paid the price for our sins and therefore made atonement for us. Truly in Him we have the redemption through His blood!

τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων

This stands in apposition to the preceding phrase, but is not identical to it in all respects. The forgiveness of (or "release from")[47] transgressions is the result of the redemption through blood. Even in the Old Testament ritual the blood sacrifice was accompanied by a transferral of the guilt of transgressions committed onto the animal sacrificed. In this way the removal of transgressions by vicarious atonement was symbolized.[48] Note that the same apposition occurs in Colossians 1:14.

κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

The pronoun here must refer to the Father, when seen in the context of v.6, cf. also 2:7 where the phrase is repeated. Not only is our adoption through Jesus Christ evidence of God's unmerited favour towards us, but also the redemption in Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our sins. In short all the spiritual blessings of salvation in Christ are evidence of the riches of God's favour towards His people, cf. 2:7. Only by God's favour have we been at all saved (2:5, 8). This is a theme that runs throughout the correspondence of Paul (the word occurs 101 times in the Pauline literature)[49], and throughout this letter (twelve times).

V.8.
ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς

Yet again Paul feels the need to add a reinforcing phrase to χάρις! The verb περισσεύω is here transitive, the ἧς standing for ἥν by attraction. In Phil. 4:12 Paul uses it as the complete opposite of ὑστερεῖσθαι and ταπεινοῦσθαι. It denotes an overflowing abundance. It seems as if Paul cannot find words enough to express the wonder of God's mercy towards us in His salvation in Jesus Christ.

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει

Here again we need to ask whether this phrase belongs with the preceding or with the participle in v.9. Structurally there are arguments for both readings. We might argue that in v.6 the relative clause dependent on χάρις had the structure: relative, verb, first plural pronoun, prepositional phrase with ἐν. On this model the prepositional phrase here would clearly belong with the relative clause preceding. However, it could also be argued that we have another example of a prepositional phrase preceding a participle, so common in Paul (see above at v.4b-5a). That the solution must be sought with the latter option is clear from the following considerations: First, the structural similarity to the relative clause in v.6 is only apparent, for there the preposition ἐν functions differently to that here (v.6 = more or less locative, v.8 accompaniment), and according to my

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[46] The last clause of the verse could emphasise this. It reads: כִּי־הַדָּם הוּא בַּנֶּפֶשׁ יְכַפֵּר. While many interpret בְּ as *instrumenti*, the LXX interpreted this as בְּ *pretii* (ἀντὶ τῆς ψυχῆς) which is completely possible, cf. New International Version.

[47] The use of ἄφεσις in apposition to ἀπολύτρωσις shows that the meanings "release" and "forgiveness" for the former should not be too sharply distinguished or separated. They stand on one line of meaning synchronically as well as diachronically, i.e. to the Greek speaker in the first century AD the connection and line between the two uses was indeed perceived.

[48] This was done by leaning one's hands upon the animal and confessing one's transgressions, cf. Lev.1:4 *et al.* in connection with Lev.16:21.

[49] We should, however, be careful in equating word with concept. One might argue that the concept itself permeates Paul's letters many more times than the mere occurrence of the word χάρις, which in some instances does not refer to God's favour in salvation, e.g. 1 Cor.16:3.

assessment of the text (see above) the first relative clause begins differently as well (ἐν ᾗ).[50] Second, in view of the first consideration Paul's frequent habit of introducing a participle with a prepositional phrase should take exegetical preference. Third, in terms of the overall sense and meaning, the words fit better with v.9, indicating knowledge of the mystery of God's will.[51] This fact is confirmed by the same connection made in the kindred letter to the Colossians 1:9.

Terms for wisdom frequently appear in duplets or triplets both in Greek literature and in the Old Testament. It is therefore not surprising that we find the collocation of σοφία and φρόνησις elsewhere (cf. Septuagint: 3 Ki. 2:35a; 5:9; Prov. 10:23 (all with חָכְמָה and תְּבוּנָה—a more common Hebrew collocation cf. Ex. 31:3; 35:31; 36:1; Prov. 21:30; Ezek. 28:4); Job 5:13; Theodotian's Dan. 2:21; Josephus *Antiq*. 2:87; 8:171; Philo *Praem*. 81 and Dio Chrys. 42.1). Paul is also fond of duplets generally, cf. the related duplet in Col. 1:9.

The precise meaning of this phrase in connection with v.9 belongs properly to the exegesis of that verse and is therefore not dealt with in this article. We may, however, note that in v.17 Paul proceeds to pray that God may give the Ephesians πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ, probably a reference to Isaiah 11:2. Paul praises God in the blessing that they have wisdom and understanding with respect to the knowledge of the mystery of His will, and yet just as in Colossians 1:9, also goes on to pray for the same. We as Christians must never be contented with what we have but always, in the giving of thanks, strive to grasp more and more the wonderful revelation we have of our salvation in Christ.

V. EXPLANATION

Paul opens his letter to churches in Asia Minor with an expansive בְּרָכָה to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In one long sentence he records the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places that the believers have been blessed with by their God, in Christ. He begins by enunciating the fact that God, even long before the world's foundation, elected them to be holy ones before Him. God predestined them for adoption as His sons through the work of Jesus Christ. What motivated God to do this? Anything in them? By no means, but it was due only to the kind intention of His will, unto the glorious praise of His favour. This favour, and not any work of their own, is the ground of their election. It was this favour with which God favoured them in His beloved Son who accomplished for them the redemption which they have. Thus in v.7 Paul moves on to further elaborate on the work of Jesus Christ in connection with this salvation of pure favour. That redemption of Christ is a redemption from their sinful and fallen state resulting in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the ransom payment paid for with Christ's blood. All this took place in accordance with the great riches of God's favour which He has simply lavished upon them.

This article only covers the beginning of Paul's bursting words of praise. But even from what we have here covered, no believer can possibly reflect on what Paul has said without himself bursting out in thankfulness to His God and saviour!

VI. HOMILETIC REMARK

The opening בְּרָכָה of this letter (vs. 3-14) would make excellent material for a mini-series of sermons. The rubric under which the whole series would fall would have to be the praise of God for the spiritual blessings Has bestowed upon us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The first sermon could cover the verses 3-6 which focus on God's election of us in Christ. In this case a synthetic structure would seem to best deal with the material. A proposed theme and heads could be:

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[50] Meyer's argument (*op. cit.*, 318) that the preposition is not used in the same way as the ἐν ἀγάπη of v.4b, is less to the point. The argument is not that the construction with the two participles (of v.5 and v.9) are structurally mirrored, but only that Paul frequently uses a prepositional phrase to qualify an ensuing participle.

[51] Even if connected with the foregoing they certainly do not, as Calvin suggests, indicate the preaching of the Gospel (Evangelii praedicationem) as the causa formalis. Calvin in his commentary attempts, not altogether successively, to cast Paul's opening comments on election into the Aristotelian scheme of causa efficiens, causa materialis, causa finalis and causa formalis (cf. also sub v.5). See *Ioannis Calvini in Novum Testamentum Commentarii*, ed. by A. Tholuck (Berlin: Gustav Eichler, 1834) vol. 6.

Praise God for the spiritual blessing of your election in Christ!
1. The description of our election.
2. The purpose of our election.
3. Election as spiritual blessing.

A second sermon on vs.7-10 would focus on the mystery of God's will now made known to us, namely, our redemption in Christ and the summing up of all things in Christ. Precisely how this would be worked out would of course depend on a complete exegesis of the passage of which we have here only presented a part. It would seem to me possibly a good idea to attempt to formulate the whole mini-series into four sermons, the last three each dealing with one of the ἐν ᾧ clauses (thus vs. 8-10; 11-12; and 13-14).