

## All the fullness of God pp. 233 - 236

The church of the One Body is the great outstanding anticipation of the goal of the ages. It is associated with Him under Whose feet are *all things*; it is associated with a dispensation of the fullness of the seasons when *all things* are to be summed up in Him, and it is itself called,

“The fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. i. 23).

How are we to understand this statement? It falls into line with the last occurrence of *pleroma* in Colossians, and for that matter in the N.T.

“For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. ii. 9).

The first occurrence of *pleroma* in Ephesians stands by itself (Eph. i. 10); the remainder form a group that expand the theme thus:

- A | “The church which is His body,  
the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. i. 22, 23).
- B | “The whole family in heaven and earth . . .  
that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . .  
filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. iii. 14-19).
- C | “He ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things . . .  
Unto a perfect man,  
unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. iv. 8-13).
- B | “For in Him were all things created . . .  
all things were created by Him, and for Him . . .  
He is the Head of the Body, the church . . .  
for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell . . .  
to reconcile all things . . . in earth and things in heaven” (Col. i. 16-20).
- A | “For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;  
and ye are filled to the full in Him,  
Which is the Head of all principality and power” (Col. ii. 9, 10).

Here is a very complete conspectus of this mighty theme, point answering point with such precision, that no approach to one corresponding member can be undertaken without due consideration of the other. This the reader will perceive is fraught with immediate consequences. It forces a comparison between Eph. i. 22, 23 and Col. ii. 9, 10. The church of the one Body is “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” and the second prayer of Eph. iii. is that the believer may be “filled with all the fullness of God”. Identical language *Pan to pleroma* “all the fullness”, is found in Eph. iii. 19, Col. i. 19 and ii. 9, and these passages cannot be separated and interpreted independently of each

other. The “fullness” of Christ dwells “bodily” in the church, even as the “fullness” of the Godhead dwells “bodily” in Him.

There are moreover many contextual links that bind these references together as one whole. In Eph. i. 21-23, the stress is upon the headship of Christ as the risen and ascended One, with all things under His feet, the church which is His body, being the fullness of Him, Who in His turn filleth all in all. In Col. i. 15-20 the two creations are brought together, with Christ as “Firstborn” in each (Col. i. 15, 18), and as pre-eminent in both (Col. i. 17, 18). Things in heaven and earth were His creation (Col. i. 16) and they are the objects of reconciliation (Col. i. 20). When we come to Col. ii. 4-23, we have left the positive revelation of truth, and have entered into the sphere of conflict with error. For our present purpose we will give the opening and closing members of this great correspondence.

R | a | 4-8-. Plausible speech. Philosophy (*sophos*).  
b | -8-. Traditions of men.  
c | -8-. Rudiments of the world.  
CORRECTIVE. | -8. Not after Christ. Fullness *pleroma*  
9, 10. Ye are filled full in Him. *pleroo*  
\* \* \* \* \*  
R | c | 20-22. Rudiments of the world.  
b | 22. Teaching of men.  
a | 23-. Wordy show of wisdom (*sophos*).  
CORRECTIVE. | -23-. Not in any honour.  
-23. Filling of the flesh. *plesmone*

Whatever is intended by Col. ii. 9 “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” is closely and intentionally carried forward into verse 10, for the word translated “complete” is *pepleromenoi*, even as conversely, the title of the church as “the fullness” is carried upward to Christ as the One Who is filling (*pleroumeno*) “the all things in all”. Col. iv. 4-23 combats the invasion of a vain and deceitful philosophy, supplied by tradition and the rudiments of the world and “not after Christ”, and later in the same argument, not only intruding philosophies and traditions, but even divinely appointed “new moons and sabbath days” are alike as “shadows of things to come” because “the body is of Christ”. The whole Fullness toward which every age and dispensation has pointed since the overthrow of the world, is at last seen to be Christ Himself. All types and shadows that once filled the gap caused by sin, are now seen to be transient, and of value only as they point the way to Him, and then disappear. He is Head, He is Preeminent, He is Creator and Redeemer, He is the Firstborn of all creation, and the Firstborn from the dead. He is the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation iii. 14; Col. i. 18), the Alpha and Omega, The First and the Last. In deed and in fact “Christ is all and in all” (Col. iii. 11) in the church of the one Body now, as He will yet be in the whole redeemed universe in the future.

No more glorious position for the redeemed is conceivable than that revealed in Ephesians i. 23. To be one of a kingdom of priests on the earth is a dignity so great, that O.T. prophets have piled imagery upon imagery in setting it forth. Yet when we come to

the Bride of the Lamb, and the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, we realize how much more glorious is that calling as compared with the highest calling on earth. What shall be said then of that company of the redeemed, blessed neither on earth nor in the New Jerusalem, blessed neither as a kingdom nor as a Bride, but blessed “in Christ” where He now sits “far above all”, blessed not only as the members of His Body which is dignity indeed, but actually destined to be “the fullness of Him” in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is evident from what we have discovered in the Word, that the term “fullness” is vital to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose and there is one point more that must be considered before we close. Head and members, or Head and Body, are relative terms. The one cannot exert or function without the other. This we all recognize must be true of the members, but is it not also necessarily true of the Head? Christ AS HEAD needs the complement of His Body, just as surely as the church. His Body, needs the complement of the Head. In the words “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” the words thus translated *to pleroma tou* “The fullness of Him” are cast in the form known as “The genitive of relation”. Words ending in *ma* often have a passive significance. Chrysostom, in his commentary says:

“The fullness of the head is the body, and the fullness of the body is the head . . . .  
that is just as the head is filled (or fulfilled) by the body.”

Beza says something very similar:

“However complete He is in Himself, yet as Head He is not complete without His Body.”

*Pleromenou* “That filleth” is not passive but middle voice . . . . “To fill up or complete for Himself”.

The very fact that God has a goal, and is moving toward the goal, implies that this relationship of the redeemed with the Redeemer is essential to the glorious achievement of the ages. God is moving from the status of God Who is Creator, to God Who is Father, and the title Father is itself relative, it necessitates a family. While therefore the redeemed are nothing in themselves, they are precious by reason of His gracious purpose.

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