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Short Title: CHRISTOLOGY OF PLEROMA IN PAUL.

Member of the Faculty
of the St. Louis
Theological Seminary
and the degree of
Doctor of Theology

W. B. E. ...
1912

John B. ...
1912

THE CONCEPT OF PLEROMA IN ITS CONTRIBUTION
TO PAULINE CHRISTOLOGY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the meaning of the word *πλήρωμα* as it is used by St. Paul and from its theological content to ascertain Paul's contribution to Christology in his employment of the concept. Theologically Paul's concept of Pleroma¹ is among his basic concepts. This is particularly true in his epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. In the latter Paul uses Pleroma to give his readers a glimpse into the deep relationship which exists between the Father and the Son, while in the former epistle he moves Pleroma over into the realm of Ecclesiology to describe the relationship existing between Christ and His Church.

Because Paul used Pleroma at times to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son and at other times that which exists between the Son and the Church, this study will frequently appear to vacillate between Christology and Ecclesiology. The reason for this lies in the close affinity between these two great doctrines. Karl Ludwig Schmidt says:

Solche Aussagen [*ἐκκλησία, σῶμα, Χριστός, κεφαλή*]
sind ganz eng verwoben. Jedenfalls ist Christologie
gleich . . . Ekklesiologie und umgekehrt . . . diese

¹In this paper *πλήρωμα* will be written as Pleroma when it refers to the concept. On the other hand, it will be written in Greek when exegetical or other contexts demand.

Dinge sind im Sinne des Apostels dunkel, weil Menschenaussagen um ein Mysterium kreisen ([Eph] 3:4f.).²

The meaning of Pleroma has been heatedly debated for over one hundred years. In 1839 Carl Fridrich August Fritzsche published the second part of his three volume commentary on Romans. In this book he set forth his theory that nouns ending in *-μα* have a fundamentally passive meaning.³ This was written in reply to Gottlob Christian Storr, who had attempted to show that in the New Testament *πλήρωμα* always has an active sense.⁴

Bishop J. B. Lightfoot wrote his lengthy and now famous extended note on *πλήρωμα* in 1875 in which he championed the passive meaning of the word.⁵ J. Armitage Robinson took issue with Lightfoot by maintaining that the passive sense should not always be strictly insisted upon.⁶

Thus the discussion on the active versus the passive

²K. L. Schmidt, "*ἐκκλησία*," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, et al. (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, n.d.), III, 572. Hereafter this volume is referred to as TWNT, III.

³Carl Fridrich August Fritzsche, Pauli Ad Romanos Epistola (Halle: Gebauer, 1836-1840), II, 469ff.

⁴Gottlob Christian Storr, De Vocis πλήρωμα Vario Sensu in Novo Testamento, in Opuscula Academica, I, 144ff. Quoted in J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 257.

⁵J. B. Lightfoot, op. cit., pp. 257-273.

⁶J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., n.d.), pp. 255ff.

sense has gone on in commentaries and theological journals up to the present day. As late as 1957 C. F. D. Moule's Commentary on Colossians laid stress on the argument over the active versus the passive sense.⁷ Time was spent and much heat generated on this grammatical phase of the problem.

About the same time that the grammatical debate began, F. C. Baur's Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi appeared. This publication added a new angle and approach to the discussion of Pleroma, less from a grammatical than from a religious point of view. Baur maintained that πλήρωμα was a Gnostic word.⁸ This religionsgeschichtliche approach has been the predominant thought in the Pleroma research up to the present day, as Chapter IV of this thesis will point out.

It is a pity that this "Gnostic" approach was emphasized in the discussions on Pleroma because it put into temporary eclipse the ray of light which Gottlieb Christolph Adolph Harless had thrown on the theological understanding of Pleroma. In his remarks on Eph. 1:23 he said,

⁷C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon, an Introduction and Commentary, in The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), pp. 164ff.

⁸Ferdinand Christian Baur, Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi. Sein Leben und sein Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre. Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristentums (Stuttgart: Verlag von Becher und Mueller, 1845), pp. 425ff.

Ja ich glaube, dass dasselbe was die Juden unter $\pi\tau\iota\varsigma\psi$ im Allgemeinen verstanden, naemlich die reale Gegenwart der goettlichen Herrlichkeit (dies moechte die richtige Loesung des Streitiges seyn, ob sie die specialis oder die generalis praesentia Dei damit bezeichnet haetten . . .) der Apostel durch $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ ausdrueckte.⁹

Only in recent years has the suggestion of Harless been taken up by such men as Sverre Aalen,¹⁰ Gerhard Delling,¹¹ and to a certain degree by Josef Gewiess.¹²

In the view of this writer the most significant development and contribution has been made by Father Yves M. J. Congar, the distinguished French Roman Catholic scholar. He published the results of his studies in his book, Le Mystère du Temple in 1958, which is available in English as well.¹³ Congar's theme is that the Bible makes it clear that God has dwelt with His people in a tabernacle and temple of living stones. This book supplies an excellent background for the study of Paul's concept of Pleroma.

⁹Gottlieb Christolph Adolph Harless, Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser (Erlangen: Verlag von Carl Heyder, 1834), p. 125.

¹⁰Sverre Aalen, "Begrepet $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ i Kolosser- og Efeserbrevet," Tidskrift for Teologi og Kirke, XXIII (1952), 49-67.

¹¹Gerhard Delling, " $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, et al. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), VI, 297-304. Hereafter this volume is referred to as TWNT, VI.

¹²Josef Gewiess, "Die Begriffe $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ und $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ im Kolosser- und Epheserbrieft," in Vom Wort Des Lebens, Festschrift fuer Max Meinertz (Muenster, Westf.: Aschendorfsche Buchhandlung, 1951), pp. 128-141.

¹³Yves M. J. Congar, The Mystery of the Temple, translated from the French by Reginald F. Trevett (London: Burns & Oates Ltd., c.1962).

The general method used by those who have followed Harless is the approach which this thesis takes toward the solution of Pleroma as a concept. The writer is convinced that the solution to the understanding of Paul's use of the term lies in Paul's theological roots deeply imbedded in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament uses *νιζο - πλήρωμα* only in a spacial sense, it used the verb *νιζο* to designate God's filling of the temple, which took place at the dedication of the building by Solomon (I Kings 8:10f.).

The conclusion which this writer has reached is that in Colossians Paul uses the term Pleroma to express what Jesus had already enunciated, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19), a statement which John illuminated with the remark, "but He was speaking about the temple, His body" (John 2:21). In Ephesians, the Pleroma concept passes over to the Church, to the believers themselves as the Body of Christ. They are His *πλήρωμα* (Eph. 1:23), and the Christians grow up into a temple sanctified in the Lord (Eph. 2:21).

It must be pointed out that the writer of this paper is assuming the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians, a position not held by all New Testament scholars. Yet, many of those who doubt or deny the Pauline authorship of Ephesians regard the letter as thoroughly Pauline in thought and understanding even though written by one of

Paul's disciples.¹⁴ This is not the place, however, to enter into the argument.

One further point should be made. This thesis, it will be noted, takes little cognizance of rabbinic writings in arriving at a solution to the problem. Because the rabbinic writings were codified at a late date many interpreters have doubts concerning their reliability as accurate reflections of Judaic thought current in the Apostolic days, some two hundred years earlier.

¹⁴W. L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), pp. 184f.

CHAPTER II

THE NON-THEOLOGICAL USES OF PLEROMA IN PAUL

St. Paul uses *πλήρωμα* twelve times in his Epistles: four times in Romans (11:12,25; 13:10; 15:29), once in I Corinthians (10:26), once in Galatians (4:4), and four times in Ephesians (1:10,23; 3:19; 4:13), and twice in Colossians (1:19; 2:9). As the exegesis of these passages will reveal, Paul's use of this word is not a single, inflexible one. Pleroma is always associated with divine activity or with the Church. In spite of Paul's relatively frequent use and obvious fondness for it, he does not turn Pleroma into a rigid technical term. His choice in each case is deliberate and appropriate.

Because Pleroma in Ephesians and in Colossians has a very special sense, charged as they are with theological, and particularly Christological meaning, the investigation of the Pleroma passages in these two epistles will be studied separately in Chapter III. Because of their theological content, Rom. 11:12 and 25 and Gal. 4:4 will be included in that chapter as well.

Romans 13:10

"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (*πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη*)."

(RSV)

This Pleroma passage is the clinching argument in Paul's treatise on love as the supreme claim upon the Christian in this life. Paul had just completed his instructions regarding the Christian's relationship to the civil government (13:1-7). He makes it quite clear that the Christian is in no way excused from social responsibilities: *μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε* (13:8a). The Christian must have no outstanding obligations other than that of love.

Love is a continuing obligation. The Christian must love his neighbor. This is an imperative given by God in the Decalog, not by civil statute. All the negative obligations can be summed up in one simple directive of God's will (9c): "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He who loves his neighbor in the same way that he loves himself will not hurt or wrong his fellowman (10a). Therefore, the fulfilling of the law is love (10b).

The sense, then, of Pleroma in this passage is that of fully doing, fully keeping the law. That Pleroma here means fully doing is substantiated by *ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν* (8b).¹ The passage from verses 8b to 10b contains the single thought, the obligation to love one's neighbor. Since this chain of thought begins with *γὰρ* and concludes with *οὖν*, Paul can say that he has proved his

¹Gerhard Dellling, "*πλήρωμα*," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), VI, 303. Hereafter this volume is referred to as TWNT, VI.

point: the one continuous obligation Christians have is to love one another (8a). According to this, *ἕτερον* is the object of the participle *ἀγαπῶν*. It is not an adjective modifying *νόμον*, as Theodor Zahn takes it.² Christians are to love one another, the other person, the neighbor. This is the one on-going debt which Christians always owe.

John Knox's interpretation of this passage is likewise incorrect. His comment is, "This 'fullness of the law' probably means the whole of God's will for us."³ First of all, love is not the whole of God's will, but, secondly, if verse 10b is the clinching argument of Paul's claim that our obligation is to love one another, then Pleroma means the act of fully keeping the law.

For the same reason The New English Bible is incorrect when it renders this verse with "Therefore the whole law is summed up in love." Its alternate reading in the footnote, "The whole law is fulfilled by love," is in keeping with the context.

Romans 15:29

"And I know that when I come to you I shall come in the

² ". . . denn der Liebende hat das uebrige Gesetz erfuehlt." Theodor Zahn, Der Brief des Paulus an die Roemer, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, edited by Theodor Zahn (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf. [Georg Boehme], 1910), VI, 562.

³ John Knox, The Epistle to the Romans in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1954), IX, 607.

fullness of the blessing of Christ (*ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας Χριστοῦ ἐλεύσομαι*).⁴ (RSV)

This Pleroma passage is part of the closing message of the epistle, where Paul informs the congregation at Rome that a visit with them is part of his plan for a proposed journey to Spain. His stop-over in Rome was not planned to found a congregation.⁴ That had been established already and its members were acquainted with the will of God (14). His stay with them in Rome, he reminded them, was part of his ministry of the Gospel which he was still carrying out and would, God willing, carry out in the future as he had in the past. In the great arc of his Eastern Mediterranean mission field further activity held no future for him (23). Hence, he was on his way to Spain as soon as he had delivered the offering raised by the Gentile Christians for the saints in Jerusalem. From the Christians in Rome he hoped to receive the necessary help to equip him for his work in Spain. Entertaining no ambition to build on another's foundation, Paul was confident he would come to them *ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας Χριστοῦ*.⁵

⁴It is difficult to say with any degree of certainty who founded the congregation in Rome. The only certain facts are that there was a congregation in Rome and that Paul was not its founder (Rom. 1:8; 15:21). For a detailed analysis of the problem concerning the founding of the congregation at Rome see William A. Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary (5th ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), pp. xxv-xxxi.

⁵The variant reading of *πληροφεία* for *πληρώματι*

Here Pleroma has the sense of fill to the full, almost with adjectival force, to indicate Paul's confidence in the overflowing wealth of blessing, the full blessing, which Christ was lavishing on his ministry. Previously, in connection with his mission activity in the Eastern Mediterranean area, Paul had expressed the same thought (19). He had carried out completely his assigned task of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ (πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Paul had accomplished this because it was Christ through the Holy Spirit who had enabled Paul to be a successful evangelist. Hence, he was equally confident that on his arrival in Rome his work would enjoy the full blessing of Christ.

I Corinthians 10:26

"The earth is the Lord's and everything (τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῆς) in it." (RSV)

This passage is a quotation from Psalm 24(23):1, which Paul cites as his Scriptural authority to permit the Christian

we must reject, not because it makes no sense, but precisely because it does make sense. It was probably an emendation to make the passage less difficult. The compelling reason to reject this variant is that the manuscript support is weak and of late origin. The omission of τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ can also be supported with the editors. While this reading has better manuscript support than πληροφροῦν, the textual evidence favors the omission. It appears that these words were added by a copyist to bring verse 29 into harmony with πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ^{of} verse 19.

to eat meat sold in the meat market without troubling his conscience by inquiring whether or not the meat had been offered to an idol prior to sale. His argument is that the earth and all its contents belong to the Lord because He created them. Consequently, meat does not cease to be from God even though it has been offered to an idol. The same truth is expressed in I Tim. 4:4: "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." Paul is using Pleroma here in the sense of that which fills, the contents.⁶ In this sense it is used also in Mark 6:43 and 8:20.⁷

This same quotation from Ps. 24(23):1, but with the words *κυρίου* and *γὰρ* reversed, reappears at the end of verse 28 in the Byzantine manuscripts and others. Via Erasmus this variant reading found its way into Luther's Bible and into the Authorized Version. Quite properly, however, the modern translators omit this quotation in verse 28.

To sum up what has been found in the Pleroma passages to this point: the evidence indicates that Paul does not use the word in a single, fixed meaning. In Rom. 13:10 it means fully doing. In Rom. 15:29 it has the meaning of fill to the

⁶Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, adapted and translated from the German by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1957), sub *πλήρωμα*.

⁷Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in TWNT, VI, 300.

full, while in I Cor. 10:26 it has the sense of all the contents. For Paul, Pleroma had not yet solidified into a strictly technical term.

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGICAL USES OF PLEROMA IN PAUL

This chapter will investigate the remaining passages in which Paul uses the term Pleroma. As the study progresses, it will become increasingly evident that Paul employs the word in a sense quite different from that which he used in the passages considered in the previous chapter. The principal difference which will come to light is this that Paul charges the term Pleroma with theological intensity.

It should be emphasized, however, that though usage may differ, this does not necessarily indicate a development in Paul's theology. It means merely that the subjects which Paul discusses demand this theological content. In one way or another, Paul has either Christ or the Church in mind when he uses Pleroma.

Romans 11:12 and 25

"Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion (τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν) mean!" (12)
(RSV)

"A hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) comes in."
(25) (RSV)

These two verses form a part of that great section of Romans in which Paul deals with the subject of God's rejection of Israel according to the flesh and the effect this had on Jew and Gentile. Israel, Paul said, had spurned salvation. Yet God had not turned His back on His people. As in the days of Elijah, He still had His remnant. Israel's rejection had resulted in the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It is at this point that Paul introduces the word *πλήρωμα*. In 11:12 he says that, if Israel's sin is the world's riches, and if Israel's defeat is the heathen's wealth, then how much more will their, i.e., Israel's, Pleroma be! The meaning Paul attaches to Pleroma in verse 11 must await its reappearance in verse 25, where Paul speaks of *τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν*.

Between the two passages Paul observed that God had grafted wild olive branches, the Gentiles, into the root of the good olive tree, whose branches, Israel, had been broken off. This displacement is no reason for boasting on the part of the Gentiles, for it is at once a sign of God's goodness and of His severity. Furthermore, it is entirely possible for God to regraft the natural branches into the tree. This is a real mystery, Paul admitted. There is no occasion for self-congratulation in God's permitting a hardness of the heart to afflict Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles should enter. Thus, the prophet had foretold, this would result in all Israel being saved.

What meaning did Paul have in mind when he spoke of τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν (12) and τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἔθνῶν (25)? Many interpreters, e.g., Sanday and Headlam,¹ Delling,² Gewiess,³ Stoeckhardt,⁴ translate πλήρωμα with full number, Vollmass, Vollzahl. E. J. Goodspeed translates verse 12 as "their full number" but in verse 25 he has "until all the heathen have come in." These translations, with the exception of Goodspeed's rendition of verse 25, are quite acceptable, provided one thinks of the full number as a unit, as a whole, rather than as a large number or host. "Mit πλήρωμα ist stets, auch wenn es eine Vielheit umschliesst, die Idee der Einheit verbunden . . ." ⁵ The context of these two passages indicates that Paul is looking upon a single

¹ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary (5th ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), p. 396 and p. 404.

² Gerhard Delling, "πλήρωμα" in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), VI, 303 and 300. This volume is hereafter referred to as TWNT, VI.

³ Josef Gewiess, "Die Begriffe πληροῦν und πλήρωμα im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief" in Festschrift fuer Max Meinertz (Muenster Westf.: Aschendorfsche Buchhandlung, 1951), p. 134.

⁴ Georg Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 515f. and p. 538.

⁵ Gewiess, op. cit., p. 135. From the usage in the Corpus Hermeticum and in Philo, where it is used in distinction to πλήθος, Gewiess affirms "bedeutet es nicht die Summe an sich getrennter Dinge, sondern solcher, die ein Ganzes bilden derart, dass beim Fehlen auch nur eines Dinges das Ganze unvollstaendig waere."

body, the remnant, when he speaks of the olive tree and especially when he concludes by saying, "and so all Israel shall be saved" (26). Paul is viewing the saved as a whole when he speaks of "all Israel," for he does not say that all the Jews or all the Israelites are to be saved.⁶

To conclude: in these two passages St. Paul is using the term *τὸ πλήρωμα* to describe the Church in regard to its completeness. In the view here expressed by Paul, the Church is composed of the remnant from Israel plus the full complement of the Gentiles who have been saved.

Galatians 4:4f.

"But when the time had fully come (*ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου*), God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (RSV)

This passage marks the decisive point in God's time line, when Christ's act of redemption brought to a close Israel's bondage to the law and effected man's assumption of

⁶This is the view of Friedrich Buechsel. "*πᾶς Ἰσραήλ* kann nicht aufgefasst werden als 'jeder Israelite,' denn *Ἰσραήλ* als Bezeichnung fuer den einzelnen ist zwar im palaestinischen Sprachgebrauch haeufig . . . , aber im NT nirgends zu finden. Die Formel ist vielmehr mit Bl [ass]-Debr [unne] ⁶ 275 als 'Hebraisierend' aufzufassen: 'das ganze Israel.' Das verlangt jaschon der Zusammenhang." Friedrich Buechsel, "*Ἰσραήλ*," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, c.1938), III, 390, n. 133. Hereafter this volume will be referred to as TWNT, III.

sonship. The point in time does not refer exclusively to the Incarnation, but, as the context indicates, to God's sending of His Son to redeem mankind and to grant man the status of sonship.

To arrive at the meaning of *τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου* we must view this passage in the light of its wider context, Gal. 3:6-4:7. Oscar Cullmann notes quite correctly that this wider context carries through in a particularly complete way "the line Abraham-Christ-Church."⁷ The significance of this appears when we recall that this is what Paul said in Rom. 11: 12,25, namely, that the Church is composed of the remnant of Israel plus the full complement of the Gentiles who have been saved. God gave His promise of blessing to Abraham. This is a blessing shared by all who are Abraham's sons through faith in Abraham's seed (Christ), who through His death on the Cross redeemed everyone from the curse of the law. This redemption includes the Gentiles as Gentiles. Indeed, Christ's redemption embraces all; for all are one in Christ Jesus, and all are heirs of God's promise to Abraham through faith. All have come into their inheritance at a time set by the Father. That precise time was the time when Christ wrought the redemption of mankind.

⁷Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1950), p. 110 and 118.

Ephesians 1:9f.

Und er hat uns wissen lassen das Geheimnis seines Willens nach seinem Wohlgefallen, so er sich vorgesetzt hatte in ihm, dass es ausgefuehrt wuerde, da die Zeit erfuellet war (*Εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν*),⁸ auf dass alle Dinge zusammengefasst wuerden in Christo.

This passage, in translation, sounds quite similar to the words of Gal. 4:4. Though the words of these two passages may ring somewhat similar, the similarity ends there. In Eph. 1:10 Paul conveys a much wider view of God's activity. Instead of focusing upon the redemptive event as Paul does in Gal. 4:4, he directs the attention of the readers in Eph. 1:10 to the great panorama of "the divine providential administration"⁹ of the entire range of events by which God brought man's salvation in Christ.

To view this panorama which Paul portrays, one must take a look at the record of salvation events to which Paul draws attention. Eph. 1:10 is part of the great Te Deum in which Paul sings the praises of God for all the spiritual blessings He has so graciously bestowed in Christ Jesus upon Paul and his readers. Both he and they had every reason to bless God. Even before God had created the world, He had elected them in Christ for Himself. Then already God singled them out to be His sons. This was not because they would deserve this bless-

⁸Luther's translation.

⁹Cullmann, op. cit., p. 220.

ing. It was because God had been pleased to grant it through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. To this same beloved Son, who graciously shed His blood for them, they owed their redemption and forgiveness of sins. Most wisely God had made known the entire secret of His will. In His good pleasure God had made known His will in Jesus Christ when that age came which fulfills all the redemptive acts which God had carried out in Christ in the age that was and the age that is.

Colossians 1:19

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness (*πάν τὸ πλήρωμα*) dwell." (AV)

This passage is terse but significant. It forms part of the section called the "Great Christology" (1:15-23),¹⁰ in which Paul pictures so succinctly, yet stupendously, the supremacy of Christ.

The first chapter of Colossians, after its epistolary greetings and thanksgivings, voices Paul's prayer that the Colossian Christians might be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that their Christian conduct might be worthy of God their Father and bear fruit in good works and increased

¹⁰C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, in The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, ed. by C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 58.

knowledge. This is to be their way of showing gratitude to the Father for their part in the Christian inheritance, for it was God who had rescued them from the power of darkness and had transferred their citizenship into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

This brings Paul to the point he wants to drive home: the supremacy of Christ. Christ is supreme in that He is the image of the invisible God, begotten before anything was created. Not only did Christ exist before creation, but the whole creation has its raison d'être in Him. It was created through His agency and for Him. His supremacy is implemented further by being Head of the Body, the Church. He was the first to rise from the dead. As a result of this supremacy in everything--the new creation as well as the old¹¹--He is to become pre-eminent.

Then Paul gives the reason why Christ is supreme in the universe and in the Church-- *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικεῖν*. In Him, i.e., Christ, God was pleased to have all the fullness take up permanent abode.

The problem of the subject of *οἰδόκησεν*, whether it is "all the fullness" or "God" (understood) need not be dealt with here at length. T. K. Abott analyzes the arguments

¹¹E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, The English Text with Introduction and Notes, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1957), p. 206.

very well and decides for the latter.¹² Since it is difficult to envision "all the fullness," all the divine functions, as the subject of ἀποκατάλλαξις, it is preferable to take God (understood) as subject of εὐδόκησεν.¹³

The meaning of "all the fullness" we will defer until we take up 2:9, which is an elaboration of 1:19. For the present suffice it to say that "all the fullness" means, as in 2:9, the totality of the divine essence, die ganze Wesensfuelle,¹⁴ and not as Georg Stoeckhardt maintained in his Epheserbrief, "dass Kol. 1:19 πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα dem Kontext gemaess nichts anderes sein koenne als die Vollzahl der Auserwaehlten."¹⁵ Though he is not alone in this interpretation,¹⁶ it is difficult to see how the context warrants this view.

The verb κατοικήσαι, an ingressive aorist, signifies that God was pleased to have the totality of divine functions to take up permanent residence in the Incarnate Christ to reconcile the world unto Himself through Christ's blood on

¹²T. K. Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 218f.

¹³Delling, "πλήρωμα," in TWNT, VI, 302, n. 46.

¹⁴Delling, "πλήρωμα," in TWNT, VI, 302.

¹⁵Georg Stoeckhardt, Kommentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Epheser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), p. 108. This book will be referred to subsequently as Epheserbrief.

¹⁶Abbott, op. cit., pp. 219ff. names others of like mind.

the cross.

Colossians 2:9

"For in him the whole fullness of deity (*πάν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος*) dwells bodily (*σωματικῶς*)."
(RSV)

As stated above, in our discussion of Col. 1:19, Col. 2:9 contains an amplification of the Pleroma concept. Between these two Christological passages Paul tells the Colossians to stand firm in the faith. They are not to be shaken loose from the hope of the Gospel. Paul reminds them that he is being subjected to persecution and suffering for the sake of the Gospel. By suffering this persecution Paul is completing the afflictions still lacking in his own body for the good of Christ's Body, the Church. Paul was not inferring that he could add to Christ's work of redemption. What he was saying was that the world's hostility is still going on against Christ's Body, the Church, and that Christ's suffering is thus not yet complete. Paul sees in his own suffering a continuation of Christ's suffering until the struggle of the Church with sin and suffering is finally ended.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ernst Percy, Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1946), p. 131. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Probleme.

Paul struggles in prayer on behalf of the Colossians that they may be bound together in love and achieve the full knowledge of the mystery of God: namely, Christ in them (2). They are not to be misled by false but persuasive arguments. They are to stand fast in the faith as it has been taught them. They must ever be on the alert against being led astray by philosophy and empty deceit, which may be in line with human traditions but certainly not in line with that of Christ.

There follows 2:9: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς.

The ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ throws the emphasis back to the κατὰ Χριστόν of the previous verse, "for it is in Him that all the fullness of the Deity dwells." That ἐν αὐτῷ has the emphasis is clear from the verse following, where Paul writes καὶ ἔστέ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι.

In this verse, Pleroma is described as πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος. It is in Christ that all the fullness of the Divine Being and functions dwells. Luther translates with Gottheit. Ethelbert Stauffer renders it as "die Goettlichkeit, das Gott-Sein."¹⁸ Das Gott-Sein expresses it well. The English words divinity and deity, or even Godhead, as the Authorized Version renders it, are rather nebulous and not as explicit as Gott-Sein. The entire Gott-

¹⁸ Ethelbert Stauffer, "θεότης," in TWNT, III, 120.

Sein dwells in Christ σωματικῶς, bodily, actually, wesentlich, or as Ernst Percy puts it, "in einen Leib eingeschlossen . . . und deshalb in ihm sozusagen leibhaft greifbar" ¹⁹ All that God is, Christ is. All of God is made manifest in one person.

The present tense of κατοικεῖ in this sentence is significant. All the fullness of the Gott-Sein resides, i.e., dwells in Him. The ascended and exalted Christ still possesses physically all the divine functions which took up their abode in Jesus, the human and divine, at His Incarnation. What was His then, is still His as He sits at the right hand of the Father. The present tense adds considerable force to Paul's argument. Since philosophy and the empty deceit of men are fashioned after human tradition and the elements of the world and not after Christ, they possess no validity. Instead they lead into spiritual captivity. It is in the ascended and exalted Christ that the believers are firmly rooted, edified, and strengthened. As verse 10 states, it is in Him that they in turn are filled. Jesus Christ, human and divine, is still their source of strength.

At this point, the question of what Paul had in mind in his use of the concept Pleroma as referred to Christ must be answered. The word πλήρωμα, as J. B. Lightfoot points out in his extensive treatise on this word, ²⁰ is a noun derived

¹⁹Probleme, p. 77.

²⁰J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), pp. 257-273.

from the verb πληρόω . To arrive at the meaning of πλήρωμα a study of πληρόω is imperative.

Among the normal and usual meanings of "filling" associated with space, πληρόω also has the meaning of to fill with one's power, to take control of, to take full possession of. Peter asks Ananias, "Why has Satan taken over control of (ἐπλήρωσεν) your heart so that you have deceived the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5:3) "Der Satan gewinnt Raum im Herzen des Betrüegers, so dass er es beherrscht."²¹

Paul also uses πληρόω in this sense. In Rom. 1:28-29 Paul laments that God has abandoned those to a base mind who have not seen fit to own God's true knowledge. They are filled with (πεπληρωμένους - perfect) every kind of evil. Because evil has taken control of them, they do what is improper. In Eph. 5:18 Paul urges his readers to be on their guard, so that, instead of getting drunk and being under the influence of wine, they are to be filled by the Spirit. In other words, they are to be under the Spirit's influence rather than that of wine.

A close study of the account of Pentecost discloses further substantiation for filling in the sense of filling with power, taking control of. In the Pentecost account it will be observed that St. Luke does not use πληρόω but

²¹Delling, "πληρόω" in TWNT, VI, 289. For a discussion of πληρόω in the sense of take control of, see also Josef Gewiss, "Die Begriffe πληροῦν und πλήρωμα im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief" in Vom Wort des Lebens,

rather *πίμπλημι* (*ἐπλήσθησαν*), when he reports that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit prompted them to speak out. For some unknown reason Paul never used the verb *πίμπλημι* in the writings which have come down to us. His choice of verb was *πληρόω*. However, the Pentecost event, on one occasion at least, was not far from his thoughts when he used *πληρόω*. This becomes apparent when Eph. 5:18, quoted above, is compared with Acts 2:13-15.

In any event, both verbs come from the same Greek root (*ΠΛΗ*).²² That *πληρόω* and *πίμπλημι* were not far apart in the mind of the Greek-speaking Jew emerges when one notices that in the Septuagint *πληρόω* is used approximately seventy times to translate various form of *נָפַח*,²³ while *πίμπλημι* renders the same Hebrew verb seventy-seven times.²⁴ The implication of filling with power inherent in *נָפַח* emerges in such passages as Jer. 23:23f.; I Kings 8:10f.; and particularly in Ex. 32:29; II Sam. 23:7, and II Kings 9:24.

Military language uses the English word "occupy" in the same sense. Our forces capture and "occupy" a city. We

²²Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 8th ed., revised (Oxford: University Press, 1901), ad loci.

²³Delling, "*πληρόω*," in TWNT, VI, 286.

²⁴Delling, "*πίμπλημι*," in TWNT, VI, 128.

speak of an "Army of Occupation." This does not mean simply that, after the victorious forces have defeated the enemy, the victor covers so many hundreds of square miles of conquered territory. The occupying forces actually control and govern the vanquished country. Indeed, they establish a military government.

Paul's use of the verb *πληρόω* supplies us with a lead in determining the meaning of the noun *πλήρωμα*. Col. 2:9f. indicates that Paul is indulging in a word-play between the noun and the verb.

Paul does not define or elucidate in a full theological discussion what he means by *πλήρωμα*. The word must have been well understood in the valley of the Lycus and in its environs. This has led some interpreters to assume that the word "was employed in a technical sense by the heretical teachers at Colossae."²⁵ This is not necessarily so. Paul did not have to take over a term from the opposition, for, as Ernst Percy points out,²⁶ Paul may have chosen the word quite independently to demonstrate the superiority and supremacy of Christ. Our task is to ascertain the content of the word as given to it by Paul.

In Col. 1:19 Paul used *πλήρωμα* to sum up all that he had said about the supremacy of Christ as Lord of Creation and as Head of the Church. In both these capacities, Christ

²⁵Simpson and Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

²⁶*Probleme*, pp. 76f.

holds first place; "for God was pleased to have all the fullness come to take up abode in Him." This indwelling fullness was the reason why God through Christ was able to reconcile the universe and to bring peace through Christ's blood on the cross. All this Christ was able to do because *ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς*. All the divine functions which God possesses are Christ's and reside in the person of Christ. In Philippians Paul ascribed to Christ *τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεοῦ* --"eine Kraft ewigen Besitzes."²⁷ The word, *πλήρωμα* thus is freighted with the concept of authority and power. The verse has the sense of the words "For in Him all the power of the Deity dwells bodily." This is not to say that the exercise of power and authority were the sole divine functions of Christ. The emphasis in these two verses of Colossians is on Christ's supremacy and control in His creative and redemptive work and being.

In Col. 2:10 Paul continues by saying *καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι*. The thought is that the believers share all the fullness of the deity that dwells in Christ. "Das ist: ihr habts ganz und gar, wenn ihr Christum habt, duerfts nicht weiter suchen."²⁸

²⁷Gustav Staehlin, "ἴσος," in TWNT, III, 355.

²⁸Luther's gloss on Col. 2:10 quoted by Paul Ewald, Die Briefe des Paulus an die Epheser, Kolosser und Philemon, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, herausgegeben von Theodor Zahn (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf. [Georg Boehme], 1905), p. 363.

The *πεπληρωμένοι* obviously corresponds with the *πλήρωμα*. Christ is *πεπληρωμένος*: being in Him you share in His *πλήρωμα*, and are therefore yourselves *πεπληρωμένοι*. Compare John 1:16, *ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν*. Eph. 3:19, *ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ*. also *ibid.* 4:13 and 1:23.²⁹

This is in keeping with what Christ said,

And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.
John 17:22f.

This is also in agreement with Luke 24:49, where Jesus told His disciples to 'stay in Jerusalem "until ye shall be filled with power from on high." In Acts 1:8, too, the disciples were promised power when the Holy Spirit was to come upon them.

Two things must be pointed out as a safeguard in connection with the concept of *Pleroma* when applied to the Church. First of all, we must not understand Paul as conveying the idea that the Christians are filled with all the divine attributes. At the same time we must not feel that the Christians are filled with power and strength as though that were the sole blessing which Christ bestows. One must think of all the saving power with which Christ fills the Church. Doctor Stoeckhardt explains this very well when dealing with Eph. 1:23, which, as we shall shortly see, conveys the same meaning as Col. 2:10. On this point Meyer

²⁹ Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

and Schmidt say as follows:

Die Gemeinde ist naehmlich das Erfuellte Christi, das heisst, dasjenige, was von ihm erfuellt ist, sofern naehmlich Christus durch den Heiligen Geist in den Christen wohnt und waltet, die ganze Christenheit mit seinen Gaben und Lebenskraefte durchdringt und alles christliche Leben wirkt.³⁰

In his notes on Col. 2:10 Bishop Lightfoot similarly remarks, "Hence also the Church, as ideally regarded, is called the *πλήρωμα* of Christ, because all His graces and energies are communicated to her" ³¹ Col. 2:10 forms the transition into Paul's use of *πλήρωμα* as applied to the Church in the Epistle to the Ephesians.³²

Ephesians 1:23

"Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (*τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι πληρουμένου*)."
(RSV)

In Eph. 1:23 *τὸ πλήρωμα* is equated with *τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ* (Christ's), which in turn is equated with *τῆ ἐκκλησίας*. The Church is His Body, Christ's fullness.

In what sense can the Church, Christ's Body, be His fullness? Everything that makes God God has its abode in the exalted Christ. The members of the Church are in turn filled with His power.

³⁰Epheserbrief, p. 109.

³¹Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 183.

³²Eph. 1:10 is excluded.

Eph. 1:23 bears this out. The context (1:18-23) is Paul's prayer that the believers might attain, among other blessings, a deeper knowledge of the power of God, the same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead and which the ascended Lord is exercising at the right hand of the Father. This Christ is over all rule and authority. Now and forever, God has given this very Christ to be Head of the Church, which, in fact, is His Body, His fullness. To quote Gerhard Delling's interpretation of *πλήρωμα* in this passage, "*πλήρωμα* bezeichnet das *σῶμα* als das ganz von dem machtvollen wirken des Christus Erfuellte."³³

As the body receives its direction, control, and power from the head, so the Church as Christ's Body receives its direction, control and power from Christ its Head. "Das Haupt ist hier als membrum regens gedacht."³⁴ This dependence is elucidated further in Eph. 5:22ff., where the relationship of Christ to the Church is compared with that existing between husband and wife. A wife, subject to her husband and dependent on him, follows his decisions and bidding, receiving from him in turn his unselfish loving care and protection.

It should be observed here that Paul's figure of the Church as the Body, in Eph. 1:23 and in Col. 1:18, is not

³³Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in TWNT, VI, 302f.

³⁴Epheserbrief, p. 239.

the same figure which he employs as the figure of the body in Rom. 12:4f. and I Cor. 12:12-27. In Romans and Corinthians the human body is viewed as one organic whole in which each individual part of the body performs its own specific function. In this figure the head (I Cor. 12:21) is regarded as one among many members of the human body.³⁵ Paul uses this comparison to illustrate his point that the members of the Church, with their differing spiritual gifts, have specific and necessary functions to perform for the wellbeing of the Church just as the individual parts of the human body have their own specific functions to perform for the wellbeing of the physical body. In Ephesians 1:23 and in Col. 1:18 Christ is pictured as the Head of the Body, which is the Church. The Head is not one among other parts of the Body.

In Eph. 1:23 *τὸ πλήρωμα* is described as belonging to Him, that is Christ, *τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου*. The meaning of this difficult participial clause hinges on the meaning and voice of *πληρουμένου*. Does this verse mean that the Church fills Christ? And, if so, in what way? Or is its meaning that Christ fills all in all? And, again if so, in what way?

The first problem is to determine the meaning of

³⁵ Ernst Percy, *Der Leib Christi (Σῶμα Χριστοῦ) in den Paulinischen Homologumena und Antilegomena* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1946) contains a full treatment of these two *σῶμα Χριστοῦ* figures. In future the title of this book will be referred to as *Leib Christi*.

πληρουμένου . Paul uses *πληρώω* in connection with *τὰ πάντα* in 4:10 of this same epistle. The latter is a difficult passage, but it is closely related to 1:23.

In Eph. 4:10 *πληρώω* is used as Luke employed it in the Ananias passage (Acts 5:3) where it means that Satan filled the heart of Ananias by gaining control of it. Paul is saying in Eph. 4:10 that Christ descended into the realm of the dead. After His resurrection from that realm He ascended to the right hand of the Father that He might fill *τὰ πάντα*, that is exercise His dominion over *τὰ πάντα* . *τὰ πάντα*, as Eph. 1:20-22 shows, is the universe, particularly the evil powers.³⁶ This too is the view taken by Friedrich Buechsel.³⁷ In Eph. 1:23 *πληρουμένου* thus means Christ fills the universe with His dominion in every respect (*ἐν πᾶσιν*).³⁸ Christ does not fill the universe with His saving powers as He does the Church. Paul never calls the universe Christ's Pleroma.³⁹

In addition to the meaning of *πληρουμένου* emerges the problem of the voice of the verb form. Paul is using it

³⁶Gewiess, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

³⁷Buechsel, "Κατώτερος," in *TWNT*, III, 641-643.

³⁸Paul thus uses *πληρώω* in a different sense in Eph. 1:23; 4:10, different from that which he attaches to it in Eph. 3:19 and Col. 2:10. In the latter case Christ fills the Church with His saving power and governance, while in the former Christ exercises His dominion over the universe.

³⁹Gewiess, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-141.

in the middle voice. "The middle is occasionally used . . . where an active is expected" ⁴⁰ Paul's meaning of Eph. 1:23 then is that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, the Church which Christ has filled with all His saving powers, has as its saving and governing Head Him who fills the universe through His dominion in every respect: Christ.

In conclusion it should be added that the meaning of this passage has been much debated over the centuries. The crux around which the discussion has centered has been the participial clause. C. F. D. Moule lists five different interpretations:

The following exegeses cover most of the alternatives: (a) ". . . the fulfillment of him who all in all is being fulfilled," i.e., the church is to be the completion of the Christ, who is thus finding fulfillment through it; (b) "the fullness of him who all in all is being filled," i.e., the church is filled (the fullness in this passive sense--but see above for the unlikelihood of this) by Christ who, in his turn, is filled by God; (c) ". . . the fullness of him who fills all in all," i.e., the church is either the completion of (as in (a) or that which is filled by (as in b) Christ, who fills everything (cf. Eph. 4:10); (d) construing "the fullness" as in apposition to "the head," we get the sense that God has appointed Christ both to be head of the church and to be God's own full representative (cf. Col. 1:19; 2:9 above); (e) construing as in (d), but taking τοῦ πληρουμένου as a periphrasis for the universe or for the church: Christ is himself the

⁴⁰F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated from the German and revised by Robert A. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1961), §316 (1).

totality or filling of that which is to be completed or filled (see the Commentaries).⁴¹

Of the above interpretations the first requires special attention and must be rejected. Among its champions of the past have been such eminent exegetes as T. K. Abbott,⁴² J. A. Robinson,⁴³ and Adolf Schlatter.⁴⁴ Ever since Chrysostom, the interpretation that the Church is the completion of Christ has found favor with some interpreters.

This interpretation has a follower at the present in F. W. Beare, who prefers to render the term as "complement; that which makes complete." "Christ and the Church together," he writes, "form an organic unity; the body is the complement of the head."⁴⁵

Heinrich Schlier, in a class by himself, gives *πληρουμένου* both an active and a passive meaning. After he says that the Church is the Body of Christ, he comments:

⁴¹C. F. D. Moule, "Pleroma," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, et al. (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1962), III, 827.

⁴²Abbott, op. cit., p. 37.

⁴³J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes, 2nd edition, 3rd impression (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., n.d.), pp. 42f.

⁴⁴Adolf Schlatter, Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Kolosser und Philemon, in Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, c.1963), VII, 173.

⁴⁵F. W. Beare, The Epistle to the Ephesians, Introduction and Exegesis, in The Interpreter's Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1953), X, 122f.

So ist sie damit als der mit der Fuelle Gottes und Christi erfuellte und erfuellende "Raum" dieser "Fuelle" gekennzeichnet.⁴⁶

In other words, the Church is at one and the same time the "filled" and the "filling." Since in Schlier's view the Church also fills Christ, Christ is being filled.

To establish his position, Schlier uses an unusual exegetical method. It consists of a catenation of Pauline passages pertaining to Christ and the Church, involved arguments, and the abundant use of classical, Judaic, and Oriental literature.⁴⁷ He initiates the development of his position by laying down two basic and self-evident principles: (1) that Christ is the Lord of the universe, and (2) that Christ is the Head of the Church. Being Head of the Church involves three things for Christ:

a. His lordship over the Church. Christ's lordship demands obedience to Him on the part of the Church. In turn, Christ's love for the Church gives the Church its power, its growth and its goal.

b. Supplementation. The Church supplements Christ. This Schlier draws from the figure of husband and wife in Eph. 5:25-33. The underlying thought is that a man is not a husband without a wife. The wife supplements him. Here Schlier misses the point in Paul's comparison of the relation-

⁴⁶Heinrich Schlier, Der Brief an die Epheser (2nd ed.; Duesseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1958), p. 99.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 89-99.

ship between a husband and a wife with that of the relationship existing between Christ and the Church. Paul uses this analogy to illustrate that the obedience a wife owes to her husband is like that which the Church owes to Christ and to indicate the devotion, the loving care and the self-sacrificing concern a husband possesses for his wife. If Schlier sees "supplementation" in *παραστήση* (27), he overlooks Paul's use of the same word in Col. 1:25,28 where it has the meaning of "make" or "render."⁴⁸

c. The goal of the Church's growth. The Church's growth springs from Christ to the Church and progresses from the Church to Christ.

The next major point which Schlier seeks to prove is that, when Paul says that the Church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22f.), he uses the same figure which is found in Rom. 12:f. and in I Cor. 12:12-17. Schlier frankly admits that the passages from Romans and First Corinthians do not specifically equate the Church with the Body of Christ but rather with the human body. To effect the equation "the Church equals the Body of Christ" in these two passages, Schlier resorts to an unusual linking together of these passages. The catenation runs like this: In I Cor. 12:12

⁴⁸Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, adapted and translated from the German by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1957), sub *παιίστημι* (1), (c).

the congregation is compared with the human body and so is Christ. Rom. 12:5, however, states that "though we are many we are one body in Christ." This leads Schlier to the conclusion:

Es steht in dem Hintergrund die Gleichung: Christus = Leib bzw, wir in Christus = ein Leib . . . Die Aussage meint Praegnant dies: wir, die wir ein Leib sind, sind Christus (als ein Leib).⁴⁹

In addition to using this odd and misleading method, Schlier fails to see that in I Cor. 12:12f. Paul is stressing that the human body, in spite of its many members, is a unit like the oneness of Christ. The interdependence of the numerous members and organs of the human body is to be an example of Christian unity and co-operation for the members of the congregation to follow.

Schlier's next paragraph seeks to establish that the term Body of Christ expresses the relationship of the Church to Christ. Schlier maintains that Eph. 1:22f; 4:15f.; 5:23; Col. 1:8; (2:10); 2:19 actually establish this dual relationship through the words "head" and "body." In the "head" and the "body" the Church "in Christ" becomes "the new man" (Eph. 2:15b). However, Schlier misinterprets this last verse, which deals with the Jews and Gentiles being one in Christ as the context (11-15a) makes clear. He continues by saying that, when the "body" reaches the "head," then it becomes "the

⁴⁹Schlier, op. cit., p. 90.

perfect man" (Eph. 4:13).⁵⁰ Here again Schlier misunderstands what Paul writes. The perfect man is not the "body" plus Christ the "head," but the perfect man is the mature man. The contrast of *ἡλικία* (13) with *νήπιοι* (14) makes this clear. The meaning of Eph. 4:13 will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.⁵¹

After Schlier feels that he has established what he set out to prove from Paul's own statements, he draws on the classics to support his argument. He cites proof that the classical writers who often call the cosmos a body which is formed out of the multiplicity of "members" and "parts" that the body has. In this cosmic body the classical writers found a sense of mutual help and co-operation because of a sympathetic union which exists between the members.⁵²

The state as well is regarded by some classical writers as a body, Schlier points out. The Greeks regarded the *πόλις* as a *σῶμα*. This concept gives a judicial character to the *πόλις* in its relationship over the *σῶμα*. Because the body was the state it was also the head. Like the members of the cosmic bodies the members of the *σῶμα* reciprocated a mutual responsibility between the body and the members.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵¹ Infra, pp. 46-48.

⁵² Schlier, op. cit., p. 91.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 91.

Schlier cites these parallels from the classics to show that Paul's use of "head" and "body" was in keeping with concepts current at the time. Schlier admits, however, that his examples do not coincide in every detail with Paul's concept. The classical usage never identified its body-head figures with a definite and particular individual as Paul did when he named Christ as the individual on whom the Body-Head concept is focused. This difference was deliberate on the part of Paul. Schlier explains, "Er [Paulus] hebt die Kirche aus der Sphaere menschlicher Gemeinschaften heraus."⁵⁴

Schlier follows this with an analysis of similar concepts from Judaic, Oriental and Gnostic writings.⁵⁵ Then he takes up the question of the extent to which Paul was dependent on them in the derivation and use of his concept of Pleroma and the Head-Body figure. Chapter IV of this thesis deals at some length with the theory that Paul borrowed this concept of Pleroma from Gnostic and Oriental sources. Schlier's views regarding Paul's dependence on these sources are presented there.⁵⁶ The rebuttal to Schlier's views on Paul's Gnostic sources will be presented when that theory is analyzed.⁵⁷

From his studies of the Pauline statements concerning

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 91f.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 92-94.

⁵⁶ Infra, 53-55.

⁵⁷ Infra, 56-61.

the Church Schlier concludes that in Colossians and Ephesians Paul finds a "cosmic" view of the Church, but that in Romans and First Corinthians the Church is regarded as a "social organism." Thus Paul's conception of the Church is both cosmic and social.⁵⁸

Sie [die Kirche] ist durch Christus und in Christus aus vielen Glaebigen geeinter Leib, und sie ist der Leib Christi selbst. Sie ist immer, kann man auch sagen, Christus selbst in seinem Leib Die Kirche ist immer der Leib Christi, der vor der einzelnen Gliedern gegeben ist und die einzelnen Glaebigen zu "Gliedern" macht, bzw. sie "Glieder" sein laesst Die Kirche ist . . . immer ein aus der Welt ausgegrenztes Gebilde. Weil sie das ist, weil sie der (neue) Welt-Leib in einem herausgehobenen sozialen Organismus ist, erhebt sie den Anspruch und geht sie darauf aus, alle Welt in ihren und Christi Leib hereinzuholen

Dabei darf nicht vergessen werden, dass nun wiederum auch der Begriff **σῶμα** nur ein Wesensbegriff fuer die Kirche bei Paulus ist, wenn auch ein ueberragender.

Das verraet sich in unserem Zusammenhang sofort darin, dass der Apostel die Kirche auch noch **τὸ πλῆρωμα τοῦ . . . ΠΑΡΟΥΣΗΟΥ** nennt.⁵⁹

Schlier feels that he can support his argument even further that the church is both the filled and that which fills. He points out in Eph. 3:19 and in Col. 2:9 "solches Pleroma Gottes oder gottheitliches Pleroma ist."⁶⁰ According to Col. 2:9 Pleroma is the abode, the house, the room of the Pleroma. However, the Church as the Body of Christ is also called the Pleroma, and the Pleroma is repeatedly said to embrace the

⁵⁸ Schlier, op. cit., p. 95.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 95f.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

Pleroma. Since Paul speaks of achieving the Pleroma (Eph. 4:13), and because the believers are filled (passive) by baptism (Col. 2:10) and by gnosis (Eph. 3:19), πληροῦσθαι in the absolute sense means to be drawn into the Pleroma, "und so ein in der 'Fuelle' durch die 'Fuelle' 'Erfuellt'-werden."⁶¹

To sum up Schlier's devious and torturesome view of Pleroma we quote his own summary of the concept:

Es handelt sich bei πλήρωμα in unseren Briefen also in der Tat um einen einheitlichen Begriff: Gottes Pleroma, das "leibhaftig" in Christus Wohnung genommen hat, ist in Christi "Leib," der Kirche, praesent. Durch sie, die Kirche, den Ort seines und damit Gottes Pleroma, zieht Christus das All in das Pleroma hinein, das er als der Auffahrende schon in Besitz genommen hat. Er zieht es dadurch in das Pleroma hinein, dass er die Glaebigen in das (ganze oder volle) Pleroma gelangen laesst.⁶²

Damit [dieses πληροῦσθαι des Alls] ist schon angedeutet, was sich spaeter klar erweist, dass die Einbeziehung des Alls in das Pleroma Gottes als solches nur ueber die Kirche und in ihr ueber den einzelnen geht, der sich in dieser Staette der Fuelle Christi von der Fuelle Christi in das Pleroma Gottes einholen laesst.⁶³

This view of the Body complementing the Head must be rejected for the following considerations:

a. Because it fails to observe that the Head-Body figure conveys the concept of Lordship. Schlier is an exception in this regard.

b. Because "complement" is inconsistent with Paul's view

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁶² Ibid., p. 97.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 99.

as expressed in Col. 2:10 that Christ fills the Church. It is not the Church which fills Christ, but Christ who fills the Church.

c. Because Eph. 4:10 expresses the identical thought of 1:23b, which the exponents of "complement" overlook.

d. Because by the context (22) God made a gift of Christ to the Church as its Head. God did not give the Church to Christ as His complement.⁶⁴

Ephesians 3:19

"To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (*ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλῆρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ*)." (RSV)

The two remaining Pleroma passages in Ephesians speak of the growth in knowledge by which the Church attains fullness in Christ and God. These two passages, though appearing to contradict Col. 2:10 and Eph. 1:23, are nevertheless in harmony with them. Ernst Percy states:

Durch den Gedanken des wachsenden Leibes bekommt aber die ganze Vorstellung von der Gemeinde als Leib Christi etwas Schillerndes: einerseits ist sie als in Christus eingegliedert seiner ganzen Fuelle teilhaft (Kol. 2:10), ja kann sogar als sein eigenes *σῶμα* bezeichnet werden (Eph. 1:23), wobei Christus selbst der Leib ist, andererseits erreicht sie diese Fuelle erst durch allmähliches Wachstum (Eph. 3:19; 4:13, 15f.) und wird als der Leib von Christus als Haupt des Leibes unterschieden.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Leib Christi, p. 51, n. 93.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 53.

In Eph. 3:19 St. Paul prays that the recipients of his letter might achieve the final goal of knowing the measureless love of Christ: *ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ* (19b).

His prayer is that the Father might strengthen them with power through the Spirit (14-16), that Christ may dwell with them through faith unshakeably rooted in love, and finally, that they may know the love of Christ, which exceeds comprehension. All this Paul asks in prayer that they might share in the complete fullness of the knowledge which God bestows.⁶⁶ The indwelling gift-giving Christ is to fill them so completely that they possess "all the fullness of the riches of God, all that is 'spiritually communicable to the saints, who are the "partakers of divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4' (Moule)."⁶⁷

On the face of it, this verse appears to contradict Eph. 1:23 and Col. 2:10. In the latter verses the fullness of the Church is an already established fact, while in Eph. 3:19 the fullness is set as a goal to be achieved. Paul's line of reasoning in 3:19 is that Christians still live in this world. While they are still in the flesh in this aeon they are to appropriate for themselves increasingly that which God has already accomplished for them. They are to become what in fact they already are. Apparent contradictions of this type

⁶⁶Delling, "πλήρωμα," in TWNT, VI, 301.

⁶⁷Abbott, op. cit., p. 102.

are not rare in Pauline thinking. The "conflict" here is analogous with the pardon expressed by simul justus et peccator.⁶⁸

Ephesians 4:13

"Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (*εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*)."

(RSV)

Eph. 4:13 and 3:19 both set fullness as an objective for the Christians in this life. Briefly, Paul sees full maturity in Christian knowledge as the destiny of the individual members of the Church. Christians who arrive at this objective are no longer "*νήπιοι* tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine . . ." (14).

In this fourth chapter, Paul is telling his addressees that the differing gifts which the individual members possess are not to be a source of envy or friction (4:2-4) but are to be regarded as that which God meant them to be, God-given gifts for the edification of the Church (4:5-12). This upbuilding eventuates in full spirit maturity, when all the members achieve full knowledge of Christ (13,14). They have then arrived *εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ*

⁶⁸ Probleme, pp. 301ff., 385, n. 36.

πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ernst Percy puts it very well

when he writes:

Die Gemeinde ist erst dann vollkommen und schliesst erst dann die ganze Fuelle in sich, wenn alle ihre einzelnen Mitglieder die vollkommene Erkenntnis von Christus erreicht haben; erst dann haben sich diese die ganze Fuelle Christi angeeignet (3:19).⁶⁹

When Christians achieve this full knowledge then they are wholly governed by Christ. Immature children (*νήπιοι*), who do not possess full knowledge, are easily influenced by anything they are told. Immature Christians are tossed around by every changeable teaching advanced by deceitful preachers. The faith of those immature in Christian knowledge is unstable. The members of the Church are to utilize their manifold gifts of ministry to draw their unity and strength from Christ the Head, who binds them all together and promotes the growth and development of His Body. The gifts associated with the ministry have been bestowed by the exalted Christ for the furtherance of knowledge of the faith. When these are properly used and accepted, the congregation achieves full knowledge and grows into a mature, stable unity. In Christian knowledge lies the Church's power.

After studying all these Pleroma passages, particularly those in Colossians and Ephesians, one cannot escape the conviction that what Paul has set forth is the fulfillment of the Savior's parting words in Matt. 28:18-20:

⁶⁹ Probleme, p. 322, n. 78*.

All power⁷⁰ is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go forth, then, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teach them to cling to everything I have commanded you. And, mark well, I am with you at all times, right up to the close of the time.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *ἐξουσία* describes the invisible power of God and in relation to Christ His God-given fullness of power. Thus when in Matt. 28:18 Jesus says, "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth," He is proclaiming that He is now exalted as Christ and Lord in the Kingdom of God (Acts 2:36). See Werner Foerster, "*ἐξουσία*" in TWNT, II, 563 and 565.

⁷¹ Author's translation.

CHAPTER IV

GNOSTIC SOURCE FOR THE WORD PLEROMA

With Paul's rather frequent use of the word Pleroma the question arises as to where he obtained this concept. The question of its source becomes particularly important in the study of his use of the word in Colossians and Ephesians, where Pleroma appears with little elaboration and explanation. The absolute use of the term leads interpreters to the conclusion that Paul is operating with a concept already quite familiar to the recipients of these two letters. The conclusion reached by many who have investigated the term Pleroma is that Paul borrowed the word from the Colossian heretics. The heretics were Gnostics who used the word to describe the intermediary powers between man and God. Paul took this word and explained it in a Christian sense to undermine the false teachers. This view, Ernst Percy maintains, has become almost an axiom among interpreters. He says:

Es ist nun in der Forschung beinahe ein Axiom geworden, dass Paulus oder wer nun der Verfasser des Kolosserbriefes sei diesen Terminus von der in diesem Brief bekaempften Irrlehre geholt habe.¹

Not a few of those who have come to grips with the concept of Pleroma have taken the Colossian heresy to be a form

¹Ernst Percy, Die Probleme der Kolosser-und Epheserbriefe (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1946), pp. 76f. Hereafter referred to as Probleme.

of Gnosticism. Bishop J. B. Lightfoot assumes that the word "was common to St. Paul and the Colossian heretics whom he controverts."² While attributing the use of the term to Cerinthus, he, nevertheless, believes that Cerinthus' teaching "was a development of the Colossian heresy."³ Lightfoot himself held that the Colossian heresy was an incipient Gnosticism, "which ultimately took form and consistency in the tenets of Cerinthus."⁴

T. K. Abbott goes into considerable length to establish the Pauline authorship of Colossians by demonstrating that the supposed Gnostic coloring and tendency cannot be used against the genuineness of Colossians and Ephesians. He supposes that Paul used a term common to himself and the Colossian false teachers to combat their erroneous views, but he does not grant that this is an argument in favor of a Gnostic tendency on the part of the writer. Abbott does not say expressis verbis that Paul did not obtain the term from Gnostics (since Abbott's point is to demolish the Gnostic tendency theory) but he leaves no doubt of his conviction that

²J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 265.

³Ibid., p. 265.

⁴Ibid., p. 112.

Paul was in no way dependent on the Gnostics.⁵

Included in the ranks of those who see a Gnostic term is W. L. Knox. In his book, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles, Knox reconstructs from Colossians a description of the Colossian heresy. Among the errors is the necessity to attain "the fullness of wisdom" through knowledge of "the hidden wisdom" to bring a person to "completion."⁶ Then he goes on to say:

The whole system is a relatively simple type of Gnosis of the earlier type, before Valentinus had introduced the complication which was bound to result from the attempt at a complete duplication of things celestial and things terrestrial.⁷

Rudolph Bultmann is numbered among the interpreters who see Gnosticism as the heresy being opposed when Paul uses the word *πλήρωμα*. Says he:

In der griechischen Gnosis wird *πλήρωμα* absolut als Name des goettlichen Reiches der Aeonen gebraucht Ebenso liegt dieser Sprachgebrauch zugrunde Kol. 1:9.19; 2:9; Eph. 1:23; 3:19.⁸

In Gnostic literature the term (in absolute usage) means the sphere of the Aeons, the upper pneumatic world to which

⁵T. K. Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. liv-lvii, passim.

⁶W. L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), p. 154.

⁷Ibid., p. 155.

⁸Rudolph Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in Kritischexegetischer Kommentar ueber des Neue Testament (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 51, n. 7.

the Gnostic is substantially related and into which he hopes to ascend after his death. Thus the concept Pleroma is changed from a merely formal conception of fullness to a material conception of divine essence. Some passages in the New Testament show this modified usage.⁹

Martin Dibelius follows along with Bultmann. Dibelius says:

Die Bedeutung des Wortes ist im Kolosserbrief nicht entwickelt, sondern vorausgesetzt; aus diesem Umstand und aus der Verwendung von *πεπληρωμένος* 2:10 dürfen wir wohl schliessen, dass *πλήρωμα* ein Terminus der kolossischen Gnostiker ist¹⁰

F. W. Beare joins those who espouse the belief that Paul took up the term from his opponents. In his exposition of Colossians, he states, "The word Pleroma is undoubtedly a technical term of the Colossian 'philosophy'; it is one of the key words of the Gnostic systems."¹¹ In his discussion of the dependence of Ephesians on Colossians he cites as proof the following:

Not only are the actual words of Colossians taken up again and again, but the cosmic theologoumena which were brought forward in Colossians to serve the needs

⁹Rudolph Bultmann, "Pleroma," in The Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (revised edition by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 777.

¹⁰Martin Dibelius, An die Kolosser Epheser an Philemon, dritte Auflage, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (neubearbeitet von Heinrich Greeven; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), XXII, 18.

¹¹F. W. Beare, The Epistle to the Colossians, Introduction and Exegesis, in The Interpreter's Bible (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1955), XI, 171.

of an apologetic against a particular form of Gnostic syncretism and asceticism are here made the heart of a system of Christian thought¹²

C. K. Barrett has no doubts that Paul is among "the early Christian writers" who took over the Gnostic term Pleroma "in something like its Gnostic sense."¹³ F. F. Bruce apparently is not quite willing to concede that Paul might have borrowed the word. While he admits that the heretical teachers at Colossae employed it in a technical sense "as it was in a number of Gnostic systems," he does not say that the Colossian heretics were Gnostics.¹⁴

Heinrich Schlier endorses the Gnostic source of Pleroma. Schlier sees Gnosticism behind the errors of Ephesians and Colossians, as his article "κεφαλή" in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Griechischen Neuen Testament demonstrates.¹⁵ In an extensive treatment of πλήρωμα in Der Brief an

¹²F. W. Beare, The Epistle to the Ephesians, Introduction and Exegesis, in The Interpreter's Bible (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1953), X, 603.

¹³C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, an Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text (London: S.P.C.K., c.1958), p. 140.

¹⁴E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, the English Text with Introduction and Notes, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1957), p. 206.

¹⁵Heinrich Schlier, "κεφαλή," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, c.1938), III, 679f. Hereinafter referred to as Schlier, "κεφαλή," TWNT, III.

die Epheser¹⁶ he says:

Und als Terminus technicus ist er durchaus als bekannt vorausgesetzt und wird nicht weiter erklart¹⁷

How deeply this Gnostic source theory worked its way into Schlier's thinking and interpretation is evident from his book, Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief. In the chapter dealing with the Church as the Body of Christ he quotes eighteen passages from Colossians, Ephesians, and Ignatius to describe the Church as Christ's Body. Then he comments:

Es wird wohl kaum einer auf den Gedanken kommen, dass diese merkwuerdige Vorstellung vom Verhaeltnis von ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ und ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ eine einfache bildliche Uebertragung, von Verhaeltnissen des natuerlichen Leibes auf ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ und ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ durch den Verfasser des Epheserbriefes ist. Denn abgesehen davon, dass der "Leib" eigentlich ein Rumpf ist, wie schon H. J. Holtzmann (Neutestamentliche Theologie, S. 293f.) gesehen hat, ist das Wachsen des Leibes ein ganz unnatuerliches, naehmlich zum Haupt hin, obwohl es auf der anderen Seite wieder vom Haupt ausgeht. Vor allem aber ist zu beachten, dass Christus sowohl die ΚΕΦΑΛΗ allein ist, als auch das ΣΩΜΑ + ΚΕΦΑΛΗ. Er ist sowohl Anthropos selbst, wie die ΚΕΦΑΛΗ des Anthropos. Man kann schon von diesen Voraussetzungen aus im Sinne des Epheserbriefes von Christus sagen, was etwa Ormuzd und der Weltgott ΑΙΩΝ gilt . . . , dass er sowohl das Ganze wie auch einen Teil des Ganzen darstellt. Das ist nur eine andere Auspraegung dessen, was wir schon oben bei der Vorstellung vom ΑΝΗΡ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ feststellten: der Anthropos ist zugleich im Himmel und auf der Erde. Dort als "Haupt," das doch der ganze Christus Wieder ist, hier als ΣΩΜΑ, das aber wiederum doch das ΣΩΜΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ist. Durch solche Erwaegungen wird auch von vorherein bestaetigt, was Dibelius in seinen

¹⁶ Heinrich Schlier, Der Brief an die Epheser (Duesseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1958), pp. 96-100.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

Exkurs: "Die Vorstellung von Christus als Weltseele und Weltschoepfer" fuer den Kolosserbrief festgestellt hat, dass hinter der Christusgestalt des Kolosserbriefes (und Epheserbriefes) die Anthropos- (bzw. Aion-) Theologie einer immer mehr sich erhellenden "Gnosis" steht.¹⁸

Admittedly, Schlier wrote this thirty-four years ago.

That this remains his stand, though in a somewhat weaker form, is clear from Der Brief an die Epheser where he writes:

Eine formale Analogie zum paulinischen Gedanken bzw. zu seiner Voraussetzung wird aber in der juedischen, vom orientalischn-agnostischen Urmensch-Erloeser-Mythus beeinflussten Adamsspekulation greifbar. Dass Paulus solche Adamspekulationen kennt, ergibt sich aus seiner gegenueberstellung von Adam und Christus in Roem. 5:12-21; I Kor. 15:20-22; 44b-9.¹⁹

Ernst Lohmeyer finds Gnosticism, at least in its incipient form, behind the Colossian heresy. He states:

So scheint es sich in der kolossischen Philosophie um eine gnostische Religion der Selbsterloesung mit juedischem Untergrund zu handeln . . . ihr Inhalt ist die Flucht aus dem Diesseits in jenes jenseitige Reich der "Erfuellung," und sie geschieht aus Askese und Gnosis, deren Beginn durch den juedischen Ritus der Beschneidung gleichsam gesichert ist.²⁰

Das [die abstrakten Begriffe: "Gottheit, Welt und Elemente"] scheint zu bedeuten, dass hier vorderorientalische Gnosis und hellenistischer Begriff sich beruehrt haben. Ist aber die Vereinigung dieser Beiden religioes-philosophischen Stroeme das Merkmal der spaeteren christlichen wie ausserchristlichen Gnosis vor allem des zweiten Jahrhunderts, so bereiten sich in diesem Streit, den Paulus um einen entlegenes Flecken des inneren Kleinasiens fuehrt, die grossen Kaempfe der werdenden christlichen Kirche mit der maechtig ent-

¹⁸ Heinrich Schlier, Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief (Tuebingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930), p. 38f.

¹⁹ Heinrich Schlier, Der Brief an die Epheser (Duesseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1958), p. 92.

²⁰ Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon, in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar (II. Aufl.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), p.8.

faltenen gnostischen Bewegung vor; er ist ihr leiser und ferner Vorklang.²¹

L. J. Baggott sees Paul combatting Gnosticism when he writes:

Where Gnosticism required a chain of principalities and powers by means of which a man might climb up to God, the Incarnation proclaims as ever-present and all-sufficient Mediator, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, at once Son of Man and Son of God.²²

In all fairness to Baggott, one must say that he tones down this strong statement that Paul was fighting Gnosticism when he closes his treatment of the subject by saying, "Nor need we call it Gnosticism, although the Gnostic systems all developed under similar circumstances."²³

Similarly Hans Conzelmann says: "Auch 'Fuelle' (pleroma) ist ein Stichwort jener kosmischen Religiositaet,"²⁴ and again, when referring to "diese Gnostiker," he adds, "'Christus' ist nur noch Chiffre zur Bezeichnung eines aus eigener Spekulation konstruierten Inhaltes. Er ist das 'pleroma' der Welt."²⁵

Ranged against the interpreters who believe, or are inclined to believe, that Paul borrowed Pleroma from the

²¹ Ibid., p. 12.

²² L. J. Baggott, A New Approach to Colossians (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Limited, c.1961), p. 13.

²³ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁴ Hans Conzelmann, Der Brief an die Kolosser in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (9. Aufl.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1962), VII, 143.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

Gnostics are some who are convinced that he employs the word quite independently. Sverre Aalen came to the conclusion that Paul's use of the Pleroma concept is not traceable to the Gnostics. He concedes that the passive meaning of *πλήρωμα* shapes itself in the direction of Gnostic thinking. Aalen studied the concept of Pleroma in Valentinian and in Manichaeism in particular. The latter, in his opinion, certainly presents some very clear parallels to the thought that the Deity fills "the All." The "Redeemed-Redeemer Figure" of Manichaeism with its "Pillar of Light" (*lyssole*) fits quite nicely into the Pauline Christology. The "Pillar of Light" not only fills the All but is itself filled by, and is composed of, cleansed souls. This, Aalen concedes, approaches very close to Paul's statements in Eph.4:13 about *ἀνὴρ τέλειος* which can be construed as Christ's body, even Christ Himself. In this view of the perfect man it is Christ who grows to full size as the Church progresses toward its goal and thus becomes Christ's fullness; for it fills Him, completes Him, makes Him whole (as Schlier interprets the passage).²⁶

Aalen rejected Gnosticism as Paul's source of the concept (1) because the Gnostic texts are of a late date, (2) because the perfect man concept is found in the Stoics and in Philo as well, but, more cogently, (3) because the argu-

²⁶ Sverre Aalen, "Begrepet *πλήρωμα* i Kolosser- og Efeserbrevet," in Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke, XXIII (1952), pp. 50-54.

ment of Ephesians is not what the believers mean to Christ but what Christ means to the believers. Aalen's conclusion is that one must look for Paul's source material at some place other than in Gnosticism.²⁷

There are other interpreters as well who do not see Gnosticism as Paul's source for the use of *πλήρωμα*. Among them is C. F. D. Moule. While he admits that ". . . it is very possible that St. Paul's vocabulary included technical terms borrowed from the 'Gnostic' armoury," he concludes that "evidence is lacking that the technical use of *πλήρωμα* was ever widespread--least of all as early as this."²⁸

Gerhard Delling, who contributed the article "*πλήρωμα*" in Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Griechischen Neuen Testament, is emphatic in his refusal to accept its Gnostic derivation. He gives two reasons to substantiate his position.

Deshalb [weil die goettliche Liebes- und Machtfuelle in ihrer Vollstaendigkeit durch den Christus wirkt und herrscht] befriedigt auch die Erklaerung nicht, mit *πλήρωμα* sei ein Stichwort der kolossischer Irrlehrer aufgenommen.²⁹

Again he says:

Es ist weiterhin nicht zu uebersehen, dass auch in Kolosser und Epheser oefter die das Substantiv *πλήρωμα*

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 50-54.

²⁸ C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon in The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, ed. by C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), p. 166.

²⁹ Gerhard Delling, "*πλήρωμα*" in Theologisches Woert-

benutzende Wendung formal durch eine Konstruktion mit dem Adjektiv *πληρής* bzw. dem Verb *πληροῦν* ersetzt werden koennte (wenn auch die Wahl von *πλήρωμα* ihre guten sachlichen Gruende hat); das waere nicht moeglich, wenn es sie um einen technischen Gebrauch von im gnostischen Sinne handelte.³⁰

The most explicit and certainly the most pointed opponent of the Gnostic view among the writers studied is Ernst Percy. In support of his stand he gives a number of reasons in Die Probleme der Kolosser und Epheserbriefe.

First, Percy cannot conceive that Paul would borrow a term, which to Paul is so obviously important and expressive, from the false teachers without any polemics against the heretical view. Percy believes,

dass der Apostel von selbst jenes Wort gewaehlt habe, um gegenueber der Irrlehre hervorzuheben, dass in Christus das Hoechste, was ueberhaupt gedacht werden kann, naemlich die ganze Wesensfuelle Gottes, zu finden ist und dass deshalb die mit ihm Verbundenen schon dieser Fuelle teilhaft sind.³¹

Second, because the use of *πλήρωμα* in Colossians (das Verhaeltnis Christi zu Gott) differs from that in Ephesians (das Verhaeltnis der Gemeinde zu Gott und Christus), a very strong argument exists against the claim that Paul borrowed the word from the false teachers;³² and,

erbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), VI, 302. Hereinafter referred to as Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in TWNT, VI.

³⁰ Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in TWNT, VI, 302.

³¹ Probleme, p. 77.

³² Probleme, p. 385.

Third, because, as he believes, the Colossian heresy, in common with Gnosticism, was a syncretistic attempt to harmonize Christianity with the speculations of non-Christian piety. However, Gnosticism's characteristic conflict between this world together with its ruling powers, on the one hand, and the higher world, on the other, was not the creation of syncretism but that of the great opponent of the Colossian syncretism: Paul.³³

Gerhard Delling, Sverre Aalen, and Ernst Percy have valid arguments. In addition, the absence of Gnostic literature current in the middle of the first century raises grave doubts as to the existence of a form of Gnosticism of the kind from which Paul is alleged to have made this borrowing. The earliest Gnostic known as such was Cerinthus of around 100 A.D.³⁴ and who was said to be a contemporary of John according to a statement of Polycarp quoted by Irenaeus.³⁵ The late date for Cerinthus makes it quite unlikely that he would have been active or had a following at the time Paul wrote his First Captivity Letters.³⁶

³³ Probleme, p. 178.

³⁴ "Gnosticism" in Lutheran Cyclopedia, ed. Erwin L. Lueker, William F. Arndt, Otto A. Dorn, et al. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 417.

³⁵ A. S. Peake, "Cerinthus" in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. by James Hastings, John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918), III, 318. Referred to in future as ERE.

³⁶ Ca. 60 A.D. Those who hold that Caesarea or Ephesus was the place of writing of the Captivity Letters (ca. 59 A.D. in the case of the former and ca. 53-56 A.D. if the latter) will find it even less plausible to believe that Cerinthus was the originator of Gnosticism.

The view that Simon Magus of Acts 8:9-14 was the originator of Gnosticism, as is sometimes said, is too obscure and confused to be reliable. It appears that much that was written about Simon Magus in later generations was the result of legend and imagination sparked by the passage in Acts.³⁷

The Valentinian brand of Gnosticism with its emanations and series of aeons which constituted the Pleroma does use Pleroma in a way that might indicate a borrowing of the word by Paul.³⁸ However, Valentinianism flourished in the second century, so there is no possibility of Paul borrowing from Valentinus. On the contrary, it would appear that Valentinus borrowed from Paul to lend a Christian semblance of authority to his teachings.

Since Gnosticism, as Percy pointed out, was a syncretistic movement, the likelihood exists that the Colossian heresy and the Gnostics, though decades apart, used the same process of attempting to harmonize Christian teachings with that of Greek, Alexandrian, Essene, and Judaic cultures and philosophies then current.

³⁷ S. Vernon McCasland, "Simon Magus" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, et al. (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1962), III, 358-360.

³⁸ For a full description of Valentinian Gnosticism in concise form see Ernest Findlay Scott, "Valentinianism" in ERE, III, 577ff., and Robert McQueen Grant, "Gnosticism" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, II, 404ff.

The source of Paul's understanding of Pleroma lies elsewhere. It is to be found in the Old Testament. The following chapter will seek to demonstrate this fact.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE PLEROMA CONCEPT

Paul had no need to appropriate the word Pleroma from those who were disturbing the faith of his addressees.

Student of the Scripture that he was, Paul found the roots and basic concept of Pleroma in the Old Testament.

The Septuagint used *πλήρωμα* twelve times to translate the Hebrew nouns *נִזְוֹ*, *נִיזְוֹ* or *לִנְזֹו*. Once the Septuagint renders *רִצָּן* with *πλήρωμα*.¹ In all these cases in the Septuagint "wird das Wort nur räumlich gebraucht."²

The Hebrew verb *נִזְוֹ*, as we have seen,³ occurs much more frequently, one hundred and forty-seven times, and is translated by the Septuagint by either *πίμπλημι* or *πληροῶ*.

Only a small number of these Old Testament passages need be cited: Jer. 23:24; Is. 6:3; Ps. 72:19; Num. 14:21; Ps. 33:5, 119:64.

¹Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books), 2 Volumes (Graz-Austria: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1954), I, 1148.

²Gerhard Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GMBH, 1959), VI, 298. Hereinafter referred to as, Delling, "*πλήρωμα*," in TWNT, VI.

³Supra, p. 27.

The first of these is important for our purposes. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill ($\text{נִפְלֵא} = \text{πληρόω}$) heaven and earth? saith the Lord." This was a favorite passage in rabbinic Judaism to demonstrate the omnipresence and providence of God.

No sin, however done in secrecy and in darkness, can escape the eye of him who fills heaven and earth. On the other hand, that wherever we are, and in whatever estate, God is present with us, gives a realizing sense of his providence.⁴

Is. 6:3c states "the whole earth is full of ($\text{נִפְלֵא} = \text{πλήρης}$) his glory." This passage shows that something that does not occupy space can fill the earth, namely God's glory (יְדִבְרֵהוּ). Progressing further along these thought lines we find in I Kings 8:10,11 that the cloud (10) and the glory of Jaweh (11) filled ($\text{נִפְלֵא} = \text{ἐπίπλησεν}$) the Temple.

Both these Old Testament passages, and many more, demonstrate that God took control of the objects filled. This was the thought process involved in Paul's use of the word.

Not only is Paul's lexical use of Pleroma taken from the Old Testament, but, more significantly still, the Hebrew Scriptures supplied Paul with the theology for his understanding of Pleroma. The thought of God filling the heavens

⁴George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim, 2 Volumes (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, c.1927), I, 371. Here Moore gives a number of rabbinic references in support.

and the earth (Jer. 23:24; Is. 6:3) is that which Paul expressed in Eph. 1:23b and Eph. 4:10. The quotation from I Kings was the source--only one of many similar ones--from which he drew his concept of Christ filling the believers (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:23a). Paul was steeped in the thought of the Old Testament, as the entire Pauline corpus patently exhibits. His lexicographical and theological thesaurus was the Old Testament, the storehouse from which he drew the theology he set forth in Ephesians and Colossians, particularly his Christology.

The Christology of Col. 1:19 and 2:9 is among the richest Paul proclaimed. Human language can hardly convey more precisely or more comprehensively the conviction that all that God was Christ was than Paul's careful, succinct expression:

ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

However, there is more to the Christology of Col. 1:19 and 2:9 than a mere affirmation that Christ Jesus was and still is true God and true man. Paul is telling the Colossians that Christ Jesus is the temple of God.

Paul was not the first to equate Christ with the true temple. That Jesus had done Himself as John reports in his Gospel (John 2:19-22). Christ's *σῶμα* was the temple.⁵

⁵ Admittedly, John's Gospel had not yet been written when Paul wrote Colossians. However, the words and deeds of Jesus were circulated among the Churches by the Apostles and, in the case of the Colossians, by Epaphras (Col. 1:3-8).

Paul is here developing Old Testament thinking along the lines of Christ being the true temple. Col. 1:19 is an amplification of Ps. 68:17: *εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς κατοικεῖν ἐν αὐτῷ*. The *ἐν αὐτῷ* refers to Mount Zion as the context indicates. Mount Zion according to Ps. 48:2 is called "the city of the great King." The great King is identified as God because the first verse sets "the city of our God" as parallel to "the city of the great King." In Ps. 84:7 the faithful make their pilgrimage to Mount Zion to appear before God. Zion, though originally a name for the city of David, was the name later given to the temple area. It is in the temple that God dwells as Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the temple discloses, I Kings 8:27.

Both *εὐδόκησεν* and *κατοικεῖν* of Col. 1:19 are words approaching the force of technical terms to express God's will to have His presence take up its abode upon earth.⁶ This is the thought that later Judaism expressed with the term Shekinah, a term which John apparently had in mind when he wrote: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt (*ἐσκήνωσεν*) among us and we got to see His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

It was John who quoted Jesus as saying that His *σῶμα* was the true temple. What John is saying is that the

⁶ Sverre Aalen, "Begrepet *πλήρωμα* i Kolosser- og Efeserbrevet," in Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke, XXIII (1952), p. 58.

Incarnate Christ took up His abode among men and men got a look at His glory, His divinity. This is essentially what Paul is saying--in Christ the full Gott-Sein took up His abode (ΚΑΤΟΙΚῆΣΑΙ - 1:19) and still dwells (ΚΑΤΟΙΚΕῖ ἘΝ Αὐτῷ ΣΩΜΑΤΙΚῶΣ 2:9). Jesus' word σῶμα as the temple Paul expressed with σωματικῶς. God was present bodily, leibhaft greifbar.⁷ In the Old Testament temple, God's presence was visible in the form of a cloud (I Kings 8:10). In Christ the temple, God's presence dwelt σωματικῶς. In the temple of Solomon the priests could not stand to minister in the temple because the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (I Kings 8:11). In Christ, the temple, the divine presence dwells σωματικῶς, greifbar, physical, touchable. For Paul the Incarnate Christ is the temple of God.

It can be said, then, as God took up abode in Solomon's temple, filling it with His presence in the form of a cloud, so God took up physical abode in Christ Jesus. And so God was pleased to fill Christ Jesus with all the divine attributes. As the temple was the God-filled, so Christ is the God-filled. The conclusion is not hard to draw. Jesus Christ, the Pleroma of God, is God's temple among men.

Having drawn this conclusion, one still has not exhausted Paul's Christology as he set it forth in his

⁷Supra, p. 25.

Pleroma-temple concept in Col. 1:19 and Col. 2:9. He applies the Pleroma-temple also to the Church, which is likewise His body.

The transition to this further understanding Paul made in Col. 2:10, where he wrote: *καὶ ἔστε ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι*. Christ the filled in turn has filled the believers with Himself. As the temple existed (and still exists!) in Christ *σωματικῶς*, so it exists also in the Church, which is His *σῶμα*, His *πλήρωμα*.

When Paul speaks of the Church as Christ's Pleroma (Eph. 1:23), he conveys more than the Old Testament idea of God's filling the temple with His presence. In Paul, as in the whole New Testament, the Church-temple concept is associated with God's presence in, His filling of the Church through the Holy Ghost.⁸ Paul made very clear to the Christians in Corinth that they were the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in them (I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16ff.). In the first two of these passages Paul assumed that the Corinthians were quite familiar with the truth that Christians were indeed the Temple of God (*οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ κ.τ.λ.*); for a question asked with *οὐκ* implies an affirmative reply.

In I Cor. 6:19 Paul not only states that the Christians are the temple of the Holy Ghost but designates the temple

⁸Delling, "πλήρωμα," in TWNT, VI, 303, n. 54.

as *σῶμα ὑμῶν*. This is what Paul says in Eph. 1:22f., where he sets the Church, His Body, and His Pleroma side by side, in apposition to one another.

The concept of the Church, Christ's Pleroma, Paul describes in Eph. 2:21,22 as a *ναὸς ἅγιος ἐν κυρίῳ* (a temple sanctified through the Lord) and as a *κατοικτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι* (a permanent dwelling which God inhabits through the Spirit). The whole portrayal of the Church as a holy temple which God fills with His living presence is of one piece with *σῶμα-πλήρωμα*. The Church is the *πλήρωμα-ναός* of God.

When Paul speaks of the growth in knowledge by which the members of the Church attain the fullness of Christ and of God (Eph. 3:19; 4:13), he is not violating the spiritual temple picture of Eph. 2:21f. given above. Through growth in knowledge Christians while still living in this world are to appropriate for themselves increasingly what God has already made them to be--His temple. They are to become what they already are.⁹ According to Eph. 2:21f. the growth of the members of the Church into the temple is still going on (*αὐξεῖ, συνοικοδομεῖσθε*) even though they are already incorporated in it (*ἐποικοδομηθέντες*).

The Christology set forth in Paul's concept of Pleroma, based on the Old Testament teaching that the temple was God's dwelling place, can be summarized as follows:

⁹Supra, p. 46.

1. Christ Jesus is the temple of God because all the fullness of the divine Being has its permanent dwelling in Him, and
2. The Church, as the fullness of Christ, His Body, is in turn through the indwelling Christ the temple of God, because God dwells in and among its members.

God's people have become God's holy temple. No longer does God dwell in a temple made with hands. His permanent residence now is in and among His people, whom He has sanctified through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How did this ineffable blessing come about? It became a reality because God in His providence managed the course of salvation that it should be so. At the decisive point in His redemptive history, reaching as it does from before creation to long after this world has passed away, God sent His Son into the world to effect the redemption of Jew and non-Jew alike. Christ accomplished this through His death and resurrection. This redemption Christ was able to achieve with success because He possessed then, as now, the very divine functions and powers that God possesses. In fact, in Christ's physical body God was pleased to make His home. Christ in the flesh was God's temple among men, His Pleroma.

Even though Christ has ascended to His exalted position at God's right hand, God's temple remains among men. Not only is Christ still with His people here on earth, but the

community of believers, His Church, is His Body, for He has filled it with His love and saving power. Thus, the members of the Church are God's temple. As God was pleased to dwell in Christ, so God is pleased to take up residence among His people, His Pleroma.

Paradoxical as it may appear, the erection of this temple among men is still going on. Not that the temple is incomplete or that it is not yet a reality. The "edification" of the temple continues in the members of the Church as they grow in love and in the fuller knowledge of God's grace. Through this growth the believers reach complete maturity, which the full knowledge of God in Christ produces. Members of the Church are to become what they already are: the Pleroma, the temple of God.

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