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# THE CHURCH AS THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRIST:

## A NOTE ON EPHESIANS I. 23.

AT the close of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians S. Paul describes the Church, which he has just declared to be Christ's Body, by a very noteworthy phrase: τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου. The purpose of this paper is: (1) To investigate the meaning of πλήρωμα in general; and (2) To apply the result of the investigation to the theological interpretation of S. Paul's description of the Church.

I. The precise meaning of the word πλήρωμα has been a matter of much controversy among Biblical critics. It was discussed at great length by C. F. A. Fritzsche in his Commentary on *Romans* (1839), vol. ii. pp. 469 ff., and to him subsequent writers are in the main indebted for their illustrations from Greek literature. Fritzsche's long note was drawn from him by the statement of Storr and writers who followed him, that πλήρωμα always has an *active* sense in the New Testament. He, on the contrary, starts with the assertion that substantives in -μα have a *passive* sense. He admits a few cases in which πλήρωμα has an *active* sense: such as Eurip. *Troad.* 823:

Λαομεδόντιε παῖ,  
Ζηγὸς ἔχεις κυλίκων  
πλήρωμα, καλλίσταν λατρείαν

and Philo *de Abr.* (Mangey, II. 39), where "faith towards God is called παραγώρημα βίου, πλήρωμα χρηστῶν

ἐλπίδων. But he insists that in such cases πλήρωμα means "the filling" or "fulfilling," and not "that which fills" (*complendi actionem, non id quod complet*). He then proceeds to show that the fundamental sense of πλήρωμα is a *passive* sense.

But we must note carefully what he means when he thus speaks of a "*passive* sense." In ordinary parlance we understand by the *passive* sense of πλήρωμα, "that which is filled" (*id quod completum est*); but of this Fritzsche has only one plausible example to offer, viz. πληρώματα, as used in naval warfare as an equivalent of "ships" (to this we shall return presently). He himself, however, uses the expression "*passive* sense" to cover instances in which πλήρωμα means "that with which a thing is filled" (*id quo res completur s. completa est*). This extension of phraseology enables him, with a little straining, to find an underlying *passive* signification in all instances of the use of πλήρωμα, apart from those which he has already noted as exceptions.

Lightfoot, in his Commentary on *Colossians* (pp. 257-273), discusses the word πλήρωμα afresh, and deals (1) with its fundamental signification; (2) with its use in the New Testament; (3) with its employment as a technical term by heretical sects.

At the outset he recognises the confusion which Fritzsche produced by his unjustifiable use of the expression "*passive* sense." Thus he says: "He apparently considers that he has surmounted the difficulties involved in Storr's view, for he speaks of this last [*id quo res impletur*'] as a *passive* sense, though in fact it is nothing more than 'id quod implet' expressed in different words."

Lightfoot, accordingly, starting with the same postulate of the *passive* signification of all verbal substantives in -μα, undertakes to find a genuine *passive* sense under-

lying those instances in which Fritzsche had interpreted *πλήρωμα* as "id quo res impletur."

"Substantives in *-μα*," he says, "formed from the perfect passive, appears always to have a passive sense. They may denote an abstract notion or a concrete thing; they may signify the action itself regarded as complete, or the product of the action; but in any case they give the *result* of the agency involved in the corresponding verb."

Lightfoot appears to me to have correctly diagnosed the formations in *-μα*, when he says, "they give the *result* of the agency involved in the corresponding verb." It is, however, unfortunate that, in his desire to be loyal to what he speaks of as a "lexical rule," he insists that "in all cases the word is strictly passive." For the maintenance of this position involves again an extension of the term "passive," not indeed so violent as Fritzsche's, but yet unfamiliar and easily leading to misconceptions. Thus, to take one instance, we may allow that *κάλυμα* is in the first place the *result* of "hindering," *i.e.* "hindrance." But when the "hindrance" is thought of not merely as an abstract idea, but as a concrete thing, it has come to mean "that which hinders"; that is to say, it has acquired in usage what we should naturally call an *active* signification. And yet Lightfoot's theory demands that *κάλυμα*, the *result* of the agency of the verb *κωλύω*, shall be "strictly *passive*."

The straits to which Lightfoot is put by this theory may be illustrated from his interpretation of the word *πλήρωμα* in Mark ii. 21, the saying about the new patch on the old garment. The true text of S. Mark at this point is somewhat rough, but not really obscure: No man seweth a piece of new (*or* undressed) cloth on an old garment; *εἰ δὲ μήγε, αἶρει τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ.* Our old translators rendered *πλή-*

ρωμα, "the piece that filleth it up"; taking πλήρωμα in the sense of "the supplement." It cannot be denied that this gives an admirable meaning in this place. Perhaps a stricter writer would have said ἀναπλήρωμα, for ἀναπληροῦν seems to differ from πληροῦν in the same way as "to fill up" differs from "to fill": it suggests the supply of a deficiency, rather than the filling of what is quite empty to start with. Apart from this, which is perhaps somewhat of a refinement, we might render the words, "the supplement taketh therefrom, *to wit*, the old *from* the new."

But Lightfoot boldly refuses the obvious explanation, and, insisting on his theory, interprets τὸ πλήρωμα as "the completeness which results from the patch." "The completeness takes away from the garment, the new *completeness* of the old *garment*." We must hesitate long before we dissent from the interpretations of so great an expositor: but we are sorely tempted to ask if there is not a nearer way to the truth than this.

To return: if we are to have a theory to cover all these formations in -μα, it seems wisest to abandon altogether the traditional rule "that substantives in -μα have a *passive* sense," and adopt in its place the wider rule "that they give the *result* of the agency of the corresponding verb." This result may be thought of as primarily an abstract idea. But it is a common phenomenon in language that words denoting abstract ideas have a tendency to fall into the concrete. The result of "mixing" is "mixture" (abstract); but, again, the result is "a mixture" (concrete).<sup>1</sup>

But before we discard a venerable tradition, let us try to do it some measure of justice. There must have

<sup>1</sup> It happens that "a mixture," when it ceases to be abstract, is *passive*; so, too, "a fixture" is "a thing fixed," and is *passive*; but "a legislature" is *active* and "legislates."

been some reason for a rule which has dominated us so long: and the reason appears to be this. There are two familiar sets of substantives in Greek which are derived from verbs: they are commonly spoken of as those ending in *-σις* and those ending in *-μα*. When we compare them for such verbs as *ποιέω, πράσσω, δίδωμι, μίγνυμι*, we find that the one class (*ποίησις, πράξις, δόσις, μίξις*) expresses the action of the verb—"making," "doing," "giving," "mixing"; while the other class (*ποίημα, πράγμα, δόμα, μίγμα*) represents the result of that action—"a thing made," "a deed," "a gift," "a mixture." A vast number of similar examples could be provided, and at once it appears that we have a simple distinction between the two classes: substantives in *-σις* have an *active* sense, substantives in *-μα* have a *passive* sense. Moreover we observe an obvious similarity between the formations in *-μα* and the perfect passive of the verbs from which they are derived:

*πεποίημαι, πεποιημένος, ποίημα*  
*πέπραγαμαι, πεπραγμένος, πράγμα*  
*δέδομαι, δεδομένος, δόμα*  
*μέμιγαμαι, μεμιγμένος, μίγμα.*

It is probable that this "false analogy" has had something to do with propagating and maintaining the idea that these formations are specially connected with the *passive*.

As a matter of fact, it would conduce to clearness and accuracy if these formations were spoken of as formations in *-ματ-*, as their oblique cases show them to be. The formative suffix is added directly to the root or to the strengthened verbal stem: as *μιγ-, μιγ-ματ-*; *ποιη-, ποιη-ματ-*; whereas for the perfect passive the root is first reduplicated *μέ-μιγ-μαι, πε-ποίη-μαι*. The original

meaning of the formative suffix *-ματ-* is now altogether lost to our knowledge. It appears in Latin in a stronger form as *-mento-*, and in a weaker form as *-min-*; cf. "ornamentum" (from "ornare"), and "fragmen, -minis" (from "frangere"). Side by side with these Latin forms we have others in *-tion-*, as "ornatio, -onis," and "fractio, -onis," which are parallel to the Greek derivatives in *-σι-*.

The help that we gain from Comparative Grammar is thus of a negative kind; but we may be grateful for it, as releasing us from bondage to the old rule which connected these formations with the *passive* of the verb. We are now thrown back upon usage as our only guide to the discovery of a general signification which may serve as the starting-point of their classification.

I am not quite sure that we ought to demand such a general signification; but if we do, then "the *result* of the agency of the corresponding verb" may serve us well enough. Thus *πρᾶγμα* is the result of "doing," *i.e.* "a deed"; *δῶμα*, the result of "giving," "a gift"; *ornamentum*, the result of "adorning," "an ornament"; "fragmen," the result of "breaking," "a fragment." But it is quite possible that this *result* should be followed by a substantive in the genitive case, so as to express the same relation as would be expressed if the corresponding verb were followed by the same substantive in the accusative case. Thus *ornamentum domus* would express the same relation as *ornare domum*: and *κάλυμα τῆς ἐπιχειρήσεως*, as *κωλύει τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν*. When this is the case, the word may fairly be said to have an *active* sense. In Latin we have such instances as *solamen*, *leuamen*, *nutrimen*, *momen* (= *mouimen*), and many others; most of them having fuller forms, perhaps as a rule later, in *-mentum*.

We may conveniently classify the Greek words of this formation in *-ματ-* under three heads:

(1) Where the verb is intransitive, and accordingly there

is nothing transitive about the corresponding substantive: as *ἀγώνισμα, αἴνιγμα, ἀλαζόνευμα, ἄλμα, ἀμάρτημα, βιότευμα, γέλασμα, καύχημα*.

(2) Where the verb is transitive, and the substantive corresponds to the object of the verb, and thus may rightly be said to have a *passive* sense: as *ἄγγελμα, ἀγόρασμα, ἄγυρμα, αἴτημα, ἄκουσμα, ἀκρόαμα, γέννημα*.

(3) Where the verb is transitive, and the substantive is no longer the object of the verb, but the object can be expressed as a genitive following the substantive: as *ἀγλαΐσμα, ἄγνισμα, ἄγρευμα, ἄθροισμα, αἰώρημα, ἀλλοίωμα, ἄμμα, ἄμνυμα, ἀνάσεισμα, ἔνδειγμα, ἥδυσμα, μίμημα, σχίσμα*. Why should not these be called *active*?

It is important to notice that, in distinguishing between classes (2) and (3) usage is our only guide: there is nothing whatever in the nature of the formation which points us in one direction rather than in another. As a matter of fact many words oscillate between the two cases. *Ἄγαλμα*, for example, may be the object "honoured" (as *ἀγάλματα θεῶν*), or that "which gives honour" to the object (as *ἄγαλμα δόμων*): *βρῶμα* may be the food eaten, or the canker that eats: *βόσκημα*, the cattle that are fed, or the food that feeds them: but it is seldom that both meanings are thus retained together.

If the forms in *-ματ-* perplex us by their apparent inconsistency, the forms in *-σι-* are scarcely less unsteady. They ought properly to remain in the abstract region to which they certainly belong; but they are very unwilling in many cases to be so limited. They choose to descend into the concrete, and in doing so they often coincide with the corresponding forms in *-ματ-*. Thus in practice we find that *τάξις* and *τάγμα* can both mean "a rank"; *πρᾶξις* and *πράγμα*, "a deed"; *ἔνδειξις* and *ἔνδειγμα*, "a proof"; *ἐρώτησις* and *ἐρώτημα*, "a question." The starting-points of the two sets of words are different: the forms



in *-σι-* denote the action in *process*; the forms in *-ματ-*, the action in *result*. In the first instance always, in the second sometimes, the primary meaning is an abstract one; and so long as the abstract meaning is retained the distinction between the two sets of words is clear enough. When however the abstract gives way to the concrete, the distinction often disappears.

We have said enough on these two formations in general to clear the way for an examination of the word *πλήρωμα*, which has suffered hitherto from the loyalty of its expositors to a grammatical canon against which it was determined to rebel.

We may now examine some of the examples ordinarily cited. We begin with two nautical usages of the word. *Ναῦν πληροῦν*, or *πληροῦσθαι*, is "to man a ship," or "to get it manned"; and the result of such action in either case is *πλήρωμα*, which has the concrete meaning of "a crew." That *πλήρωμα* sometimes means "the ship," as being "the thing filled" with men, is not a strictly accurate statement. For in the passages cited (Lucian, *Ver. Hist.* ii. 37, 38, and Polyb. i. 49) the literal meaning is "crews"; though "to fight with two crews" (*ἀπὸ δύο πληρωμάτων μάχεσθαι*) is only another way of saying, "to fight with two ships." The other nautical use of *πλήρωμα* for a ship's "lading" or "cargo" is again a perfectly natural use of the word when it is concrete. To say that in these two instances *πλήρωμα* does not mean "that with which the ship is filled" is certainly a statement difficult to maintain. Nor can I see what is gained by maintaining it.

There is a whole class of instances in which the word *πλήρωμα* has a somewhat stronger sense, viz. that of "the full complement." Thus in Aristid. *Or.* i. p. 381 we have *μήτε αὐτάρκεις ἔσεσθαι πλήρωμα ἐνὸς οἰκείου στρατεύματος παρέχεσθαι*, i.e. enough to put it at full strength.

So *πλήρωμα πόλεως* is "the full population of a town," "a townful"; *πλήρωμα δρακός* (Eccles. iv. 6), "a handful"; *πλήρωμα σπυρίδος*, "a basketful."<sup>1</sup> In these cases the "fulness" spoken of is a "complement" in the sense of entirety; it is strictly a "fulness" in exchange for "emptiness."

II. But I am anxious to come on to S. Paul, and more especially to the passage which has prompted the foregoing investigation.

We have seen that *πλήρωμα* can be used as a "complement" or "a supplement," as that which "fills" or "fills up"; we have seen too that it can have the strong sense of "a full complement" or "totality."

And here I would recall an important, if somewhat obvious, distinction; viz. that the verb *πληροῦν* has two senses, a literal and a metaphorical sense. It may mean "to fill" or "to fulfil." Accordingly its derivative *πλήρωμα* may mean either "fulness" in the literal sense, or "fulness" in the metaphorical sense, that is to say "fulfilment."

Two examples of *πλήρωμα* occur in Romans xi. The first in *v.* 10, where S. Paul is discussing the failure, partial and temporary, as he would fain believe, of his own people to receive the Messiah. If the Gentiles have been enriched in a sense through the very miscarriage and disaster of Israel, what wealth is in store for them in the great Return, when all Israel shall be saved,—

"When God hath made the pile complete"!

This is what S. Paul means by, "How much more their

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark viii. 20: *πίσων σπυρίδων πληρώματα κλασμάτων ἤρατε*; "How many basketfuls of fragments took ye up?" "Basketfuls" is an unpleasant plural; but S. Mark's Greek is certainly not less harsh. As to Mark vi. 43, *καὶ ἤραν κλασμάτων δώδεκα κοφίνους πληρώματα*, I can only say that on no theory of the meaning of *πληρώματα* could it ever have been tolerable to a Greek ear. If S. Mark wrote it so, the other Evangelists were fully justified in altering it, even though the later copyists were not.

fulness" (τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν). It is not so much "the whole number," as "the fulfilment of their whole number." In quite a similar sense he speaks in *v.* 25 of "the fulness" or "fulfilment of the Gentiles (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν)."

Another instructive instance of S. Paul's use of the word is found in Romans xiii. 10, *πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη*, "Love is the fulfilment of the Law." For he has just said in *v.* 8, "He that loveth hath fulfilled the law" (*νόμον πεπλήρωκεν*). No one commandment of the old commandments fulfils the law: all of them together of course do. And they are all gathered up in one in the command to love. Consequently, love does fulfil the law; nothing is lacking where love comes; love is the completion, the fulfilment of the law.

Before I go on to Ephesians i. 23, I would recur for a moment to an oft-quoted passage of Aristotle, in which he is criticising Plato's *Republic* (*Arist. Polit.* iv. 4). The simplest conceivable form of a city, Socrates had said, must contain six kinds of artisans or labourers—weaver, husbandman, shoemaker, builder, smith, herdsman; and in addition to these, to make up a city, you must have a merchant and a retail dealer. "These together"—to use Aristotle's words—"form the *pleroma* of a city in its simplest stage": *ταῦτα πάντα γίνεται πλήρωμα τῆς πρώτης πόλεως*. If you have all these elements present, then your extremely simple city is complete. They are its *pleroma*. With them you can have a city, without them you cannot. Nothing less than these can make a city, *quâ* city, complete.

Now, when St. Paul declares in Ephesians i. 23 that the Church is the *pleroma* or fulness of the Christ, he would appear to mean that in some mysterious sense the Church is that without which the Christ is not complete, but with which He is complete. That is to say, he looks upon the Christ as in a sense waiting for completeness,

and destined in the purpose of God to find that completeness in the Church.

This is a somewhat startling thought. Are we justified in thus giving to S. Paul's language what appears to be its obvious meaning?

(1) First, I would call attention to the metaphor which the Apostle has just used, and which leads directly up to this statement. Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His Body. Now, is it not true that in a certain sense the Body is the *pleroma* of the Head? Is the Head complete without the Body? Can we even think of a head as performing its functions without a body? In the sense then in which the Body is the fulness or completion of the Head, it is clear that with S. Paul we may think of the Church as the fulness or completion of the Christ.

Even now, in the imperfect stage of the Church, we can see that this is true. The Church is that through which Christ lives on and works on here below on earth. Jesus, the Christ incarnate, is no longer on earth as He was. His feet and hands no longer move and work in our midst, as once they moved and wrought in Palestine. But S. Paul affirms that He is not without feet and hands on earth: the Church is His Body. Through the Church, which S. Paul refuses to think of as separate from Him, He still lives and moves among men.

(2) But, further, we must not forget that, although it may make havoc of his metaphors, S. Paul will never let us forget that the relation of the Church to Christ is something even closer than that of a body to its head. When he is combating the spirit of jealousy and division in the Corinthian Church, he works out in detail the metaphor of the Body and its parts as applied to the Christian Society. But he does not there speak of Christ as the Head. For not only does he point out the absurdity of the head's saying to the feet, I have no need of you;

but he also refers to the seeing, the hearing, and the smelling, to which he could not well have alluded as separate functions had he been thinking of Christ as the Head. Indeed in that great passage Christ holds what is, if possible, a more impressive position still: He is no part, but rather the Whole of which the many members are parts: "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body; so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). This is in exact correspondence with the image employed by our Lord Himself (John xv. 5): "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." That is to say, not "I am the trunk of the vine, and ye are the branches growing out of the trunk"; but rather, "I am the living Whole, ye are the parts whose life is a life dependent on the Whole."

It is interesting to observe that in Ephesians v. 22 ff., when S. Paul comes to expound the details of human relationship as based on high and eternal truths, he says in the first place: "Let wives be subject to their own husbands as to the Lord; because the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is Head of the Church, Himself being saviour of the body"; but then, turning to the husbands, he drops the metaphor of headship, and bids them love their wives as their own bodies, following again the example of Christ in relation to His Church; and he cites the ideal of marriage as proclaimed at the Creation of Man, "the twain shall become one flesh." Not headship here, but identity, is the relation in view. "This mystery," he adds, "is a mighty one: but I speak it with reference to Christ and to the Church."

Thus the two conceptions, though the imagery may fail to express them both at once, involve to S. Paul's mind no inherent inconsistency. He passes easily from the one to the other. Each in turn serves to bring out some side of the truth.

In Ephesians i. 23 the Apostle has begun with the exalted Christ; and he asks, How does He in His supreme position of authority stand to the Church? He stands as Head to the Body. But this is never all the truth; and if we bear in mind S. Paul's further conception in accordance with which the Whole, Head and Body together, is "the Christ," we get yet further help in our interpretation of the statement that the Church is the Pleroma of the Christ. For it is plainer than ever that without the Church the Christ is incomplete. And as the Church grows towards completion, the Christ grows towards completion, the Christ who in the Divine purpose is to be "all in all"; if we may use the language of our own great poet, "the Christ that is to be."

(3) Again, this conception illuminates and in turn receives light from a remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Colossians. S. Paul is speaking of his own sufferings (Col. i. 24): he can even rejoice in them, he tells us. If the Church and the Christ are one, the suffering of the Church and the suffering of the Christ are not two but one. The Christ, then, has not suffered all that He is destined to suffer; for He goes on suffering in the sufferings of the Church. These sufferings of the Church have fallen with special heaviness on S. Paul. He rejoices to think that so large a share is allotted to him. He is filling up something of what has still to be filled up, if the sufferings are to be complete. So he says: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in your stead the remainder ('the deficits') of the sufferings of the Christ, in my flesh, on behalf of His Body, which is the Church" (*ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ*).

Thus then the Church, the completion of the Christ, is destined to complete His sufferings; and S. Paul rejoices that as a member of the Church he is allowed by God to do a large share of this in his own person on the Church's

behalf. The thought is astounding; it could never have occurred to a less generous spirit than S. Paul's. It is of value to us here, as helping to show in one special direction how to S. Paul's mind the Christ in a true sense still waited for completion, and would find that completion only in the Church.

(4) The very next words which follow the word on which our attention has been fixed help, I believe, yet further to justify our interpretation. The Church is "the fulness" or "fulfilment" of Him who all in all is being fulfilled (*τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου*).

Here S. Paul, if we interpret him in the most obvious and natural way, is still speaking of the Christ as moving towards completion. The thought is difficult and mysterious no doubt; but the Apostle has given us abundant warning earlier in this Epistle that he is dealing with no ordinary themes. He has already told us that the purpose of God is "to gather up in one all things in the Christ" (i. 10). Until that great purpose is fully achieved the Christ is not yet all that the Divine wisdom has determined that He shall be. He still waits for His fulfilment, His completeness. As that is being gradually worked out, the Christ is being fulfilled, being completed—*πληρούμενος*.

The only grammatical difficulty which attends the translation which I have given above is the position of the words *τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*, *lit.* "all (things) in all (things)" It does not appear to me to be a serious difficulty. The phrase is used adverbially, to heighten the verb.

In 1 Corinthians xii. 6 we read: "One God which worketh all in all" (*τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*); but there the construction is of course quite simple. In 1 Corinthians xv. 28 we have: "That God may be all in all" (*πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*), and in Colossians iii. 1: "Christ is all in all" (*πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*). In each of these cases there is some evidence for reading *τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*: but the matter is

not important, as the article would naturally be omitted in the predicate. The phrase, I take it, has become stereotyped, very much as our English phrase "all in all." Here, in an adverbial sense, it is more emphatic that the classical adverb *παντάσῃ*, which as a matter of fact is not found in the New Testament. Its appropriateness is increased by the fact that the phrase is twice used, as we have seen, by S. Paul of Christ and of God. All conceivable fulness, a completeness which sums up the universe, is predicated of Christ, as the issue of the Divine purpose.

"Through the Church" (iii. 10) this purpose is being worked out. The Head finds its completeness in the Body: the Church is the completion of the Christ: for the Christ is being completed, is moving towards a completeness absolute and all-inclusive.

"He hath given Him to be Head over all to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him who all in all is being fulfilled." Thus the two words which have caused difficulty, *πλήρωμα* and *πληρουμένου*, are seen to explain and justify each other.

It is right that we should consider the alternative explanation which has been offered of the second word—for it is that of the English version, nor have the Revisers made any change at this point. It is to take *πληρουμένου* as middle, and to render, "that filleth all in all." This certainly appears at first sight to be a simpler course; but it involves a usage of which we have no other example. The only cases cited for *πληροῦσθαι* as middle are those in which a captain is said to man his ship (*ναῦν πληροῦσθαι*). But this is a perfectly natural and correct use of the middle, "to get it filled," just as *παῖδα διδάσκεσθαι* is to get your boy taught, when you do not teach him yourself (*διδάσκειν*). It is plain that this offers no justification of the middle being here taken in what is really the active sense. S. Paul does indeed (in iv. 10) speak of Christ as



ascending "that He might fill all things"; but then he uses the active (*ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα*). Had his meaning here been the same, we can hardly doubt that he would have said *πληροῦντος*, and would not have used a word which always means something different, and which he himself uses in the passive sense again and again (Eph. iii. 19, v. 18; Col. i. 9, ii. 18, iv. 12).

So long as *πλήρωμα* was regarded as "the thing filled," it was practically necessary to speak of Christ as "the filler"; and so against all grammatical authority to give a transitive meaning to *πληρουμένου*. But once the meaning of *πλήρωμα* is made clear, the harsh necessity vanishes, and the natural interpretation is found to be the simplest and the most in accordance with the thought of S. Paul.

In a matter of so great importance, and especially when we seem to be in conflict with an accepted interpretation of long standing, it is right to ask how the passage was translated in the oldest versions. Those who made these versions in the first instance were not great scholars like S. Jerome in a later age, and King James's translators in 1611; but they lived when the kind of Greek which the Apostles wrote was a living language; so that it is always worth while to know what they thought a passage meant.

(1) *The Latin*. What seems to be an early form of the Latin has *supplementum (eius) qui omnia et in omnibus impletur* (Sabatier). The usual Latin is *plenitudo eius qui omnia in omnibus adimpletur*: so the Vulgate, and S. Jerome in his Commentary. The sense is in either case that which we have preferred: the verb is taken as passive, and no difficulty is felt in the adverbial phrase "all in all."

(2) *The Syriac*. We find in the Peshito (the Syriac Vulgate) that an active meaning is given to the verb. But we have evidence that the earlier Syriac Version, of which the Peshito was a revision, took it as passive. For S. Ephraim, a Syrian Father, wrote a Commentary on the

Epistles of S. Paul in Syriac. It has been preserved to us in an Armenian translation only ; but from this we can see that the Version which S. Ephraim used must have given the verb a passive sense.

(3) *The Egyptian*. Both forms of this Version—the Bohairic (or Memphitic) and the Sahidic (or Thebaic)—take the verb in the passive sense.

Thus the three great Versions of antiquity are on our side. The Latin Church, the early Syrian Church, and the Egyptian Church, agree with us in the meaning which we have assigned to the words.

From these simple translators let us turn in conclusion to two of the greatest of the masters of interpretation. Let us look first at Chrysostom, and then we may fitly close with the words of Origen.

Chrysostom, in his Commentary on the passage (Savile, iii. 776), after expounding the Headship of Christ to His Body, says :

“ But, as though this were not enough to show the relation and close connexion, what says he? The fulness, he says, of Christ is the Church. For the fulness of the head is the body, and the fulness of the body is the head. . . . The fulness, he says: that is, just as the head is filled (or ‘fulfilled’) by the body. For the body is constituted of all its parts, and has need of each one. . . . For if we be not many, and one a hand, another a foot, and another some other part, then the whole Body is not fulfilled. By means of all, then, His Body is fulfilled. Then the Head is fulfilled, then there comes to be a perfect Body, when we all together are knit and joined in one. Do you see the riches of the glory of the inheritance? Do you see the exceeding greatness of the power to usward who believe? Do you see the hope of the calling?”

Origen’s Commentary on the Ephesians is unhappily only preserved in fragments in a *Catena*, or Chain-commentary, selected out of the works of various writers. This *Catena* does not always mark accurately the source of its quotations, nor warn us when it passes from one

writer to another. Now, as it happens, S. Jerome wrote a Commentary on the same Epistle, and in his Preface tells us that he made use of Origen. The *Catena* shows us that again and again he simply translated and embodied him almost without change. Thus, in turn, we are helped to see that passages of the *Catena* which might seem of uncertain authorship are the very Greek of Origen from which Jerome was translating. We have this attestation to assure us here, though Jerome has cut the passage rather short (Cramer, *Catena in Ephes.* pp. 133 ff.).

“Now, we desire to know in what way the Church, being the Body of Christ, is the fulness of Him who all in all is being fulfilled; and why it is not said ‘of Him who filleth (πληροῦντος) all in all,’ but who is Himself ‘filled’ (or ‘fulfilled,’ πληρουμένου): for it will seem as though it would have been more naturally said that Christ was He who filleth, and not He who is filled. For He Himself is not only the fulness of the Law, but also of all fulnesses ever the fulness, since nothing comes to be full apart from Him. See, then, if this be not the answer, that inasmuch as, for the close relation and fellowship of the Son with reasonable beings, the Son of God is the fulness of all reasonable beings, so too He Himself takes as it were a fulness into Himself, being shown to be most full in regard to each of the blessed. And that what is said may be the plainer, conceive of a king as being filled with kingdom in respect of each of those who augment his kingdom, and being emptied thereof in the case of those who revolt from their king. So nothing is more in harmony with the merciful kingdom of Christ, than each of those reasonable beings aided and perfected by Him who help to fulfil that kingdom, in that fleeing unto Him they help to fulfil His Body, which is in a manner empty, while it lacks those that are thus aided by Him. Wherefore Christ is fulfilled in all that come unto Him, whereas He is still lacking in respect of them before they have come.”

The words of the great master are not always clear, but his illustration is a good one up to a certain point: and at least there is no doubt of what he thought the passage meant.

With all his efforts after universality Origen was still too much of an individualist to enter wholly into the mind of S. Paul. Yet he speaks, as indeed S. Paul speaks, with

a clearer voice to our age than to any that has preceded it. Our yearning after unity, our recognition—faint though it still be—of the meaning and the mission of the Church, is enabling us at last to catch something of the sense of the prophetic voices of the past.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

*THE NEW VERSIONS OF THE PSALTER AND  
THE BOOK OF JUDGES.*

BEAUTIFUL as the Authorized Version is, it must be confessed that its too exclusive use is one of the chief hindrances to a living appreciation of the Scriptures, and, accurate as it is, if compared with the Latin Vulgate, its frequent obscurity shows that the translators often missed the sense of the original writers, and that something more is wanted to open the door effectually to this priceless literature. Hebrew scholars have now and then attempted to retranslate the Old Testament, but they have generally taken as their basis the text received by us from the Jews, which, though both as a text and (in the vowel-points) as an interpretation by no means contemptible, is obviously full of faults, not a few of which may with practical certainty, and many more with different degrees of probability, be removed. Prof. Haupt, an eminent Semitic scholar, whose career as an Assyriologist has been as brilliant perhaps as it could be, and who is also interested in the future of religion, has therefore conceived the idea of getting the Old Testament retranslated on the basis of a critically revised text. For himself he has selected the modern thinker's favourite book—Ecclesiastes; the other books have been allotted by him (as general editor) to different English, American, Australian, German, and Dutch