

Ephesians 2013  
Lessons  
037 and 038

Ephesians 1:15-23  
(Still The First Pass through)

The Church - Part 1

*The Believer's Grace Adjustment to the  
Justice of God*

- Psalms 66:18 *If I perceive sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*
- Psalms 32:5 *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*
- 1 Cor 11:31 *But if we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.*
- 1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all other unrighteousness.*

*Invitation: The Non-Believer's Grace  
Adjustment to the Justice of God*

*(If you have never trusted in Christ Alone for  
salvation...)*

- Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- Rom. 11:6, *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."*

- Gal. 2:21, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*
- Gal. 3:24, *"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."*
- 1 Corinthians 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'*
- John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*
- *"Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"*  
Acts 16:31

**Our Text - Eph 1: 15-23**

<sup>15</sup> Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, <sup>16</sup> Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; <sup>17</sup> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: <sup>18</sup> The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

<sup>19</sup> And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, <sup>20</sup> Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: <sup>22</sup> And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

*Introduction:*

Expositors Greek Testament Commentary

Vv. 15-23. Second Section of the Epistle: in which the writer expresses his own feelings and desires towards the Ephesians, and in doing so leads them to the highest conception both of Christ's own supremacy and of the grandeur of that Church of His of which they had been made members.

The wonders of the grace thus shown them give him occasion, he tells them, for increasing thanksgiving.

But his thanksgiving also prompts him to prayer on their behalf.

Seeing to what they had already attained in the Christian life into which that marvellous grace had brought them, especially in faith and in brotherly love, his prayer is that they may increase in these yet more and more, and in particular that they may have an enlarging insight into the hope that springs from their calling, the inheritance which is reserved for them, and the present power of Christ which is the guarantee for all that they have and look for.

*<sup>15</sup> Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, <sup>16</sup> Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

*Translation. On account of this, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and of your love to all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you as I constantly make mention of you in my prayers.*

*<sup>17</sup> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:*

Translation. That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the glory, might give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the sphere of a full knowledge of Him.

*<sup>18</sup> The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

Translation. The eyes of your heart being in an enlightened state with a view to your knowing what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

*<sup>19</sup> And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

*<sup>20</sup> Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

Crossway:

**19. And his incomparably great power for us who believe.**

This is the third petition in the apostle's prayer.

He prays that his readers may have right apprehensions of the greatness of the change which they had experienced. It was no mere moral reformation effected by rational considerations, nor was it a self-wrought change, but one due to the almighty power of God.

Grotius, indeed, and commentators of that class, understand the passage to refer to the exertion of the power of God in the future resurrection and salvation of believers. But:

1. It evidently refers to the past, and not to the future. It is something which believers, as believers, had already experienced that he wished them to understand.

2. The apostle never compares the salvation of believers with the resurrection of Christ, whereas the analogy between his natural resurrection and the spiritual resurrection of his people is one to which he often refers.

3. This is the analogy which he insists on here: "As God raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, so you, who were dead in sins, he has made alive, and raised you up together in him."

This analogy is the very thing he wants them to understand.

They had undergone a great change; they had been brought to life; they had been raised from the dead by the same almighty power that was in Christ.

There was as great a difference between their present and their former condition as there was between Christ in the tomb and Christ at the right hand of God.

This was something which they ought to know.

4. The parallel passage in Colossians 2:12-13 is decisive concerning this interpretation: *"Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins."*

In this passage it cannot be doubted that the apostle compares the spiritual resurrection of believers with the resurrection of Christ and refers both events to God's work, or to divine power.

Such, also, is doubtless the meaning of the passage before us; most commentators concur with this interpretation. Chrysostom says: "The conversion of souls is more wonderful than the resurrection of the dead."

On this passage Oecumenius says: "To raise us from spiritual death is an exercise of the same power that raised Christ from natural death."

Calvin says: "Some men regard the language of the apostle in this passage as frigid hyperbole, but those who are properly exercised find nothing here beyond the truth."

He adds: "Lest believers should be cast down under a sense of their unworthiness, the apostle recalls them to a consideration of God's power; as though he had said, their regeneration is God's work, and no ordinary work, but one in which his almighty power is wonderfully displayed."

Luther, referring to the parallel passage in Colossians, uses the following language: "Faith is no such easy matter as our oppressors imagine, when they say, 'Believe, believe, how easy it is to believe!' Neither is it mere human work, which I can perform for myself, but it is a divine power in the heart, by which we are new born, and whereby we are able to overcome the mighty power of the devil and of death; as Paul says to the Colossians, *'In whom you are raised up again through the faith which God works.'*"

It is, then, a great truth which the apostle teaches here.

He prays that his readers may properly understand **his incomparably great power**.

The conversion of the soul is not a small matter;  
nor is it a work effected by any human power.

It is a resurrection due to the exceeding greatness of God's power:

**That power is like the working of his mighty strength.**

The original here offers a remarkable accumulation of words: "according to the energy of the might of his power." The first is inherent strength, the second power, the third the exercise or efficiency of that strength.

Or as Calvin says, the first is the root, the second the tree, the third the fruit. Whatever be the precise distinction in the meaning of the words, their accumulation expresses the highest form of power.

It was caused by nothing less than the omnipotence of God.

No created power can raise the dead or make alive those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

How this clause links with the others is doubtful. It may refer to the words **his incomparably great power**.

The sense would then be, "That you may know the exceeding greatness of him towards us who believe, *which was* according to, or like, the working of his mighty power which worked in Christ."

Or, **power for us who believe** may be linked with **the working of his mighty strength**.

In the one case, this clause is a mere illustration or amplification of the idea of the divine power of which believers are the subject. In the other, it expresses more definitely the reason why the power which they had experienced was to be considered so great—namely, because their faith was due to the same energy that raised Christ from the dead.

In either case, the doctrinal impact of the passage is the same.

In favor of the latter construction:

1. The position of the clauses. According to this interpretation they are taken just as they stand:

**Us who believe ... like the working ...**

Consider the frequency with which the apostle uses the preposition “like” in the sense thus given to us.

In Ephesians 3:7 he says his conversion and vocation were “through the working of his power.”

See also Ephesians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Christ will transform our lowly bodies “by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control” (Philippians 3:21; compare Colossians 1:29).

To say, therefore, “for us who believe ...” is in line with the apostle’s normal use of this phrase.

2. The parallel passage in Colossians 2:12 expresses the same idea.

There the phrase is “faith in the power” of God—i.e., which he operates; here it is **believe ... like the working**.

The similarity between the expressions is so striking that the one explains and authenticates the other.

The prayer recorded in these verses is a very comprehensive one.

In praying that the Ephesians might be enlightened with spiritual understanding of the truth, the apostle prays for their sanctification.

In praying that they might have just conceptions of the **inheritance** to which they were called, he prayed that they might be elevated above the world.

And in praying that they might know the exceeding greatness of the **power** exercised in their conversion, he prayed that they might be at once humble and confident—humble in view of the death of sin from which they had been raised, and confident in view of the omnipotence of that God who had begun their salvation.

**20. Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead.**

There are two things clearly intended in these words:

1. That the **power** which raises the believer from spiritual death is the same as that which **raised Christ** from the grave.
2. That there is a striking analogy between these events and an intimate connection between them.

The one was not only the symbol but the pledge and agency for the other.

The resurrection of Christ is both the type and the cause of the spiritual resurrection of his people, as well of their future rising from the grave in his glorious likeness.

The apostle speaks at length about this analogy and connection in Romans 6:1–10, and also in the following chapters of this letter.

Therefore, as often as the believer contemplates Christ as risen and seated at the right hand of God, he has at once an illustration of the change which has been effected in his own spiritual state and a pledge that the work commenced in regeneration will be consummated in glory.

**And seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.** Kings place at their right hand those whom they wish to honor or whom they associate with themselves in regal authority.

No creature can be thus associated in honor and authority with God, and therefore to none of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand” (Hebrews 1:13).

That divine honor and authority are expressed by sitting at the right hand of God is further seen from those passages which speak of the extent of that dominion and of the nature of that honor to which the exalted Redeemer is entitled.

It is a universal dominion (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9–11; 1 Peter 3:22), and it is an honor that is due to God alone (John 5:23).

The immediate subject under discussion in this chapter is the blessings of redemption conferred on believers.

The resurrection and exaltation of Christ are introduced incidentally, by way of illustration.



The apostle dwells for a moment on the nature of this exaltation and on the relation of Christ, at the right hand of God, to his church; and then, at the beginning of the following chapter, he reverts to his main topic.

The subject of the exaltation spoken about here is not the *logos*, but Christ—the *theanthropos* or God-man.

The possession of divine perfections was the necessary condition of this exaltation, because, as has just been noted, the nature and extent of the dominion granted to him demand such perfections.

It is a dominion not only absolutely universal, but extending over the heart and conscience, and it requires the obedience not only of the outward conduct but of the inner life, which is due to God alone.

We therefore find the divine nature of Christ presented in the Scriptures as the reason for his being invested with this special dominion.

Thus in Psalm 2 it says, “You are my Son ... ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance ...” (verses 7–8); that is, “Because you are my Son, ask and I will give you this dominion.”

And Hebrews chapter 1 says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word ... he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (verses 3–4).

That is, because he has the same nature as the Father and possesses the same almighty power, he is associated with him in his dominion.

While Christ’s divine nature is the necessary condition of his exaltation, his mediatorial work is the immediate ground of the *theanthropos*, God revealed in the flesh, being invested with this universal dominion.

This is expressly asserted (see Philippians 2:9).

Though equal with God, he humbled himself to become obedient to death; therefore God has exalted him to the highest place.

WUEST: (1:19, 20) The third thing Paul prays for is that the saints might know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe." Expositors comments: "In these three clauses Paul leads the readers on from the hope itself which becomes theirs in virtue of their being called of God, to the splendor of the inheritance to which the hope points, and from this again to that in God Himself which makes the fulfillment of the hope and the possession of the inheritance certain, namely, the limitless efficiency which is His prerogative."

This power of God working in our behalf with reference to our salvation is not thought of here as operating only in the future, but also at present. The word "exceeding" is hyperballon (υπερβαλλον), literally, "a throwing beyond," thus metaphorically, "superiority, excellence." It speaks of power here that is beyond measure, more than enough, of surpassing power.

This power is described as "according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."

The word "working" is energeia (ενεργεια) from which we get our word "energy."

It speaks of energy put forth, in operation.

This surpassing power which God in salvation uses in ministering to our spiritual needs, is in accordance with, commensurate with the divine energy "of His mighty power."

The Greek has it, "of the manifested power of His strength."

Paul uses four words here, all having the general meaning of "power;" the first use of "power" is dunamis (δυναμις), "natural ability, general and inherent;" "working" is energeia (ενεργεια), "power in exercise, operative power;" "mighty" is kratos (κρατος), "manifested strength;" the second use of "power" is ischuos (ισχυος), "strength, power as an endowment."

To put these together we have, “And what is the superabounding greatness of His inherent Power to us who are believing ones as measured by the operative energy of the manifested strength of His might.”

Or,

“And what is the superabounding greatness of His inherent Power (dunamis) to us who are believing ones as measured by the operative energy [Energy in action] (energeia) of the manifested strength (kratos) of His might [endowed power].”

This might [endowed power] “He wrought [power put forth] in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.”

The word “wrought” is energeō (ἐνεργεῶ), “to be operative be at work, put forth power.”

The idea here is that this might or power was operative in Christ when God raised Him from the dead.

It operated to raise Him from the dead. We can translate, “which might was operative in Christ.” The words, “from the dead” are literally, “out from among the dead.” “Set” is kathizō (καθίζω), “to make to sit down.”

Translation. And what is the superabounding greatness of His inherent power to us who are believing ones as measured by the operative energy of the manifested strength of His might, which (might) was operative in the Christ when He raised Him out from among the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

<sup>21</sup> *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

Crossway:

**21.** To illustrate the exaltation of Christ mentioned in verse 20, the apostle says here that he is seated **far above all rule and authority, power and dominion.**

That these terms refer to angels is plain from the context, and from such passages as Romans 8:38, Colossians 1:16, and Ephesians 3:10 and 6:12, where angels are either specifically mentioned, or the powers referred to are said to be in heaven, or they are opposed to “flesh and blood”—i.e., mankind—as a different order of beings.

The origin of the application of these terms to angels cannot be historically traced.

The names themselves suggest the reason for their use.

Angels are called principalities, powers, and dominions either because of their exalted nature, or because through them God exercises his power and dominion, or because of their relation to each other.

It is possible, indeed, that Paul had a polemical reason for using these terms.

This letter and especially the letter to the Colossians contain many intimations that the emanation theory, which later developed into Gnosticism, had already arrived in Asia Minor.

As the advocates of that theory used these terms to designate the different emanations from the central Being, Paul may have borrowed their phraseology in order to refute their doctrine.

Be this as it may, the obvious meaning of the passage is that Christ is exalted above all created beings.

**And every title**—i.e., as the link shows, **every title** of excellence or honor that **can be given**.

That is, Christ is above every creature bearing such a name as prince, potentate, ruler, or whatever other title there may be.

**Not only in the present age but also in the one to come.** The words may have the general sense of “here” or “hereafter,” as in Matthew 12:32.

According to Jewish usage, they designate the period before and the period after the coming of the Messiah.

There is, however, no reference to this in the context.

As in Matthew these words are used to express in the strongest terms that the sin against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven, so here they are intended to add universality to the preceding negation.

There is no name here or hereafter, in this world or the next, over which Christ is not highly exalted.

WUEST: (1:21) "Principality" is the translation of archē (ἀρχή), literally "a first one, a leader," and is used usually to refer to the holy angels or to demons.

Here it refers to the former since the exaltation of Christ is in view, not His victory over the hosts of Satan.

"Power" is the translation of exousia (ἐξουσία), "delegated authority."

It has reference to the holy angels also.

The word "might" is dunamis (δύναμις), "power," and "dominion" is kuriotēs (κυριότης), "lordship."

Alford says that "in this enumeration not only earthly, nor only heavenly authorities are meant to be included, but both together. That the evil spirits are included, is therefore manifest." The words "far above" are the translation of huperanō (ὑπερανῶ), literally, "over above."

Of the words, "and every name that is named," Vincent says: "And has a collective and summary force—and in a word.

Every name, etc.

Whatever a name can be given to.

'Let any name be uttered, whatever it is, Christ is above it; it is more exalted than that which the name uttered affirms' (Meyer).

Compare Phil. 2:9. 'We know that the emperor precedes all, though we cannot enumerate all the ministers of his court: so we know that Christ is placed above all, although we cannot name all' (Bengal)."

The word “world” is, not kosmos (κόσμος), “the created universe,” but aiōn (αἰών), “age”; it speaks of duration; it speaks of this present state of things, and in the words, “but also in that which is to come,” of the future state of things.

*Translation. Over above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name that is constantly being named not only in this age but also in the one about to come.*

<sup>22</sup> *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*  
<sup>23</sup> *Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Crossway:

**22. And God placed all things under his feet.** Christ is not only exalted above all creatures, but he has dominion over them; all are placed in absolute subjection to him. They are **under his feet**.

This passage is a quotation from Psalm 8:6. It is applied to Christ by this same apostle in 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Hebrews 2:8.

In both of these passages the word “all” is pressed to the full extent of its meaning.

It is made to include all creatures, all capable of subjection; all beings except God alone are made subject to man in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings.

There are two principles on which the application of this passage of Psalm 8 to Christ may be explained.

The one is that the Psalm is a prophetic exhibition of the goodness of God to Christ and of the dominion to be given to him. There is nothing, however, in the contents of the Psalm to favor the assumption that it has special reference to the Messiah.

The other principle includes the reference of the Psalm to people generally, but assumes its full meaning to be what the apostle here declares—namely, that the dominion which belongs to man is nothing less than universal.

But this dominion is realized only in the man Christ Jesus and in those who are associated with him in his kingdom.

This latter explanation satisfies both the original Psalm and the passages where it is quoted in the New Testament.

**Appointed him to be head over everything for the church.** This may mean either that he gave him *to* the church as her **head**, or he constituted him **head** *for* the church.

The former is more consistent with the meaning of the verb **appointed**.

It may, however, also signify “to constitute”; see Ephesians 4:11, and compare 1 Corinthians 12:28.

In either case, Christ is declared to be **head** not of the universe, but of the church.

Once this is agreed on, **over everything** may go with **head**—i.e., supreme **head**.

This does not mean **head over all the members** of the church, for **everything** and **church** are not grammatically connected, but simply supreme **head**.

Or we may adopt Chrysostom’s interpretation: “Him, who is over all things visible and invisible, he gave to the church as her head.”

This makes good sense but supposes an unnatural word order.

De Wette transposes the words: “And placed him over all as head of the church.”

In all these interpretations the main idea is retained—namely, that Christ is the **head of the church**.

As Colossians 2:10 says that Christ is “the head over every power and authority,” in the sense of supreme ruler, and as here, in the preceding context, he is said to be exalted over every power and authority, and in the following context he is said to be **the head of the church, which is his body**, the two ideas may be combined here: “Him he gave as head over all things, as head to his church.” This is Meyer’s interpretation.

Christ, the exalted Saviour, the incarnate Son of God, seated as **head** of the universe, is made **head** of his **church**.

This view of the passage has the advantage of giving **everything** the same reference here that it has in the following verse.

**Everything** is placed under his feet, and he, **head** over all things, is **head of the church**.

The sense in which Christ is the **head of the church** is that he is the source of its life, its supreme ruler, ever-present with it, sympathizing with it, and loving it as a man loves his own flesh.

See Ephesians 4:15–16 and 5:23, 29; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27.

Intimate union, dependence, and community of life are the main ideas expressed by this metaphor.

**23. Which is his body.** This is the radical or formative idea of the church.

From this idea will be developed its nature, its attributes, and its prerogatives.

It is the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ that constitutes the church **his body**.

And, therefore, only those in whom the Spirit dwells are constituent members of the true church.

But the Spirit does not dwell in church officers, nor especially in prelates as such, nor in the baptized as such, nor in those who merely profess true religion externally, but in true believers who, therefore, constitute that church which is the **body** of Christ and to which his attributes and prerogatives belong.

The main question which this verse presents for consideration is, In what sense is the church the **fullness** of Christ?

There are, however, two other points which must be determined first.

In the first place, it is the church, and not Christ, to whom the word **fullness** refers here.

Some commentators adopt the following interpretation of the passage: "Christ, the supreme head to the church (which is his body)"; "the fullness—i.e., Christ is the fullness, of him that fills all in all."

But, first, this interpretation violates the grammatical construction of the passage.

Second, it tears the clauses apart very unnaturally.

Third, it assumes that the last clause of the verse (**fills everything in every way**) refers to God, whereas it refers to Christ.

Fourth, the sense thus obtained is unscriptural (the fullness of the Godhead is said to be in Christ, but Christ is never said to be the fullness of God).

In the second place, the church is here declared to be the **fullness** of Christ, and not the fullness of God.

Some commentators understand the passage thus: "The church, which is the body of Christ, is the fullness of him who fills all in all"—i.e., of God.



But to this it is objected, first, that the construction of the passage requires the last clause in the verse to refer to Christ.

And, second, this interpretation supposes the word **fullness** to mean “multitude”: “The multitude belonging to him who fills all in all.”

But this is a meaning which the word never has in itself, but only in virtue of the word with which it is sometimes linked.

The expression “the multitude of the city” indicates that the city is filled with a multitude, but this does not prove that the word “fullness” itself means a multitude.

There is no good reason, then, for departing from the ordinary interpretation, according to which the church is declared to be the **fullness** of Christ.

There are two principal opinions about the meaning of this phrase, over which commentators are divided.

First, the church may be called the **fullness** of Christ because it is filled by him.

As the body is filled or pervaded by the soul, so the church is filled by the Spirit of Christ; or, as God used to dwell in the temple and filled it with his glory, so Christ now dwells in the church and fills it with his presence.

The sense is then good and scriptural: “The church is filled by him who fills all in all.” Or, secondly, the church is the **fullness** of Christ because it fills him; i.e., it completes his mystical person. He is the head; the church is the body.

It is the complement, or that which completes or renders whole.

As both these interpretations give a sense that is scriptural and is consistent with the context, the choice between them must be decided principally by the New Testament use of the word “fullness.”

The former interpretation supposes that the word has a passive meaning—“that which is filled.”

But in every other case in which it occurs in the New Testament, it is used actively—"that which does fill": in Matthew 9:16, the piece put into an old garment is called its fullness—i.e., that which is put in to fill it up; in Mark 6:43, the fragments which filled the baskets are called their "fullness" (see kjv); in John 1:16, "from the fullness" means the plenitude of grace and truth that is in him; in Galatians 4:4, "when the time had fully come" is what completes the specified time; in Colossians 2:9, "all the fullness of the Deity" is all that is in the Deity; in Ephesians 3:19, **the fullness of God** is that of which God is full—the plenitude of divine perfections; in 1 Corinthians 10:26, "everything in it" is what fills the earth.

The normal use of the word in the New Testament is, therefore, clearly in favor of its being taken in an active sense here.

The church is the **fullness** of Christ in that it is the complement of his mystic person. He is the head; the church is his **body**.

In favor of the other interpretation it may be urged that:

1. In the classics, in Philo, and in the writing of the Gnostics, "fullness" has, at times, a passive sense.

2. The meaning thus afforded is preferable. It is a more scriptural and more intelligible statement to say that Christ fills the church as the soul pervades the body or as the glory of the Lord filled the temple than to say that the church in any sense fills Christ.

3. "Fullness" must be taken in a sense which suits the word "fills": "The church is filled by him who fills all things."

The second and third of these reasons are so strong that it gives this interpretation the preference in the minds of those to whom the New Testament use of the word is not an insuperable objection.

**Who fills everything in every way.** This clause, as already stated, refers to Christ, as the construction obviously demands.

The word **fills** is taken by almost all commentators in the active sense.

This assumption is justified by the context and by the fact that in common Greek the passive forms of this verb are at times used in an active sense.

That there is no such case in the New Testament is not, therefore, a sufficient reason for departing from the ordinary interpretation.

The expression **everything in every way**, or, “all with all,” does not mean all the church in all its members, or with all grace, but the universe in all its parts.

There is nothing in the context to restrict or limit **everything**.

The words must have the latitude here which belongs to them in the preceding verses.

The use of this word in Scripture is in favor of this interpretation.

God’s relation to the world, or the totality of things external to himself, is elsewhere expressed in the same terms; see Jeremiah 23:24, “‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the Lord.”

Compare 1 Kings 8:27 and Psalm 139:7. In the New Testament Christ is shown as creating, sustaining, and pervading the universe (Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 4:10).

This, therefore, determines the sense in which he is here said to fill all things.

It is not that he replenishes all his people with his grace, but that he fills heaven and earth with his presence.

There is no place where he is not.

There is no creature from which he is absent.

By him all things consist; they are upheld by his presence in them and with them.

The union, therefore, which the church sustains, and which is the source of its life and blessedness, is not with a mere creature but with Christ, God revealed in the flesh, who pervades and governs all things by his omnipresent power.

The source of life, therefore, for the church is inexhaustible and immortal.

WUEST: (1:22, 23) "Put under" is hupotassō (ὑποτάσσω), a military term, "to put in subjection under one." Expositors says: "The act referred to, therefore, by the aorist of hupotassō (ὑποτάσσω), may be the definite gift of absolute dominion consequent on the exaltation. The raising of Christ to God's right hand was followed by the placing of all things under His feet and making Him sovereign over all."

The Greek has it, "and gave Him as Head over all things to the Church." Christ is therefore God's gift to the Church. He as Head over all things and as Head of the Church is a love gift of God the Father to the Church.

The word "church" is *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), "a body of called out individuals." It refers to the invisible Church, composed of only saved individuals, not to the visible, organized Church on earth.

The Church is described as that "which is His body." The word "which" is *hētis* (ἧτις), "which is of such a nature as," and has a qualitative nature to it.

Of the word "body," *sōma* (σῶμα), Expositors says: "The word *sōma* (σῶμα), which passes readily from its literal meaning into the figurative sense of a society, a number of men constituting a social or ethical union (compare Eph. 4:4), is frequently applied in the n.t., epistles to the Church, ... as the mystical body of Christ, the fellowship of believers regarded as an organic spiritual unity in a living relation to Christ, subject to Him, animated by Him, and having His power operating in it.

The relation between Christ and the Church, therefore, is not an external relation, or one simply of Superior and inferior, Sovereign and subject, but one of life and incorporation.

The Church is not merely an institution ruled by Him as President, a Kingdom in which He is the Supreme Authority, or a vast company of men in moral sympathy with Him, but a Society which is in vital connection with Him, having the source of its life in Him, sustained and directed by His power, the instrument also by which He works."

Commenting on the words, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," Expositors has this preliminary note:

"The preceding sentence carries the idea of the Church far beyond the limited conception of a concrete institution or outward, visible organization, and lifts us to the grander conception of a great spiritual fellowship, which is one under all varieties of external form and constitution in virtue of the presence of Christ's Spirit in it, and catholic as embracing all believers and existing wherever any such are found.

It is the conception of the Church which pervades this epistle (compare 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32). It appears again in similar terms in the sister epistle (Col. 1:18, 24), and elsewhere in the varied phraseology of the 'royal priesthood' (I Pet. 2:9) and the 'Church of the First born' (Heb 12:23). It is this supreme idea of the Church as a spiritual order, the essence of which is a living relation to Christ, that receives further expression in the profound sentence with which the paragraph closes."

The word "fulness" is *plērōma* (πληρωμα). Thayer gives the following: "that which is or has been filled; used of a ship inasmuch as it is filled (i.e., manned) with sailors, rowers, and soldiers; in the n.t., the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ." Alford says, "the meaning being, that the Church, being the Body of Christ, is dwelt in and filled with God: it is His *plērōma* (πληρωμα) (fulness) in an especial manner—His fulness abides in it and is exemplified by it."

Expositors comments: "The idea is that the Church is not only Christ's body but that which is filled by Him. In Col 1:19, 2:9, the whole plērōma (πληρωμα) or every plenitude of the Godhead, the very fulness of the Godhead, the totality of the divine powers and qualities, is said to be recognized as Framer and Governor of the world, and there is neither need nor place for any intermediate beings as agents in those works of creating, upholding and administering.

Here the conception is that this plenitude of the divine powers and qualities which is in Christ is imparted by Him to His Church, so that the latter is pervaded by His presence, animated by His life, filled with His gifts and energies and graces. He is the sole Head of the universe, which is supplied by Him with all that is needed for its being and order. He is also the sole Head of the Church, which receives from Him what He Himself possesses, and is endowed by Him with all that it requires for the realization of its vocation."

"The all things" is "the whole system of things, made by Christ, and having in Him the ground of its being, its continuance, its order (Heb. 1:3, Col. 1:16, 17, I Cor. 8:6), 'with all things,' ... the universe itself and all the things that make its fulness" (Expositors).

*Translation. And all things He put in subjection under His feet, and Him He gave as Head over all things to the Church, which is of such a nature as to be His body, the fulness of the One who constantly is filling the all things with all things.*

