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Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST.

The church is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.—*Eph. i. 23.*

The word *πληρωμα* here rendered fullness, means literally, the filling up, the complement or supplement; that which fills up. The church then is the supplement of Jesus; the filling-up of Him who fills all in all. This is a wonderful idea. Let us try to illustrate it:—

As the eternal Logos or word, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God; the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person; the character of Jesus was complete. It needed no other illustration, no other means of development. It shone in its own glory, illuminating itself in its own brightness. When by him all things had been created, those created things were manifestations of his omnipotence, and the wonderful adaptation of their various parts, and the beauty of their arrangements, were manifestations of his wisdom and goodness.

But when he undertook to save ruined man, he came under responsibilities and excited expectations altogether new. His course of action is different, his manner of address is different, his names and titles are different, in a word a new view of his character is about to be opened up. He is no longer known exclusively by the term Logos. The Jews heard of him as the Messiah or Anointed One, and this prepared the mind of the church to hear of him under the more significant and ordinary name of Jesus—Saviour: "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

Now as created things were necessary to manifest the character of Jesus as Creator; so saved sinners are necessary to develop and establish his character as Jesus—Saviour. Without created worlds his character as Creator was not perfect; demonstration was not given, belief could not be demanded. And without the church, a company of saved sinners, his character as Saviour Jesus, was not perfect. It required a supplement, a filling-up, and this filling-up is done by the church. Even though Jesus

as the Eternal Word fills all in all; yet the church is his fullness, without it his character would be unmanifested and incomplete.

His blood he gave as the ransom price for man's redemption. But the giving of a price supposes some thing ought to be given in return as equivalent. Where nothing is given, the ransom has been paid in vain. A redeemer must have some specimens of his redeeming power, otherwise his assumption of the character is only pretension. Jesus is the head; but what an unseemly sight is a head without a body. He is the head of his body the church; without it he could not be made perfect. "He is the first born from the dead." "The first born among many brethren." From the grave an innumerable progeny must arise as the fruit of Jesus having been there. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Jesus was laid in the grave a bloody corpse; this was a dark spot in his history, but it was soon wiped off; for his Father did not allow him to see corruption but raised him from the dead. Even in full view of this hour and power of darkness, Jesus was filled with holy joy. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross and despised the shame. His enduring the cross was in order to accomplish a purpose, viz., the redemption of a great number of the human family, and these redeemed ones he calls "brethren;" "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." But without a church Jesus should have no brethren. Their actual presence is necessary to prove and sustain his relative as brother; without them he could not be made perfect. Hence he prays, "Father I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am that they may behold my glory." Their final salvation was the subject of his joy; because he saw in it a new development of his own glory and the glory of his Father. It was according to the divine will (*θελημα* pleasure) to glorify himself in this particular manner; and to his Father Jesus could say, "I delight to do thy pleasure, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart." Thus we find that the Divine glory and the Divine pleasure are interwoven and consequently inseparably associated with the final salvation and glory of those brethren—this body the church of which Jesus is the head.

It is on the ground of these considerations, we apprehend, that the Apostle declares

that the church is the complement or filling-up of the Lord Jesus. His character as Messiah, Anointed, Christ; his character as Jesus, Saviour; his character as Redeemer; and his relation of brother, and as head of the body, are all incomplete and imperfect without the church. He must see the travail of his soul, otherwise he cannot be satisfied. They must be with him to behold his glory, otherwise his prayer is not answered, and his joy would be unfulfilled.

O how wonderful is the thought, Jesus fills all in all, and yet his fullness is incomplete without the church. Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling; what a scene yet lies before us, what things we are yet to hear! We are to be exhibited specimens of what Almighty love can do; practical exhibitions of the manifold wisdom of God, which angels will delight to view and from which they will be happy to learn. How much these holy beings may feel interested in hearing from their own lips the experience of sinners redeemed; who can tell? Every page of our history will open up to their minds additional manifestations of divine wisdom, as seen in the manner in which a God of Love squared and polished these stones, in order to give them a place in the living Temple. Or to change the figure, every experienced Christian like the Cherubim of the ancient Temple; having been put into his beautiful proportions by the hammer, what wisdom and severe tenderness will then be seen to have given direction to these strokes. Every heat, and every stroke, was necessary to perfect the man of God, and thoroughly to furnish him for every good work. And all the glory of this will redound to Jesus. The removal of every spot, and of every wrinkle, is to be attributed to his care, and the application of his blood.

What a motive is this for the Christian's cultivation of holiness. He is a part of Jesus; a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. We shall soon be with him, and see him as he is. What a purifying influence must this hope exert upon his mind! "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Brockville.

All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.—*Dr. Alexander.*