

"ALL THE FULNESS" IN  
COLOSSIANS 1:19

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the correct interpretation of Col. 1:19. This study has given the writer a newer appreciation of the greatness of person and work of the Lord Jesus. It is the desire of the writer that any reader of this monograph may come to a greater sense of appreciation for who our Lord is, and grow to love Him more.

The writer desires to express his appreciation to Professor Nathan Meyer, faculty advisor, for his advice and friendly encouragement during the preparation of this paper. Appreciation is directed to Professor Benjamin Hamilton for careful correction of the original manuscript. The writer wishes to acknowledge the faculty of Grace Theological Seminary for the teaching which they have so faithfully imparted, giving the writer a greater love for his Lord and an increased desire to serve Him in whom "all the fullness dwells."



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## INTRODUCTION

The writer's first interest in this verse came in a Greek exegesis course in the book of Colossians. The word "fulness" became a word of interest to the writer and as he read on the passage it was discovered that there are several views as to what the actual meaning the apostle Paul desired in the word.

In the text there is no expressed subject for "pleased". Curiosity caused the writer to investigate the possibilities for the subject of the verb, and the result came in the selection of this subject for this monograph.

The interrelation of the two problems considered in this paper is very significant. The writer believes that the one cannot be properly defined without the correct interpretation of the other. The result, the writer believes, will give the reader a greater realization of the work of Christ and the Father on the behalf of the believer.

In the rejection of some views and acceptance of another, the writer does not mean to imply that everything about the rejected view is impossible of acceptance. The conclusions to which we have arrived seem to us to answer all the problems in a satisfactory manner.



GREEK TEXT

According to The New Testament in the Original Greek,  
edited by Westcott and Hort

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδοκίησεν

πάν τὸ πᾶν ἥρωμα κατοκῆσας

There are no important variations within the text.

ENGLISH VERSIONS

## ENGLISH VERSIONS

### Wiclif Version, 1380

For in hym it plesid alle plentee to enhabite.

### Tyndale Version, 1534

For it pleased the father that in him should all fulness dwell.

### Panin's Cranmer Version, 1539

For it pleased the father, that in hym shulde all fulnes dwell.

### Geneva Version, 1557

For it pleased the Father that in him all fulnes dwell.

### King James Version, 1611

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

### Noyes' New Testament, 1869

For God was pleased that in him all the fulness should dwell.

### Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, 1872-1897

Because in him was all the fullness well pleased to dwell.

### Basic English New Testament, 1941

For God in full measure was pleased to be



The Twentieth Century New Testament, 1898-1901

And this is so because it pleased God that the divine nature in all its fullness should dwell in Christ.

Revised American Standard Version, 1901

For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell.

Modern Reader's Bible, 1908

For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell.

Panin's Numeric New Testament, 1913

For the whole fullness was pleased to dwell in him. fullness should dwell.

Moffatt's Bible, 1913

For it was in him that the divine fulness willed to settle without limit.

Goodspeed's New Testament, 1923

For all the divine fullness chose to dwell in him.

Montgomery's Centenary Translation, 1924

For in him all the divine fullness chose to dwell.

Williams' New Testament, 1937

It is so because it was the divine choice that all the divine fullness should dwell in Him.

Basic English New Testament, 1941

For God in full measure was pleased to be in him.

New World Translation, 1950

Because God was good for all fullness to dwell  
in him.

Revised Standard Version, 1952

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased  
to dwell.

Rheims New Testament, 1582

Because in him it hath wel pleased, all fulnes  
to inhabite.

Douay-Chalkner Bible, 1749-1752

Because in him, it hath well pleased the Father,  
that all fullness should dwell.

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND



## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

The apostle Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Colossians. This epistle was probably written to a church that Paul never visited in person. He did know much of their problems and the heresies that were prevalent in the city of Colosse. Four outstanding forms of heretical teachings were present in the city. Mysticism, legalism, asceticism and gnosticism were these heresies.

It is important to this monograph that the two form of gnosticism be clarified in their teachings concern the person of Christ. Gnostics were of two main schools, the Docetic group and the Cerinthian group. The Docetic gnostics refused to accept the humanity of Christ. They believed that Christ only appeared to be human. Christ was to them but one of a series of aeons.

The Cerinthian gnostics accepted the humanity of Christ, but they declared that the aeon of Divinity in Him came on him at his baptism and left him when he was crucified. This would mean that only the human Jesus died on the cross.

The prevalence of these erroneous teachings concern Christ was part of the reason for the apostle to

give such a great amount of his epistle to the church to the explaining of the person and work of Christ.

It does become almost impossible for the expositor to connect any certain verse with the definite combating of heresy.

Certain portions of this verse hold no problem as to the interpretation of the phrase under consideration. The writer believes it necessary to present these parts of the verse in the background of our consideration of the problems. It is impossible

In the first place,  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\epsilon\iota$  is accepted as a 3rd person singular, 1st aorist indicative verb from the root  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$ . Thayer defines the root verb when he says: " $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  means to think it good, it seems good to one, to chose, to determine, to decide. Other uses are in 1 Cor. 1:21 and Luke 12:32."<sup>1</sup> All Commentators agree that this has to do with willing, choosing, or delighting in a thing.

In the second place,  $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\alpha\omicron$  is taken to be a 1st aorist infinitive from the root  $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$ . There is no question that  $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\alpha\omicron$  has an intransitive meaning and is translated "to dwell, to settle, or to in habit." The past, completed action signifies permanence of dwelling.

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Corrected ed.; Chicago: American Book Co., 1889).



Verses 15-18 of chapter one show the magnitude of the relationship of Christ to God, to the creation of God, and finally to the Church of God in Christ. Verse 18 has portrayed Him as the Highest of all things.

Many commentators on verse 19 have failed to investigate the fact that the root word for fulness, *πληρῶμα* with its various forms appears over 100 times in the New Testament. The usage of this word and its inter-pretations are quite varied. It is impossible therefore to give this word one set meaning in every place that it occurs in the New Testament. An understanding of this fact is thereby essential to a proper understanding of the main problem in this monograph.

The writer considered the possibility of the time of this indwelling as a minor problem. However, every commentator of any note who refers to the time, holds this to be a decree in eternity past that became effective at the incarnation of Christ. It was necessary to conclude that the time of this indwelling was the incarnation of Christ.

With this background we come to the problems of the verse.



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Major Problem: What is the Meaning of the Phrase, "all the fulness"?

Minor Problem: What is the Subject of "pleased"?



Major Problem: What is the Meaning of the Phrase, "all the fulness"?

### Immanent Indwelling of the Universe View

Conybeare and Howson are the champions of this view. They base this interpretation on 1 Cor. 10:26 where we read "For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Conybeare and Howson declare that "The word πλήρωμα is here used in a technical sense to say that the true Fulness of the universe is not found in angelic hierarchy, but in Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to see that their translation of the verse would read "For He willed that in Himself all the Fulness of the universe should dwell..."<sup>2</sup> These men stand almost alone in their view on this word.

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<sup>1</sup>W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1891, p. 694.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Eadie, A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, (New York: Robert Carter and Brosnec 1856), p. 70.

### The Indwelling Church View

The Scriptural support for this view is taken by its supporters from Eph.1:22,23 where we read "... the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." This word *πλήρωμα* is here used in refering to the church. Eadie cities the men and the view of the men who hold the church to be the fulness when he writes: "It is a most extraordinary exegesis of Theodore and Severianus, followed by Henrichs, Wahl, and Schleiermacher, that *πλήρωμα* signifies the multitude which compose the church."<sup>3</sup> This is a rare view, but seemingly has had support from the expositors in past years.

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<sup>3</sup>John Eadie, A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1856), p. 70.



## The Plentitude of Deity View

The exponents of this view hold that here all the fullness simply means that Christ was God. They believe that Paul was setting forth to the Colossians that Christ was as much Deity as was God the Father. Butler explains by writing: "Paul claims for the eternal Son all the pleroma, the true plenitude of Deity."<sup>4</sup> Nicholson also supports this view when he writes: "In Him is the entire number, the plenitude, the perfection of the attributes and energies of Deity."<sup>5</sup>

the Father's good will and pleasure; but what he naturally and necessarily enjoys by a participation of the same undivided nature and essence with the Father and Spirit...this is that dispensatory communicative fullness, which is of the Father's good will and pleasure, put into the hands of Christ to be distributed to others. This includes fulness of grace, in him which saints receive."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>J. Glentworth Butler, The Bible-Work, (New York: The Butler Bible-Work Co., 1892), II, 470.

<sup>5</sup>W. R. Nicholason, Oneness With Christ, (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1903), p. 80.

## The Dispensational Distribution View

This view holds that the fullness was a dispensational fulness that was given by the Father for the purpose of distribution to others. This view probably received its Scriptural foundation from the use of fullness in John 1:16 where we read: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Dr. John Gill defends this view by saying:

Although all the perfections of God are in Christ as eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, etc...yet this is a fulness possessed by Him, that does not spring from, nor depend upon the Father's good will and pleasure; but what he naturally and necessarily enjoys by a participation of the same undivided nature and essence with the Father and Spirit...this is that dispensatory communicative fulness, which is of the Father's good will and pleasure, put into the hands of Christ to be distributed to others. This includes fulness of grace, in him which saints receive."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>John Gill, An Exposition, The Old Testament; (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1803), II' 510.



## The Fulness of the Gentiles View

This view is quite rare, but it can be quite easily seen that this view bases the word fulness in our verse on the words of the apostle Paul in Romans. Romans 11:25b states "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." The advocates of this position give similar meaning to the word "fulness" in both passages. Abbott quotes the position of Schleiermacher when he writes: *πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα* is the same as *ὅς τὸ πλήρωμα* in Rom. 11:25, 26 where the word is the fulness of the Gentiles, and the whole of Israel, whose indwelling in Christ is the permanent state which is necessarily preceeded by the reconciliation."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Schleiermacher as cited in T. K. Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, The International Critical Commentary, Eds. Briggs, Driver, Plummer, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897).



## The Divine Power and Attributes View

This is the most popular view of Bible scholars. Outstanding expositors and exegetes hold this view. The verse upon which the majority base their conclusion is found in the same epistle, in Col. 2:9, where we read; "For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Most of these men will hold the position that *παντὸ τοῦ πλήρωμα* in verse 19 of chapter 1 and *τὸ πᾶν πᾶν* of 2:9 refer to the same thing. Lightfoot writes: "A recognized technical word in theology, denoting the totality of the divine powers and attributes."<sup>8</sup> Vincent states: "The fulness denotes the sum-total of Divine powers and attributes."<sup>9</sup> Exell defines: "The abundance or totality of Divine attributes."<sup>10</sup> Gray and Adams explain "The totality of Divine powers and attributes."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), II, p. 78.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph S. Exell, Phillippians, Colossians, Vol. XLVII, The Biblical Illustrator, (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), p. 82.

<sup>11</sup>James Comper Gray and George M. Adams, Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1950), p. 324.



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Scripture

Others who hold this view are: Dodd,<sup>12</sup> Barry<sup>13</sup> and McClaren<sup>14</sup>.

This view is based on the idea of grace or savings blessings. It is based on the idea that God has provided everything that is necessary for the salvation of man. This view has been the subject of much discussion among the scholars. It is a view that is based on the idea of grace or savings blessings. It is a view that is based on the idea that God has provided everything that is necessary for the salvation of man. It is a view that is based on the idea of grace or savings blessings. It is a view that is based on the idea that God has provided everything that is necessary for the salvation of man.

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<sup>12</sup>C. H. Dodd, "Colossians," The Abingdon Bible Commentary, Eds. Frederick Carl Eiselen, Edwin Lewis and David G. Downey, (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1929). p. 1255.

<sup>13</sup>Alfred Barry, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians," A Bible Commentary for English Readers, Ed. Charles John Ellicott, (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd., n. d.), VIII, p. 124.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander Maclaren, Colossians, Expositions of Scripture, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n. d.) p. 22.



## The Saving Blessings or Fullness of Grace View

Peake,<sup>13</sup> This exegesis and explanation of the fulness holds that all the fullness of grace or savings blessings dwell in Christ. This includes anything that is necessary for salvation and reconciliation. This view has rather surprisingly strong support from the scholars.

Eadie is a strong advocate of this view when he writes:

The proper exegesis is that all fulness of grace, or saving blessings, dwells in Christ. This is a species of fulness, the contents of which are described in John 1:14-16. We do not exclude the work of creation as a redemption. Whatever is needed to save a fallen world, and restore harmony to the universe, is treasured up in Him...In short, every grace, as it is needed, and when it is needed, in every variety of phases and operation; every grace either to nurse the babe or sustain the perfect man, to excite the new life or to foster it, to give pardon and the sense of it, faith and the full assurance of it, purity and the felt possession it; every blessing, in short, for health or sickness, for duty or trial, for life or death, for body or soul, for earth or for heaven, for time or eternity, is wrapt up in that fulness which dwells in Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Henry uses comparison to define by saying: "As the head is the seat and source of all animal spirits, so is Christ of all grace to his people."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Epistles of Paul* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), VI, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Eadie, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Holy Bible; (New York; Funk and Wangalls, 1900), VI, 1160.

The Other men who hold this view include; Meyer,<sup>17</sup> Peake,<sup>18</sup> Barnes,<sup>19</sup> Benson,<sup>20</sup> and Hodge<sup>21</sup>. All views and combines them to include in "all the fulness" the Divine attributes and all of the blessings of salvation that were brought in Christ. Daille is the champion of this view. Daille defends by saying:

'For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.' it is as much as if He had said it was the Father's will that there should appear in His Christ a rich and a complete abundance of all divine and human perfections; all the beauty, dignity, and excellency that replenish heaven and earth, that adorn the nature of God and of men. Thus the question which interpreters debate, whether this fulness should be referred to the exposition comprises them both; the eternal wisdom and power of the one, with all its attributes; the sanctity and love of the other, with all the graces which were given to it without measure. This is the all-fulness that dwells in Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Daille's view here is the inclusion of the two most widely held views as to the interpretation of "all the fulness."

<sup>17</sup>Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon, trans. John C. Moore, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), II, 237.

<sup>18</sup>A. S. Peake, "The Epistle to the Colossians." The Expositor's Greek Testament, Ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Pub. Co., reprinted, 1951), V, 508.

<sup>19</sup>Albert Barnes, Notes on the Epistles of Paul (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), VIII, 287.

<sup>20</sup>Joseph Benson, The Holy Bible, (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1815), V, 366.

<sup>21</sup>Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1872), II, 515.



## The Combined Divine Attributes and Saving Blessings View

This view takes the two separated views and combines them to include in "all the fulness" the Divine attributes and all of the blessings of salvation that were brought in Christ. Daille is the champion of this view.

Daille defends by saying: to be God, as is expressed in

1 Cor. 'For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.' it is as much as if He had said it was the Father's will that there should appear in His Christ a rich and a complete abundance of all divine and human perfections; all the beauty, dignity, and excellency that replenish heaven and earth, that adorn the nature of God and of men. Thus the question which interpreters debate, whether this fulness should be referred to the exposition comprises them both; the eternal wisdom and power of the one, with all its attributes; the sanctity and love of the other, with all the graces which were given to it without measure. This is the all-fulness that dwells in Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Barnes, *op. cit., p. 287.*

<sup>28</sup>Henry Gowles, *The Shorter Epistles*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1887), p. 159.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph S. Exell, *op. cit., p. 82.*

<sup>30</sup>Barry, *op. cit., p. 102.*

<sup>31</sup>Gill, *op. cit., p. 509.*

<sup>32</sup>Henry, *op. cit., p. 1160.*

<sup>33</sup>McClaren, *op. cit., p. 86.*

<sup>34</sup>Karl Braune, "The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians," trans. W. E. Biddle, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Ed. John Peter<sup>22</sup>Jean Daille, *An Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Colossians*, trans. James Sherman, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1900), p. 134.



Minor Problem: What is the Subject of "pleased"?

## God the Father View

This view takes the inserted words in the authorized version as the subject that the apostle Paul intended. Alford defends this view when he says: "The subject here is naturally understood as to be God, as is expressed in 1 Cor. 1:21 and Gal. 1:13."<sup>23</sup> Peake holds this view, for he writes: "The usage of Paul leads us to think of the Father, not the Son, as the one who forms the eternal purpose."<sup>24</sup> The vast majority of commentators hold this view. Among them are: Meyer,<sup>25</sup> Vincent,<sup>26</sup> Barnes,<sup>27</sup> Cowles,<sup>28</sup> Exell,<sup>29</sup> Barry,<sup>30</sup> Gill,<sup>31</sup> Henry,<sup>32</sup> McClaren,<sup>33</sup> and Braune.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Alford, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>24</sup>Peake, op. cit., p. 507.

<sup>25</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>26</sup>Vincent, op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>27</sup>Barnes, op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>28</sup>Henry Cowles, The Shorter Epistles, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1887), p. 159.

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<sup>32</sup>Henry, op. cit., p. 1160.

<sup>33</sup>McClaren, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>34</sup>Karl Braune, "The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians," trans. m. B. Biddle, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Eds. John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), Vol. VIII, 241.



## The "Christ View"

This is the view that Christ himself willed his own pleasure that all the fulness should dwell in himself. Conybeare and Howson are the chief advocates of this view. Their translation of the verse bears this out. "For He willed that in Himself all the Fullness..."<sup>35</sup> They make clear their position when they write: "He willed. Most commentators suppose an ellipsis of God, but the instances adduced by DeWette and others to justify this seem insufficient; and there seems no reason to seek a new subject for the verb, when there is one already expressed in the preceding verse."<sup>36</sup>

The verb ἐβούλητο is used by St. Paul even more frequently of men than of God (seven times to three). There is nothing in the context from which ἐβούλητο can be supplied, and clearness, especially in such an important passage would require it to be expressed. Therefore it seems best to take ἐβούλητο as the subject."<sup>38</sup>

Others who hold this view are: Horn,<sup>39</sup> Barry,<sup>40</sup> and Ironside.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Valpy, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>38</sup>Abbott, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>39</sup>E. T. Horn, "Annotations on the Second Epistle to the Colossians," The Lutheran Commentary, ed. Henry Eyster Jacobs, (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1896), p. 211.

<sup>35</sup>Conybeare and Howson, op. cit., p. 694.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. Ironside, Lectures on Colossians, (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1929), p. 47.

## The "all the fulness" View

This is the view that takes *παρ τὸ πληρὺν*

as the subject of the verb. Perhaps the chief reason for the position of this view is that this is the only possible subject that would be definitely expressed in the verse itself. This view would personify this phrase, causing it to read "For all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him." There are several advocates of this view. Valpy writes: "The word Father is not in the Greek, the literal translation is: For that in him allfullness pleased to dwell."<sup>37</sup> Abbott declares this position when he writes:

The verb *εὐδοκεῖν* is used by St. Paul even more frequently of men than of God (seven times to three). There is nothing in the context from which *θεός* can be supplied, and clearness, especially in such an important passage would require it to be expressed. Therefore it seems best to take *παρ τὸ πληρὺν* as the subject."<sup>38</sup>

Others who hold this view are: Horn,<sup>39</sup> Barry,<sup>40</sup> and Ironside.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Valpy, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>38</sup>Abbott, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>39</sup>E. T. Horn, "Annotations on the Second Epistle to the Colossians," The Lutheran Commentary, ed. Henry Eyster Jacobs, (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1896), p. 211.

<sup>40</sup>Barry, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>41</sup>H. A. Ironside, Lectures on Colossians, (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1929), p. 47.



Minor Problem: What is the Subject of "pleased"?

### The Christ View

We reject this view mainly on the condition that it seems out of harmony with the context. The course of thought is not so much Christ as being the end in Himself both of creation and reconciliation as to the bringing back of allthings into harmony with God the Father. Lenski demonstrates how the subject understood to be Christ in verse 18 cannot be the same subject as verse 19 by saying: "The view that, because in verse 18 Christ is the subject, he must be the subject also in this verse is negatived already by the emphatically forward phrase *Εἰς αὐτὸν* (repeated from verses 17 and 16), which shows that a different subject follows."<sup>1</sup> The few commentators who hold this position are evidence that it is not very plausible.

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, (Columbus, O., Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 64.

## The "all the fulness" View

This view may have some merit, but to the writer's interpretation of the verse it is not acceptable. To attribute this choice concerning the Son to an impersonal phrase borders on the side of ciolency. This view is given by Bible commentators only for the sake of immediacy and avoiding an issue. The absence of the word in the Greek is no sound basis for the acceptance of a phrase which has no grammatical foundation, even if it does happen to be written in the verse. This verb may be used more by Paul when speaking of men, than of the Divine, but this is no exegetical basis for one to conclude that  $\pi\alpha\sigma\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\kappa\alpha$  in this instance would be the subject. Therefore this writer concludes that only the surface reader or expositor would conclude this phrase as the subject of the verb.



Major Problem: What God the Father View the Phrase "all the fulness"

This view is accepted by the vast majority of all commentators. We accept this view because it solves most of the problems that would bear against its acceptance and presents the most correct interpretation for the remainder of the verse.

In the first place, there are many other passages in the New Testament and in the Pauline Epistles where there is no expressed subject the subject is to be understood as God or the Father. There are instances where even a root of the verb here under consideration has an understood subject of God. In 1 Cor. 1:21 we read "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching." There is no *ὁ θεός* for God here, but it is accepted as God or the Father. In Gal. 1:15 we read "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb..." Again we have no expressed word in the Greek for God. Therefore the writer would conclude that it is possible for the subject here to be God, and even very highly probable. Cowles gives three reasons for the use of God as the subject here when he writes:

a; It is violently harsh to attribute "all the fulness" to the "good pleasure" to dwell in Christ.  
 b The nature of the case demands that this dwelling of "all fulness" in Christ should be ascribed to the good pleasure of the Father. c New Testament usage of these words is entirely decisive. The noun "good pleasure," and the corresponding verb, "well pleased," are applied to the Father and to the Son.

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<sup>2</sup>Cowles, op. cit., p. 159.



Major Problem: What is the Meaning of the Phrase "all the fulness"?

Immanent Indwelling of the Universe View

This view is rejected because it is based on false assumptions. First, the commentators assume that Paul is combating Gnosticism. Even though this is possible, there is no suggestion whatever from the context that this was the expressed purpose for this verse. This is therefore mere presumption. There is nothing in the immediate context that could support the view that Christ was filled with all the universe. Secondly, the false assumption is made that "fulness" here is identical with "fulness" in 1 Cor. 10:26. There is no similarity in form, in context or in subject.



### The Indwelling Church View

It can be seen how one could derive this meaning from the verse at a first glance. The previous verse does refer to the superiority of Christ over the Church, but the subject is left before the verse ends. The word  $\pi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu$   $\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  is used in Eph. 1:22, 23 to refer to the church, but since there are so many meanings associated with this word, the careful exegete and expositor must turn to other evidence to support his conclusion. This writer would agree with the observation of this view by Eadie who wrote "It is a most extraordinary exegesis."<sup>3</sup> This is not the meaning of "all the fulness" in this passage.

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<sup>3</sup>Eadie, op. cit., p. 70.

### The Plentitude of Deity View

This view is quite similar to the Divine power and attributes view which will be amply discussed later. However if this were just a simple statement for the Deity of Christ, the words  $\pi\alpha\omega$   $\tau\omicron$   $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\rho\upsilon\mu\alpha$  would not be used. We must reject this view because God the Father could not will to have Christ take on Deity. Hew was Deity already; for the Father to will this to come to pass would place us in the grave error of Arianism. There are other passages which support and positively teach the Deity of Christ, but this is not the meaning of "all the fulness" in this passage.



### The Dispensational Distribution View

This view has some merit and resembles the saving blessings view, but we cannot accept this as a dispensational fulness. The aorist form of the verb  $\kappa\alpha\tau\omicron\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\alpha\epsilon$  reveals that this is a thing that took place in the past and also continues into the future. It is a "once for all" decision. We will credit Gill with good interpretation in causing an aspect of his view to contain a possible distribution of "fulness." In Romans 11:25b is stated as coming to an end. There is no end in view in the "fulness" of this passage.



### The Fulness of the Gentiles View

Little needs to be said concerning this view.

The advocates of this view do not have even a proper amount of understanding of the fulness of the Gentiles that is ~~bas~~ discussed in Rom. 11:25b. The fulness of the Gentiles is not a thing that could be poured into Christ. We reject this view further in that there is no similarity ~~ators~~ between  $\pi\alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$  as the advocates of this position seem to believe. The fulness of the Gentiles in Romans 11:25b is stated as coming to an end. There is no end in view in the "fulness" of this passage. ~~refers to one and the same thing. Col. 2:9 reads "For in Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The writer holds that if Paul had omitted the word~~  $\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma\acute{o}\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon$  ~~and had not had the Col. 1:19 verse in its peculiar context, that this could and would probably be the interpretation of "all the fulness." The writer rejects this interpretation for the following reasons.~~

First, the advocates of this position hold that the word  $\pi\alpha\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  "is a recognized term in theology denoting the totality of the Divine Person and attributes."<sup>4</sup> This cannot be true for the word has already been demonstrated to refer to the Church, the fulness of the Gentiles, and the fulness of the earth. We hold that there are varied meanings in the New Testament for the word as has already been discussed.

Second, the context of the verse, (especially verse 26) requires that this fulness have to do with the recon-

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<sup>4</sup>Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 257.



# The Divine Power and Attributes View

This view is very widely held. However, even though there are noble motives involved and a great amount of truth presented in this view, we reject it on the basis that it does not fill all the requirements for  $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\alpha\tilde{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  in this passage.

The writer agrees with the outstanding commentators in what they say about Christ, but he cannot accept this view as the meaning of "all the fulness" in this verse. The error into which the holders of this view fall is in reading Col. 2:9 and concluding that this refers to one and the same thing. Col. 2:9 reads "For in Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The writer holds that if Paul had omitted the word  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\nu\sigma\epsilon\nu$  and had not had the Col. 1:19 verse in its peculiar context, that this could and would probably be the interpretation of "all the fulness." The writer rejects this interpretation for the following reasons.

First, the advocates of this position hold that the word  $\pi\alpha\tilde{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  "is a recognized term in theology denoting the totality of the Divine Person and attributes."<sup>4</sup> This cannot be true for the word has already been demonstrated to refer to the Church, the fulness of the Gentiles, and the fulness of the earth. We hold that there are varied meanings in the New Testament for the word as has already been discussed.

Second, the context of the verse, (especially verse 20) requires that this fulness have to do with the recon-

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<sup>4</sup>Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 257.



ciliation of the world by Christ unto God. The men who accept this view do not bring their view into harmony with the context and the reconcilian which follows.

Thirdly, the writer rejects this view because of the potential error which it would of logical necessity imply. The writer holds that God the Father willed his pleasure in the placing of this fulness in Christ. The writer holds that Christ was always God; therefore he possessed the Divine power and the attributes of God already. Therefore the writer would conclude that it was necessary for God the Father to will at any time in history that Christ be given the Divine power and attributes. If this be possible or true, then we have arrived at the error of the Arians, who have Christ to be a created being.

Findlay has a remarkable force when he writes:

God's good pleasure (Eph. 1:5,9) lay within and behind Christ's choice and action (Jn. 8:29) It was his own good pleasure too. Phil. 2:7 "He emptied himself." "all the fulness" is not precisely "the fulness of the Godhead" of 2:9 Had the more definite expression preceeded, it would have been fair to interpret this more general one by its aid.  $\pi\eta\rho\upsilon\sigma\mu\alpha$  is a word so varied and elastic in Pauline usage (Rom. 11:12; 13:10; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10,23; 3:19; 4:13) that it can scarcely have hardened into "a recognized term in theology, denoting the totality of the Divine Person and attributes." (Lightfoot)<sup>5</sup>

The writer, therefore, must reject this view of "all the fulness."

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<sup>5</sup>G. G. Findlay, "Colossians," Vol. XX of The Pulpit Commentary, eds. Spence and Exell, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1950), XX, 11.



## The Saving Blessings or Fullness of Grace View

The exegetical argument.--The real word of controversy is the word for "pleased"  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\acute{o}\kappa\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$  in the verse. Thayer's interpretation has been given in the essential background. This is a 1st aorist 3rd person singular indicative verb taken from the root  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\acute{o}\kappa\epsilon\omega$ . All of the root meanings have an active character to interpret them. Some of the meanings are: to seem good to one, to think it good, to chose, to determine, to decide, and to desire. Abbott-Smith also bears out these meanings.<sup>6</sup> From these meanings we must conclude that Someone has chosen, determined, decided or desired that the remainder of the verse should come to pass. The writer has already demonstrated the Father God to be the subject of this action, or the One who originated this action on the remainder of the verse.

Our purpose in this problem is to decide upon the meaning of  $\pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{o}\pi\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ . Whatever this is, it was chosen by the Father to be that way.  $\pi\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  has been demonstrated to have many meanings in the New Testament and the Epistles of Paul. However there are only two general senses in which the word can be taken. The active sense is in "fulness" "that which is filled." There is no doubt that  $\pi\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  here takes the passive sense; therefore the "fulness" would be that with which Christ has been filled.

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<sup>6</sup>G. Abbot-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1944), p. 185.



κατοικῆσαι

is the word used to show the time

and place of the action of this verse. This word is a 1st Aorist Infinitive. The meaning is intransitive and is interpreted to dwell, settle or inhabit.<sup>7</sup>

There seems to be little question but that this desire or choice of the Father was in eternity past and the actuality of his desire was realized in the incarnation of the Son.

The question now is--what is this fulness with which Christ is filled? We believe that there can be but one answer that can satisfy the demands of the exegetical structure of the sentence. We have chosen to call it "the saving blessings or fullness of grace view." This view needs explanation and the writer believes that Barnes most aptly sets forth this view when he writes:

That in him there should be such dignity, authority, power, and moral excellence as to be fitted to the work of creating the world, redeeming his people, and supplying everything needful for their salvation....This is to us a most precious truth. We have a Saviour who is in no respect deficient in wisdom, power, and in grace to redeem and save us. There is nothing necessary to be done in our salvation which he is not qualified to do; there is nothing which we need to enable us to perform our duties, to meet temptation, and to bear trial, which he is not able to impart. We may go to him in all our troubles, weaknesses, temptations, and wants, and may be supplied from his fulness--just as, if we were thirsty, we might go to an ocean of pure water and drink.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 517.

<sup>8</sup>Barnes, op. cit., p. 288.



The Contextual and doctrinal arguments.--The apostle Paul has just been writing concerning the superiority of Christ. He has evidenced his superiority above creation and then the Church. In verse 18 he has stated that Christ is the highest among all things. He has been speaking of His creation and His Church. Then we come to verse 10 where we hear: "For it pleased the Father that all the fulness should dwell in Him." This verse does not end here but the apostle continues to write of the reconciliation of Christ. He is the one who reconciles the world unto the Father. Therefore we hold, that as Paul was before writing of creation and of the church and after this verse of the reconciliation of the world, that the pleasure of the Father was that in this fulness Christ might be given all the powers needed to redeem his people, and to supply all the needs of his church.

This interpretation is in accord with the orthodox, evangelical teaching concerning the Doctrine of Christ.

In this teaching, Christ is given all the authority and grace that He needs to effect the purpose for which He became incarnate. The Arians taught that Christ was inferior to the Father, that God the Father created him and gave to Him the attributes of Deity. This writer is unable to see how that any other widely accepted view could not help but lead to this erroneous teaching in its logical outworking. This interpretation stands the test of systematic christian theology.



# The Combined Divine Attributes and Saving Blessings View

This view was born of compromise. It takes the two most widely accepted views and combines them. The merits of the latter part of this view have been given, and the deficiencies of the first part of this view have been given and demonstrated as unfounded in the context of this verse. This is a good view, but not a correct one. Even though it is true that all the Divine authority and all the qualities of God are present in Christ; this passage does not demonstrate this fact. It would be erroneous to give this verse as the foundation for those truths.

The writer rejects this view because the first part of the view does not meet the requirements of "all the fulness" necessary for a correct interpretation of the passage. This view is rejected because the filling with the divine attributes has no definite relation with the reconciliation of verse 20 and because the potential logical conclusion would of necessity be Arianism. Christ would be inferior to the Father because the Father would have had to have willed that the Son would take on the attributes of the Father.



## ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

For this purpose God the Father chose it to be  
His supreme delight that all the graces necessary for  
salvation and the blessings provided in salvation and all  
the necessary provision for the reconciliation of the  
world unto Himself should permanently dwell in the Son  
of his love.

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