

SERMON XXXVI.

And gave him to be a head (or, the head) over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.—VER. 22, 23.

I DIVIDED these words into these two parts :—

First, *What concerneth our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as a Head ; he is a head to his Church over all, and he filleth all in all.*

Secondly, *What concerneth the Church ; it is his body, and it is his fulness.*

First, Concerning the headship of Christ : I shewed you, that by head here was meant a similitude drawn from the natural head of a man's body. There is a conjugal head, as the husband is the head of the wife. There is a political head, as the supreme magistrate is the head of the commonwealth. But this similitude hath relation to the natural head of the body of man, which is the nearest relation of all others. I opened so much in general in the last discourse. Now I shall shew you more particularly *the relation of headship that Jesus Christ hath to his Church.*

I have often had many discussions with myself, whether that this relation of headship should not import some distinct office from that of king, priest, and prophet, to which three all divines do reduce the offices of Christ. But I have at last resolved my thoughts thus : that this relation of headship doth import all his offices, but with that peculiarness, and with that eminency, as no other relation in Scripture doth. For—

First, to begin with his *kingly office* ; there is this difference between a king and a natural head of a body, that a king ruleth only externally by commands, and by laws, and by proclamations declared ; but the rule of a head is natural. Therefore now, if you reduce it to the kingly office of Christ, it is with an eminency, with a peculiarity. It is our advantage that we are not ruled by Christ as a king simply considered, so far as that similitude will carry it, by external laws revealed, or by way of promises or rewards ; but we are ruled by Christ naturally and inwardly, as the members are ruled by the head, which of all rules is the best and most eminent. So that it noteth out the peculiarity of his kingly office.

Secondly, come to his *prophetical office*. His headship noteth that too, and that with a peculiarity. The head doth not teach the members by outward dictates, or by way of doctrine ; but it doth teach the members by way of impression, a secret impression, carrying them on to do the thing it teacheth. So Jesus Christ, as a head, doth not only teach by way of doctrine, but by efficacy. I need not write unto you, saith he, for you are all taught of God to love one another. And this is the most glorious teaching in the world.

Thirdly, go to his *priestly office*, and his headship importeth that too. There are two parts of his priestly office. There is, first, offering of sacrifice ; secondly, there is intercession, a pleading of that sacrifice before God for us. And of the two, intercession is the most eminent part of the priesthood of

Christ; for that part of his priestly office was resembled by Melchisedec, who, we never read, offered sacrifice, but he blessed Abraham, as Christ doth us from heaven, and now intercedeth for us.

Now, intercession is noted out by headship, for it is natural to the head to speak for the members; the tongue speaks, if speaking will prevent any danger; the head takes care of the members by intercession and by pleading. It noteth out, therefore, his priestly office, and that with an eminency and by a peculiarity.

I might shew likewise how it noteth out his being God and man; but I would finish the chapter at this time, therefore I must cut off many things. Only there is this question, which I know not well how to pass over,—I find it not started by interpreters upon the place, but I find it started by some divines in other discourses of theirs,—and it is this, When it was that Christ began to be Head of his Church? Say they, it was when he did ascend; and the text, say they, is clear for it: for having raised him from the dead, he gave him to be a head over all things to his church, when he had first set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

To solve this doubt in a word or two:—

In the first place, headship is taken either largely for one that *representeth* another, who is a common person for others. The head, you know, standeth for the whole body; therefore you give the name of the whole man to the head: it is so in all languages. In Latin, *caput* is put for the whole person; so likewise in Greek, the word *κεφαλή* is put for the whole person: so Jesus Christ, being the head, is put for the whole body, as 1 Cor. xii. 12; and as you see oftentimes in princes' coin. Now then, take Christ as he is a common person, a person representative, so he was a head before his incarnation. In election we were all chosen in him as in a common person, standing for us, and undertaking for us, as I shewed when I opened those words, 'chosen in him.' And so, likewise, he was a common person when he was upon earth, and every action of his was capital, as the school-men say; every grace of his was *gratia capitis*. Now, as headship is taken thus for a common person representing another, so I say Christ was a head before his incarnation; and so he was a head while he was upon earth.

But then, secondly, headship importeth *an influence into members*; and that influence is either virtual or actual, as I may so distinguish. It is virtual, as before Christ was incarnate; yet the virtue of his being God-man and a head to his church was it that filled all the saints then as well as now. Therefore he was a 'Lamb slain from the beginning of the world,'—that is, he was considered as such; so he was a head from the beginning of the world, from Adam's fall.

But then there is an actual influence, whereby the Godhead, dwelling in the manhood, doth actually fill all things through his manhood, as the instrument of it: and so he began to fill all things when he ascended; for then the human nature was enlarged to take into his care every member of his church, and to send commission that this soul should be filled with this good thought, and that soul with this; which was not before.—And so I have cleared that thing.

Now, this similitude of a head importeth many things; but I will keep to what the text saith. There are two things imported in the text whereby the headship of Christ is represented to us—

First, He is said to be a Head *in respect of eminency*; and that is plain in the text; he gave him to be 'a head over all.'

Secondly, He is said to be a Head *in respect of influence into his members*;

that is plain in the text too, 'he filleth all in all.' I shall open those words afterward; but only, because the text giveth us hints of these two, I will first speak a little of them.

First, He is a Head *in respect of eminency*. The head, *caput*, is oftentimes put for the *beginning*. Christ is a head in that sense; he is the beginning of his church, he hath that eminency: so Col. i. 18, 'He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.' Here is one eminency. Now, he is the beginning of the church. As Adam was the beginning of the creation, so is Christ of the new creation; he was first in order intended, he was not ordained for us, but we for him; the text is plain for it, for we are 'his fulness.' The head is not ordained so much for the body, as the body for the head. He hath the first in that sense.

He is likewise head in respect of eminency, for he is worth all the body. Oh, my brethren, think what Jesus Christ is! The head of a man is infinitely more worth than his body. Divide them you cannot; but if you could divide them, the head is of more worth than all the body, for all reason, and wisdom, and whatsoever is glorious, all the senses dwell in the head; there is but one sense dwelling in the body,—namely, the sense of touching,—but the perfection of all the senses is in the head, it is the seat of the understanding. All the beauty is in the head; therefore the civil lawyers, in their language, call whatsoever is excellent, *caput*, the head.

All beauty, you know, lieth in the face, and the face and head is all one. You may read, 1 Cor. xi., of uncovering the head, that is, uncovering the face; covering the head is covering the face with a vail, as the custom of those times was. Such a one, my brethren, is Jesus Christ. You see saints, and you see but few of them, and you do not see them in their ruff, in their glory, as they shall be in their robes at the latter day; when you have thoughts of them all, put them all together, what are they? They are but the toes, the fingers, the hands of this head. Christ is worth all this body, and a thousand bodies more, if you could suppose them. In him is all the beauty: for it is said, the glory of God shineth in the face of Jesus Christ,—the face is put for the head,—so 2 Cor. iv. 6.

The image of God appeareth in the head more than in all the body; so it doth in Christ. God is very well pleased when he looks upon the Head, though the members be scabbed, and diseased, and full of humours; but in him I am well pleased, saith he. He is *primum amabile*, that makes the body beautiful in the eyes of God; and he will never leave it till he hath cleansed it, and made it like himself. He is 'fairer than the children of men,' than all the children of men put together, Ps. xlv.

And whereas you will say, All the grace we have Christ hath; but, my brethren, how hath he it? Not as you have it; for the fulness of the God-head dwelleth in him, and dwelleth in him bodily. The body hath all the use of the reason of the head, so that when you see a man do actions, he doth them rationally; as when a man playeth on a lute, it is a rational act, which made one say that the soul is in the fingers' ends: but now he doth these actions by way of participation; it is the soul that guideth all. So we have grace, but it is by participation; the spring of all is in Christ the Head. All the counsel, all the wisdom is in the Head; and he is 'made unto us wisdom,' we have none of ourselves; he is the mighty Counsellor, as you know he is called.—So that he is a Head in respect of eminency, a Head over all, body and all.

Secondly, He is a Head *in respect of influence*; which is imported in these

words, 'he filleth all in all.' He is a Head in respect of influence these three ways : in respect of communicating—

1. Of life.
2. Of motion.
3. Of strength.

First, *All our life is from him; that is, spiritual.* The body indeed liveth a natural life without the head, but it doth not live an animal life, a sensitive life, all that is from the head. You have a natural life from Adam, but all your spiritual life is from the Head, Christ. My brethren, the very bands by which we are united to this head all come from him, as all the nerves and sinews, by which the members are united to the head, spring from the head. You have a plain place for it, Col. ii. 19, speaking of men that did not hold the Head, Christ, by which, saith he, 'all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' He doth not only communicate all life to us, but he knitteth us to himself; first he apprehendeth us, and then we apprehend him, as in the Epistle to the Philippians.

Secondly, The head you know is *the principle of motion*, as well as the principle of life and union of the members. There is no motion in any little member but it is formed in the head first, and the head, the fancy first formeth it, and then sends the spirits to the toe, and biddeth it move this way or that way; or to the hand, and bids it act this thing or that; and it is more the action of the head than it is of the toe or of the hand. So it is here; all the spiritual actions which you do are from Christ, that 'worketh all in all,' 1 Cor. ii. 6, as he is here said to 'fill all in all.' What a mighty vast comprehensive Head have we, that should think all the good thoughts of every member; that is, give directions that any should think them. He sendeth his Spirit down, who is said to be that same *ἐνέργεια*, that same inward working, Eph. iv. 16; he sendeth his Spirit down, and that works every thing that Christ would have wrought.

I find in some of the school-men, handling Christ's headship, that they would make the Holy Ghost to be the heart, and Christ to be the head; they would follow the similitude so far. But it is an absurd one, for to make the Holy Ghost the heart in this body is indeed to make him a member whereof Christ is the head; he beareth no such part. But what part doth he bear in this body then? He beareth the part of the spirits, that run up and down in the nerves and sinews and blood, which is called the life of a man, that carry all the commissions for actions to be done, and that part indeed the Holy Ghost hath between the head and us.

Now, my brethren, do but think with yourselves what a head Christ is, in respect of motion. Suppose—it is a supposition may be made to illustrate the thing—there were a man as high as that his head were in heaven, and his feet were here upon earth, and his hands stretched all over the world. No sooner did the head that was in heaven think of moving the toe, but it would move in an instant. Even such a one is Christ, he is a head, he hath a part of his body in heaven, he moveth them as he pleaseth; he hath another part on earth here, and he moveth them as he pleaseth too, and he doth it in an instant. He is the principle of all motion. He is the head in that respect.

Thirdly, *He is the fountain of all strength likewise.* All the strength of the body lieth in the spirits. Take away the animal spirits that come from the head, the body is a weak thing; 'it is sown in weakness;' when the spirits are gone, the body dieth. Further than Christ strengtheneth us, we

are all dead ; therefore the Apostle prayeth, Eph. iii. 16, ' that they may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' And I am able, saith he, ' to do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.'

And so much for the headship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is, first, the fountain of all spiritual life, the uniter of us to himself, the principle of all union is from the head ; he is, secondly, the fountain of all motion ; and, thirdly, of all strength.

The second thing to be considered in Jesus Christ's headship is this, *He is said to be a Head over all* ; ' gave him to be a head over all.'

There are many senses of them, and they are all full of comfort to us. The words note out first, as I said before, an eminency, an excellency, a superexcellency. As Eph. vi. 16, ' Above all things take the shield of faith,' that is the most eminent thing of all the rest ; so Jesus Christ is a head above all. And so it referreth to the gift ; that above all gifts that God hath given him, this is the greatest gift, to be the head of the church. That is one meaning. It was the greatest gift that could be given to Christ to be a head of the church, which is his body ; more than sovereignty over all things else, which he had mentioned before. And it was the greatest gift that could be given to the church, the words will bear either ; *καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκε κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ.*

Or else, in the second place, ' he gave him to be a head over all to the church,' hath this sense in it. It noteth out his sovereignty and superiority over all in relation to his church, that God gave him to be a head to the church, who is above all ; and so indeed the Syriac translation readeth it, ' he that is above all, God gave him to be a head to his church.' And this seemeth to be the meaning more properly, for he had set him out before, how he was over all principalities and powers, far above all ; yet he repeateth it again in this, he gave him to be a head over all to his church ; that is, he that was Lord of all, God added this to him, to be a head to the church ; noting out, that none was fit to be a head to the church but he that was over all ; he is over all that belongeth to his church for her good ; over all that are against her to hurt her. And it was needful for the church to have such a head, for we have enough against us ; but who shall be against us if Christ our head be for us ?

There is a third meaning yet, and it is for our comfort. It is this : it hath relation to headship ; that is, above all relations else he gave him to be a head and to act that part. He doth not say, he gave him to be a lord simply, nor a king, nor a brother, but above all these, though he is all these, he is a head. God gave him to be above all things else a loving, and kind, and natural head to his church, which is his body.

Every one of these senses, my brethren, how full of comfort are they ! If you refer ' above all' to gift, ' he gave above all him to be a head,' how full of comfort is it ! That this should be the greatest gift that ever God gave, Christ to be a head to his church ; and Christ reckoneth it so. Look into John xvii., read over that chapter ; you shall see there, as it is a prayer, so it is a thanksgiving too ; it is an acknowledgment of mercies and benefits given him by his Father. He telleth his Father indeed he had given him glory ; saith he, ver. 1, ' Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee,' ' with the glory which I had with thee before the world was,' ver. 5 ; which, ver. 22, he calleth ' the glory which thou gavest me.' And this indeed Jesus Christ valueth most, therefore he mentioneth it first in ver. 1 ; for his own person being worth more than ours, he hath reason to value his own glory more than all ours ; he should not love himself regularly

else. But next to that, what valueth he? Ver. 2, 'Thou hast given him power over all flesh;' here is his being over all; but to what end? Mark what followeth: 'That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' And, ver. 22, 'The glory which thou hast given me I have given them.' So that he useth this power that he hath in order to our salvation. And if you read that chapter, observe it, what is it that Christ mentioneth oftenest in that chapter as the greatest gift? It is the giving of his church to him. He mentioneth it, ver. 6, 'I have manifested thy name to them which thou gavest me; thine they were, and thou gavest them me.' So again, ver. 8, 'I have given thy words to them which thou gavest me, and they have received them;' ver. 9, 'I pray for them which thou hast given me;' ver. 10, 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine;' still he pleadeth his interest in them as by way of gift. So ver 11, 'That those which thou hast given me may be one;' still he mentioneth this as the greatest gift of all the rest which God hath bestowed upon him.

My brethren, Jesus Christ reckoneth his being a head to the church more than all his temporal dominions, more than his being over all things else. What use shall we make of it? In a word thus, let us prize our relation to Christ, seeing Christ prizeth so much his relation to us; he prizeth it more than his being over all things, than his being far above all principalities and powers; let us prize it more than all worldly greatness and riches, or what else soever. Our being members of Christ is more than our being all things, as Christ's being a head to us is more than being Lord of all the world.

And then again, let the Church value this gift of Christ being a head to her, for it beareth that meaning too; there is an emphasis in that word *him*. 'He gave *him* to be a head,' so saith the text. He had set him forth as Solomon in all his royalty, sitting at his Father's right hand over all principalities and powers; 'and he hath given him,' saith he, 'to be a head over all to the church.' What should the church do now? It should go over all the excellencies of Jesus Christ to make her prize the gift of Christ to her as a head. And let me tell you, he hath given him to be a Saviour, the Saviour of his body, but to be a head is the greater, to be a head is an everlasting thing. When sin will be remembered no more, when his priesthood is at end, he will be a head for ever when he hath given up the kingdom to God the Father. It is a peculiar blessing. To which of all the angels hath he said he is a husband to them, or a head to them, as a body? To none of them. It is only to this body, the church, the sons of men.

Oh, my brethren, when you are in heaven and when sin shall be forgotten, —you love him now because he saveth you, justifieth you, and cleanseth you, and you will love him at the latter day because he pronounceth you blessed, forgiveth you all sins, and suffereth you not to enter into condemnation; —but when all these shall be over, what will be the sweetness for ever? That he is your head. 'Above all he gave him to be a head to his church.'

And do you but consider what a head you have. There is I know not how many *alls* in him. In his person there dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; so he saith, Col. ii. 9. In his relation to you he is *all*, and he is *in all*, Col. iii. 11. In his power for you he is *above all*; so saith the text. In his communicating his goodness, 'he filleth all in all;' so saith the text too. He is one that hath all the Godhead; that is all in all, that is above all, that filleth all in all. What would you have more? Here are *alls* enough for you; value this gift, that Jesus Christ is your head.

Last of all; take that other sense, that of all relations else he is above all

a head, performeth that part the best, and nothing is more comfortable to his church. He is not only above all other heads, above husband, above the natural head of the body, puts them all down, they are but shadows to him; but above all offices belonging to himself he is above all a head to his church. It is as if a wife should say of her husband, He is the best warrior in the world, he is a king, he hath the power and command of all the world, he is wise, he is rich, he is above all in everything, and he hath all sorts of excellencies in him; but above all he is the best husband in the world, he putteth himself down in that, he acts that part the best. So it is with Jesus Christ; he is the king of all the world, he is wise, &c.; but above all he is a head, he excellet in that above all things else.

I should have made this use of it and pressed it upon you: If he be a head above all, it is fit you should be subject to him in all. 'Wives,' saith he, 'be subject to your husbands, as the church is to Christ.' One would wonder at that, that the church's obedience to Christ should be made the pattern of wives' obedience to their husbands. Certainly it argueth that the church is more naturally, more willingly subject to Christ than wives are to their husbands. Yet let any wife consider, How do I obey Christ? how do I obey my husband? But I pass from that.

I have done with the relation of Christ to his church; he is a head, a head over all to his church. I come now to the office of Jesus Christ to his church imported in these words, 'he filleth all in all.'

First, I must explain to what kind of thing this word *all in all* is restrained or limited.

Secondly, I must explain the phrase of *filling*.

Thirdly, the phrase itself, *all in all*.

First, This word 'all' is not to be extended to all things in the world, though that be true that Christ doth put all the fulness into the creature; Adam brought an emptiness. But that is not the meaning here. It is to be restrained to his body, to believers, they are the *all* here mentioned. As in Col. iii. 11, Christ is said to be 'all in all,' but what meaneth he? To his church; 'There is neither Greek nor Jew,' saith he, speaking of the new creature in the words before, 'Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all;' namely, in his saints, be they what they will. So, Eph. iv. 10, 11, it is said he filleth all things, but by 'all things' there is meant his saints, his church, as it followeth, 'He gave some to be apostles, &c., for the edifying of the body of Christ.'

Secondly, For the phrase *filling*; to open that, 'he filleth all in all.' It is Christ's work in heaven, my brethren. 'He ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things,' saith the Apostle in Eph. iv. 10. He gave him to sit at his own right hand, that he might fill all things, saith the text.

It implieth, first of all, *an emptiness in us* that are filled by him. Not only a real emptiness, that we have nothing in ourselves; 'without me,' saith he, 'ye can do nothing;' we are but valleys, 'every valley must be filled,' Luke iii. 5. But he filleth only those that have a sensible emptiness, that have a feeling of their own wants: 'He filleth the hungry with good things,' Luke i. 53. Hunger is not only a real emptiness, but hunger is a sensible emptiness.

My brethren, the church, take all the saints in heaven and in earth, they are all empty things without Jesus Christ. We are not able to think a good thought, we are all but mere empty vessels brought to a conduit pipe to be filled; we have not a drop of good, not so much as one good thought, further than Jesus Christ filleth us. This is the glory of our Head.

Secondly, consider *what he filleth us with*. He filleth us with his Spirit. Read from Luke i. 15, to the end of the Revelation, you shall find that phrase used many a time. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, filled with him as with wine, Eph. v. 18; 'filled with the fruits of righteousness,' Phil. i. 11; 'filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,' Col. i. 9; 'filled with joy,' Acts xiii. 52. And if this be not enough, you shall be 'filled with all the fulness of God' one day, and a little of God will fill you, Eph. iii. 19.

But thirdly, *How is it that Christ filleth his Church?*

He doth it two ways.

He filleth them first *meritoriously*, by what he did here upon earth; he purchased power and grace to fill them with these. For, my brethren, you must know this, that Christ doth nothing for us but he himself had something in him proportionable that might merit why it should be done. Doth he make us rich? He was first poor. Doth he fill us? Himself was first empty, so saith Phil. ii. 7. It is said there, 'he emptied himself;' so the words *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε* signify.

Then again he filleth *efficiently*, and that while he is in heaven. He sendeth down the Holy Ghost, and he works all; the manhood doth it instrumentally, the Godhead doth it virtually. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him, and runneth, overfloweth through the human nature as the instrument of it, and filleth all in all.—And so much now for his filling.

Thirdly, I come now to the phrase, *filleth all in all*. There are two things in that to be considered distinctly.

First, Here is *an all which is filled*.

Secondly, Here is *all with which it is filled*.

First, He filleth all, that is, as I said before, *all saints*, all the members of his body. And that importeth these particulars:—

First, It importeth that he filleth *every saint*; there is not one but he filleth. There is not a saint, my brethren, but hath a measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, which God hath appointed him to have, and Christ filleth him top full before he hath done, he leaveth not one saint out. We are all vessels, 'vessels of mercy,' that are to be filled; and you may read Eph. iii. of a sea of love, a sea that knoweth neither shore nor bottom. 'That ye may be able to comprehend,' saith he, 'what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth,' of what? 'Of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled,' saith he, 'with all the fulness of God.' Every saint shall be thus filled one day, thrown into that sea of the love of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the knowledge of him, and take in all that he can hold; he shall be filled top full according to his measure.

Secondly, This word 'all' importeth *all sorts of saints*, that both Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, men and women, shall all be filled. Thus you find the word 'all in all' used, Col. iii. 11, 'There is nether Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all these.'

Then, *thirdly*, he filleth all, that is, *all the powers and faculties*, both of body and soul, that are in every one of these members. Thou hast an understanding, a memory, a will, a fancy, thou hast outward senses, thou hast a body; Jesus Christ will fill every one of these top full. He will empty thee of every one of thine own thoughts before he hath done. He will fill thine understanding with none but his own thoughts, top full; thou shalt think no thoughts but what Christ himself thinketh. He will fill thy will, thou shalt have no desires, no affections, but what Jesus Christ hath; he

will fill thee with all his own joy, with all his own delights, with all the pleasures himself hath at God's right hand. I tell you, my brethren, he will turn a man's self out of doors, and fill a man's self with himself, that as the iron that is red hot, all the pores of it are filled with heat, there is nothing but iron and fire, so at last there will be nothing but Jesus Christ and the man. As the cloud filled the temple, so will he fill your bodies and make them temples of the Holy Ghost; he will glorify you with the same glory that he himself hath; he will fill all parts in a man at last.

Secondly, He will fill all in all. I have shewed you what *all* is to be filled, Now then, what is the *all* with which he will fill *all*? He will fill you with all sorts of graces, he will fill the whole with all sorts of gifts, so the word is taken, 1 Cor. xii. 6: 'God worketh,' saith he, 'all in all.' It is not that every one hath all gifts, but take the whole body, and amongst them they have all. He worketh in the eye, and filleth that, and he filleth the hand as a hand, according to the use of every part. So that put all together, and he is all in all, and so in this life, and in the world to come it is said, God will be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28.

So much now for that head likewise; 'he filleth all in all.' And so now I have done with Christ's part, wherein he is said to be a Head over all, filling all in all.

Now then, will you come to *the Church's relation*? The church, saith he, which is 'his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' You see that in Jesus Christ's relation there were two things. There was, first, his *headship*; there was, secondly, his *office*, filling all in all. Now if you come to the church's relation, she hath something to answer both. Answerable to his headship, she is called his body; 'which is his body.' Answerable to his filling all in all, she is called his fulness.

In my last discourse I handled what was meant by the word *church*. There was a necessity that lay upon me to open that distinction of church, universal and particular. I gave you two cautions about two errors concerning each of these, both toward the church universal and toward particular churches. Concerning which I must necessarily say something to take away some mistakes and misapprehensions of meaning; for I walk by this rule, to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or to the churches of God, as the Apostle speaks.

The first error, I told you, was of the Donatists of old, who denied the Church Catholic, and restrained it to one part of the world; and yet the imputation of this error lieth upon those whom you call Brownists to this day. This I cleared them from, and it is as great a clearing as can be.

The second error was of those who hold particular churches—those you call parish churches—to be no true churches of Christ, and their ministers to be no true ministers, and upon that ground forbear all church-communion with them, in hearing or in any other ordinance. And as I acquitted these from that other error, so I acquitted myself from this, and my brethren in the ministry. I would not now have touched upon it again, but, as I said, to clear, not myself so much, as some mistakes about it.

The first is this: it was understood as if I said that all parish churches and ministers generally were churches and ministers of Christ, such as with whom communion might be held. I said not so. I was wary in my expressions. I will only say this unto you about it. There is no man that desireth reformation in this kingdom,—as the generality of all godly people do,—but will acknowledge and say, that multitude of parishes, where ignorance and profaneness overwhelm the generality, scandalousness and simony

the ministers themselves ; that these are not churches and ministers fit to be held communion with. Only this, the ordinances that have been administered by them, so far we must acknowledge them, that they are not to be recalled or repeated again.

But here lieth the question, my brethren, and my meaning. Whereas now in some of the parishes in this kingdom, there are many godly men that do constantly give themselves up to the worship of God in public, and meet together in one place to that end, in a constant way, under a godly minister, whom they themselves have chosen to cleave to,—though they did not choose him at first,—these, notwithstanding their mixture and want of discipline, I never thought, for my part, but that they were true churches of Christ, and sister churches, and so ought to be acknowledged. And the contrary was the error that I spake against.

Secondly, for holding communion with them. I say, as sister churches, occasionally as strangers, men might hold communion with them. And it is acknowledged by all divines, that there is not that obligation lying upon a stranger, that is not a member of a sister church, to find fault in that church, or in a member of it, as doth on the church itself to which one belongeth.

I will give you my reasons that moved me to speak so much. It was not simply to vent my own judgment, or simply to clear myself from that error ; but the reasons, or rather the motives and considerations, that stirred me in it were these :—

First, if we should not acknowledge these churches, thus stated, to be true churches of Christ, and their ministers true ministers, and their order such, and hold communion with them too in the sense spoken of, we must acknowledge no church in all the Reformed Churches ; none of all the Churches in Scotland, nor in Holland, nor in Germany ; for they are all as full of mixture as ours. And to deny that to our own churches, which we do not to the churches abroad, nothing can be more absurd. And it will be very hard to think that there hath been no church since the Reformation.

Secondly, I know nothing tendeth more to the peaceable reformation amongst us, than to break down this partition wall ; for there is nothing provokes more than this doth, to deny such churches to be true churches of Christ. For do but think with yourselves, and I will give you a familiar example. You come to a man whom you think to be a godly man ; you tell him he hath these and these sins in him, and they are great ones ; it is as much as he can bear, though you tell him he is a saint, and acknowledge him so. But if you come to him, and say, besides this, You are a limb of the devil, and you have no grace in you ; this provokes all in a man, when there is any ground in himself to think so, or in another to judge him so. So it is here ; come to churches and say, You have these defects amongst you, and these things to be reformed ; but if you will come, and say, Your churches and your ministers are antichristian, and come from Babylon, there is nothing provokes more. Therefore, if there be a truth in it, as I believe there is, men should be zealous to express it ; for this is the great partition wall that hindereth of twain making one.

Then again, this is that which I consider, and it is a great consideration also. I know that Jesus Christ hath given his people light in matters of this nature by degrees. Thousands of good souls that have been bred up and born in our assemblies, and enjoy the ordinances of God, and have done it comfortably, cannot suddenly take in other principles ; you must wait upon Christ to do it.

In this case men are not to be wrought off by falsehoods, God hath no need of them. No, rather, till men do take in light, you should give them all that is comfortable in the condition they are in; we should acknowledge every good thing in every man, in every church, in every thing, and that is a way to work upon men, and to prevail with them; as it is Philem. 6, 'That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.' It is that which buildeth men up, by acknowledgment of every good thing that is in them.

Lastly, the last inconvenience is this: it doth deprive men of all those gifts that are found amongst our ministers, and in this kingdom, that they cannot hold any communion or fellowship with them. So that I profess myself as zealous in this point as in any other I know. And, for my part, this I say, and I say it with much integrity, I never yet took up religion by parties in the lump; I have found by trial of things that there is some truth on all sides. I have found holiness where you would little think it, and so likewise truth; and I have learned this principle, which I hope I shall never lay down till I am swallowed up of immortality, and that is that which I said before, to acknowledge every good thing, and hold communion with it, in men, in churches, or whatsoever else. I learn this from Paul, I learn this from Jesus Christ himself, he 'fillethe all in all;' he is in the hearts of his people, and fillethe them in his ordinances to this day; and where Jesus Christ fillethe, why should we deny an acknowledgment, and a right hand of fellowship and communion?

My brethren, this rule that I have now mentioned, which I profess I have lived by, and shall do while I live, I know I shall never please men in it. Why? It is plain, for this is the nature and condition of all mankind; if a man dissents from others in one thing, he loseth them in all the rest; and therefore if a man do take what is good of all sides, he is apt to lose them all, but he pleaseth Christ by it, and so I will for this particular.

I come now to 'his body' and his 'fulness.'

First, It is said to be *his body*.

Secondly, It is said to be *his fulness*. I shall speak to both.

Our Saviour Christ's body is either taken for his *natural body*, which he weareth in heaven now and was laid in the grave, or it is taken for his *mystical body*, namely his saints. Concerning this distinction I will add but this: That what Christ did to his natural body, that he doth to his mystical body, to conform them to him.

Again, for a second distinction, our Lord and Saviour Christ hath a *sacramental body*. Saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 24, speaking of the bread, 'This is my body, which was broken for you.' And he hath a *ministerial body*, which is an assembly of his children incorporated to enjoy ordinances. 1 Cor. x. 17, speaking of the church of Corinth, 'You,' saith he, 'are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' This is a ministerial body to Christ. As he hath a universal church, a mystical body, whereof only his saints are members, so he hath a ministerial body, which is his ordinance, which are saints incorporated and made one, either really or verbally; really, by eating that one bread, as the Apostle saith.

Now to leave these distinctions; only I will give you one observation upon the last distinction, as I did upon the former. There is a sacramental body, that is, the bread which is broken. There is a ministerial body, which is the ordinance of church-fellowship. Here you see the same thing said of saints that is said of the sacrament. It is said of the saints, 'which are his body;' there is no more said of the bread in the sacrament, which is

his body. Yet the Pope and the Papists give more reverence to the sacramental bread,—and that bread, they say, because it hath the appellation of *body*, must needs be transubstantiated,—to the sacramental body of Christ, than they do to the mystical body. As of old,—it was an argument used long before the Reformation in England,—they do give more reverence to images of Christ than they do to the image of Christ in men's hearts, than they do to saints; so now they give more reverence to the sacramental body of Christ—and both these errors are correspondent and proportionable—than they do to the mystical body.—And so much for those two distinctions.

Now, why doth this come in, 'which is his body?'

It cometh in upon a twofold consideration—

First, To shew the nearness of the relation that Jesus Christ hath to his Church, and his Church hath to him. He is not a head only as a ruler, but he is a head as a natural head to a body; he is so a head to his church, which is his body.

Secondly, To shew that he is affected to them, to the saints, as the head is to the body.

I might handle many things here concerning the church's being a body to Christ wherein the similitude holdeth, but I shall not be able to do that and despatch what I am yet to do. I shall only make this use of it: That a body and the members of it are united one to another by the nearest union, by a union of sense; so saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.' Here is a union. And the inference of the Apostle from thence is this, ver. 25, 'That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.' This is the inference the Apostle makes of the church's being a body.

Now let me make but an observation upon the former distinction mentioned. I told you there is a sacramental body of Christ; 'This is my body.' And there is a ministerial body of Christ; you are 'one body, for you are partakers of that one bread.' My brethren, it is strange to see and to consider how that these two have made the greatest divisions in the world. Those things that are for communion—for Christ hath appointed church-fellowship for communion; he hath appointed the sacrament for the communion of his body; you shall be one body, saith the Apostle, by it; 'Ye are one bread and one body; for ye are all partakers of one bread,' 1 Cor. x. 17—are that which hath caused the schism of the body, as I may so express it in the Apostle's words. For what hath bred the greatest difference between the Papists and us of all other points? It is, 'This is my body.' It was that chiefly about which all the martyrs suffered. Amongst the Protestants, what hath made the greatest dissension between the Lutherans and the Calvinists? It is, 'This is my body.' There is, though not a transubstantiation, yet a consubstantiation—he is in and with the bread; so the Lutherans hold. Amongst ourselves, what hath been the great division? Still though not about the sacramental body, yet about the ministerial body of Christ, church-fellowship. The body of Christ hath been the occasion of the rending of the body of Christ. As the dispute was about the body of Moses, so are the disputes about the body of Christ. My brethren, if you cannot agree in judgment, yet agree in heart. Let me but mind you of the relation you bear to Christ; remember you are his body, and there should be no schism in the body; and there would be no schism if you did not judge one another for these things. Though you are of different minds,

here is no schism, for this will be while the saints are upon the earth ; but the schism is in judging one another, in not being at peace because you differ in judgment.

Let me say to godly men, agree ; you are the body of Christ, remember that ; let your mystical relation to Christ, that mystically you are his body, prevail over all considerations whatsoever. It is the strongest tie in the world. Shall I prophesy unto you ? Either agree, or God will make you agree ; either with the sword, or with fire and fagot. And let me edge it with this a little, ' which is his body.' Oh, my brethren, this word, *his body*, is a sweet word. You are not only a body among yourselves, but consider whose body you are, you are the body of Christ, *his body* ; the body which he owneth, which he filleth, which is more his body than yours ; and if you will do nothing out of love one to another as becometh saints, yet do it out of love unto him.

I will add this : this word *his* is added also to shew that it is the relation this body beareth to Christ that giveth the excellency to it. This body would have no beauty, no excellency in it if this head stood not on it. ' The church, which is his body.'—So I pass from that.

I have nothing now remaining, but only this last point, *which is his fulness*. He beareth the relation of head, she of body : he performeth the office of filling her ; she performeth this to him, she is his fulness.

These words, ' his fulness,' are either taken actively or passively. If you take them actively, they refer to Christ, and then the meaning is this, that *he filleth her*. If you take them passively, *she is his fulness*. I cannot stand to shew you how the word is taken in both senses, either for that which filleth, or that which is filled. I pitch rather upon that which this translation holdeth forth, viz., that this body is said to be Christ's fulness.

Why doth the Holy Ghost add this ? He doth not content himself to say, that Christ is the Head of the Church, which is his body, but he must needs bring in this, that she is *his fulness*.

He mentioneth it, my brethren, as an honour to his church, that she is such a body to him, as that though he be a head that filleth her, yet he is not complete without her. He would shew that Christ needs her not, therefore he saith he filleth her ; he ' filleth all in all : ' and yet because he is in some sense imperfect without her, she is as an ornament to him, therefore he addeth she is his fulness ; ' the fulness of him that filleth all in all.'

Now she is called the fulness of Christ in the same sense that it is said, 2 Cor. xii. 9, ' My strength is made perfect in weakness.' What, is not God's power perfect without our weakness ? Yes, it is perfect in itself ; but it is said to be made perfect, because it is declared to be perfect in weakness. So when the church is said to be Christ's fulness, what, is not he full without her ? Yes, for he ' filleth all in all ; ' yet his fulness she is, and she setteth off his fulness, because she serveth as an empty vessel for him to fill, and to shew his fulness in ; that he is not full only in himself personally, but that he hath enough overflowing to fill all his body, to fill all in all.

Now then to open this, Jesus Christ hath a *threefold fulness*—

He hath, first, a *personal fulness* ; the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth personally in him, so Col. ii. 9.

He hath, secondly, a *dispensatory fulness*, mentioned here in the text ; he filleth all in all. ' Of his fulness we all receive grace for grace.'

Then, thirdly, he hath a *relative fulness*, which ariseth from a relation to his church. He is the head, and the church is his body. And, as if you would make a man, you must not only have a head, but you must have a

body too, or it is not a perfect man : so if you would make up Christ,—take Christ mystically,—you must not only have the person of Christ, but there must be a body too ; and so there ariseth a perfect full stature of Christ, as the Apostle calleth it, 1 Cor. xii. 12.

Now, my brethren, when, and how, doth the church become the fulness of Christ ?

It becometh his fulness by these three things—

First, when Jesus Christ hath every saint brought to him, and gathered about him, united to him, and all joined in one with him, every saint that God hath given him. If there were one saint wanting, Jesus Christ should not be full. Mark what I say to you, if there were this joint of the little finger cut off, this body of mine would be imperfect : so if Jesus Christ should want but one of his members,—the joint of the little toe, as I may so express it,—the least saint, (comfort thyself,) Jesus Christ should not be full ; thou makest up Christ's fulness.

Secondly, the church is then said to be his fulness, when she shall have all variety of all gifts and graces dispersed amongst them. As now, take the members of a man's body, there is not a member but hath its use, there are variety of uses for the several members ; put them all together, and there is a completeness for all sorts of uses the body needeth. So it is here. Take all the saints together at the latter day, and there will be nothing wanting of grace, or of any measure of gifts, that is needful for glory, and excellency, and ornament.

Thirdly, to make up this fulness of his body yet more complete ; as there must be all the members, not one wanting ; as there must be all variety of uses that members serve for, none lame or imperfect : so likewise there must be a fulness of growth to a stature, to a proportion, or else the body is not full. For example ; if this hand of mine, or this little finger were writen shorter in its proportion, if it did not grow to the full measure of the proportion of a little finger, there would be an uncomeliness and a disproportion, the body would not be full. So it is in the body of Christ ; therefore to make up this fulness so much the more, you read, Eph. iv., that the Apostle, in the 10th verse, having said that he filleth all in all, saith, ver. 15, that the saints are to 'grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ ;' and, ver. 13, 'till they all come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' To open these words a little :—

The fulness of Christ lieth not only in having every member, but every member growing up to a full stature that God hath appointed him. You see some little saints, and you see some great saints ; there are saints great and small, as they are called in the Revelation. You wonder at this disproportion. Now mark ; when you come at the latter day, and all the saints are round about Jesus Christ, you will find a perfect body ; you will say, if this saint had grown anything more, he had not stood well among his fellows ; if this saint had been anything less, there had not been a fulness. They are all to grow up to the fulness of the stature of Christ.

Why is it called the fulness of the stature of *Christ*, and not of *the body* ? Because the fulness of the body is in the fulness of the head, therefore he rather calls it the fulness of Christ than of the body.

The corollaries from thence are in a word these :—

Is the body the fulness of Christ, and so his fulness, that he will have every part, every member ? *Here is then a certainty of salvation.* A man may lose his clothes, and suffer them to be taken from him ; but if he can help it, he will never lose his members. My brethren, Christ will never lose

his members ; ' My Father,' saith he, ' is greater than I, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.' But if his sheep were his very hands themselves, to be sure he would not suffer them to be pulled off ; they are not only his sheep, but his members ; they are not only in his hands, but his hands and his feet ; they are the members of his body, yea, they are his fulness.

Secondly, Learn from hence this : *Thou shalt certainly have thy measure in the growth of grace.* Thou art humbled in thyself because thou growest not according to the means ; that which God hath appointed thee to, thou shalt, either by afflictions, or by the word, attain to that stature ; for the members of Jesus Christ are all written in God's book, and the stature that they are all ordained unto, that when they are all met the body may be full. That doctrine is not true that telleth us that Christ might have died and been in heaven to want a body ; for you see it is his fulness, he cannot want so much as one member but he had been imperfect.

I will give you but some observations, and so end.

First, See the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He might have taken all the glory and honour to himself here ; the Holy Ghost might only have said, He is the head of the church, which is his body, that filleth all in all ; but he would needs put in that is his fulness, ' the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' He would not take all the honour to himself, he would give her her due ; his body, saith he, which is his fulness. Certain it is, my brethren, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ accounteth you his fulness. Doth he see a soul converted to God ? It is a part of my fulness, saith he ; his joy is full by it. Doth he see you get a little grace at a sermon ? Here is one step more to my fulness, saith he. He needed not anybody, he was perfectly glorious in himself ; but he hath taken upon him such a relation as he were imperfect without a body, he standeth in need of a body. What saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 21 ? ' The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of thee.' Jesus Christ, though a head, cannot say to the least saint, I have no need of thee. It was his love to enter into this relation. And learn from hence to give everything his due praise ; you see here, though the Apostle saith that Christ filleth all in all, yet he giveth the church her due praise ; he mingleth that with his. Christ filleth all, yet the church serveth for him to empty himself into.

Secondly, Is every degree of grace in a saint a part of Christ's fulness ? Doth it add to his fulness ? Is the addition of every member a part of his fulness ? Then conversion of souls, adding grace into the hearts of men, is the best work in the world, for it is an adding to Christ's fulness ; and what can be a greater work ? It is not only doing good to a poor soul, though that would move one ; it is the motive that James useth : ' He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death,' he pulleth him out of the fire ; but besides this, he addeth to Christ's fulness, which is the highest motive that can be. That as the apostle Paul saith, that it moved him to take all that pains he did, to suffer persecutions for preaching of the gospel, and to be glad of it too ; I bear, saith he, the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake ; this was Paul's motive : but here is a higher motive ; here is not to do it for his body's sake only, but for Christ's, to make up his fulness. If there were a piece of work, a statue that were to last to eternity, would not all the cunning artists in the world be glad to have a hand in carving but a finger in that statue ? My brethren, to build up the saints, to joint in the saints to Christ, is to add to the fulness of Christ. The work of the ministry is the best work in the world ; God had but one Son in the world, and he made him a minister.

Thirdly, What a glorious sight, my brethren, what a glorious meeting will there be at the latter day, when Jesus Christ shall have all his fulness, all his body fully and perfectly united to him in all their glory, perfectly cleansed, not a member wanting, and all grown to their full stature! To see the man Christ, as I may so call him, that perfect man the Apostle telleth us of, Eph. iv. 13, and in 1 Cor. xii. 12,—that is, Christ and all his members making one perfect man, he the head and they the body,—there was never such a sight as this; not only to see this head crowned with all glory and honour, sitting at God's right hand, and having all things under his feet; and how beautiful will that head be to behold! Our Lord and Saviour Christ is more worth than all this body, when it hath all her graces, and all her perfections; and the least member of this body is more worth than all the world, let me tell you that too; but when you have viewed the head, to view every member limb by limb, to see all the beauty and perfection of every part, when there shall not be a saint wanting, nor a degree of grace wanting, but a body proportionable to this head; the head being so excellent, if he had not a body suitable he were deformed. Christ's beauty, my brethren, will add to the beauty of this body; and the beauty of this body, put all together, will set off the beauty of the head. How doth our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ himself long for this day, when he shall be full, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, as the Apostle saith, 2 Thess. i. 10.

My brethren, if you had heard of a piece of work that all the cunning carvers in the world had been about these six thousand years, and it had been wrought limb by limb, and all the Bezaleels in the world, filled with the Holy Ghost, had been carving of it, and this piece had not been complete and put together, as you know in working arras there are many pieces put together to make the picture of a man; if you heard of such a piece of work, what mighty, what infinite expectation would you have! Let me tell you this, that this body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath been carving and working by all the prophets, and apostles, and ministers, by all the Bezaleels of the world, filled with the Holy Ghost, to this day, limb by limb; and, as the Psalmist saith, 'I am wonderfully and fearfully made in the lower parts of the earth,' God hath wrought it in the lower parts of the earth, as he did his body in the womb. When all these shall be brought together, and Christ the Head set upon them, then view them all together, what a sight will it be! Oh, but let me say one thing more. What will it be to be a member of this body, though but the little toe, though but the least part of it, to be one that shall go to make up the fulness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

So I have done with this text, and thus likewise I have, together with this chapter, finished that course of this exercise which I undertook at first; and I have so done it, as I am not conscious to myself of having offended any.