

ANDREW D. DALTON

Fulfilled Israel
according to Matthew's
Plerosis Paradigm

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
601

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

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ISBN 978-3-16-162237-3/eISBN 978-3-16-163301-0
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-163301-0

ISSN 0340-9570/eISSN 2568-7484
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <https://dnb.de>.

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The book was printed on non-aging paper by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen, and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

For Maddi
(2001–2017)

Preface

This monograph is a slightly revised version of my doctoral thesis, defended at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome on January 25, 2022, the final day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

I would like to thank the professional staff at Mohr Siebeck and the editors of the series, especially Professors Jörg Frey and James A. Kelhoffer for their kind recommendation to publish this dissertation in the WUNT II series.

I am deeply indebted to my co-supervisors, Jonathan T. Pennington and William M. Wright IV, for their meticulous attention, abundant generosity, and expert direction during the three years of research and composition. Their task was aided tremendously by Devin Roza, LC, who as my primary reviewer deeply scrutinized every chapter. Whatever shortcomings remain are my own, but these three scholars deserve much credit for their significant contributions. A special thanks also goes to David S. Koonce, LC, Dean of Theology during my doctoral studies, for allowing me – quite exceptionally – to work under two professors external to Regina Apostolorum. Moreover, his keen observations have greatly improved this final version.

I would be remiss to pass over those who inspired this endeavor, though I doubt they know it. Two professors from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross were especially instrumental. Scott W. Hahn lectured memorably not only on the relationship between the testaments but also on the church-kingdom in Matthew. Laurent Touze's class on the kingdom also inspired me. Scot McKnight, author of *Kingdom Conspiracy*, kindly met me at the SBL Annual Meetings in Denver in 2018. At his suggestion, I invited Matthew Levering (who has since authored *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel*) to serve as my supervisor – an option that nearly materialized. I am humbled that this superb scholar reviewed my final manuscript.

In Denver, too, I first met Jonathan Pennington. His pioneering work on *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* had already caught my eye thanks to my friend, Michael Barber. And Pennington's observations in "The Church as the Community Gathered Before the King" aligned significantly with my own. Having now worked with him closely for some time, I cherish how deeply he ponders my work, even when we disagree. During my dissertational defense, he said magnanimously, "I hope you surpass me in all things and in all ways." Of course, I know I do not. In fact, if I have ever seen further in any way, it is only because I have stood on the shoulders of giants like him.

William Wright came to me as a sheer gift. Since he specializes in Johannine exegesis, I did not initially see how his supervision would be so essential. But his eagle eye always impressed me. His kind encouragement always edified me. And his expert advice was always exactly on point. Early on in the project, when my rhetoric was uncharitable, he did not spare me some much-needed fraternal correction. I am so grateful for such compassion and care. As a fledgling professor, I continue to learn from this virtuous man.

In November 2019, my professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Henry Pattaramadathil, SJ, challenged the class with the age-old conundrum about the 41 male progenitors in the line from Abraham to Christ. Unconvinced by the proposals offered, I shared my alternative solution with Fr Henry (see ch. 2). He shocked me by sharing it with the entire class. If he found my proposal convincing, it seemed others might too. This positive experience propelled me into this doctoral project. I am so thankful for his life-changing encouragement.

Many others – more than I can name here – offered precious counsel and constructive criticism. While I always enjoyed taking long hikes with Louis Melahn, LC, who is a gifted logician and metaphysician, he deserves an honorary doctorate for enduring my endless queries. I am also grateful to David Neuhaus, SJ, for meeting with me in Jerusalem (on his birthday!) to discuss my thesis. He impressed upon me the importance of enunciating together affirmations of the already inaugurated eschaton and those of the not yet consummated eschaton. I would also like to thank Suan Sonna, a graduate student at Harvard, for taking interest in my work and for conducting a lengthy interview on his YouTube channel, Intellectual Catholicism, in which we discuss *Fulfilled Israel according to Matthew's Plerosis Paradigm*.

To my family, whose love and support always allows me to grow, I am forever grateful. To all my Legionary brothers, who have stood by my side through thick and thin, I owe the deepest gratitude.

Finally, to Jesus Emmanuel, without whom I am nothing and can do nothing, I give thanks and praise for being with me always to save and strengthen me.

With deep affection, I dedicate this work to Maddi, whose parents had to say goodbye to her too soon. While many dreams of hers were left undone, her radiant light inspires us to reach for ours.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A. What is Matthean Fulfillment?

The subject of fulfillment pervades biblical studies and the Gospel of Matthew.¹ It has been called “the framing motif”² and even “the central theme”³ of the First Gospel. But what is it? Augustine mused similarly over the subject of time:

For, what is time? Who can explain it easily and briefly? Who can grasp this, even in cogitation, so as to offer a verbal explanation of it? Yet, what do we mention, in speaking, more familiarly and knowingly than time? And we certainly understand it when we talk about it; we even understand it when we hear another person speaking about it. What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; but, if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know.⁴

Like time, fulfillment is a familiar category. And yet, its essence is hardly ever discussed directly. We speak of fulfillment meaningfully – just as we use clocks comfortably – but seldom do we attempt to expose its nature or mechanics. Just as it is challenging to philosophize about time, so too it is difficult to discern the fundamental paradigm of fulfillment.

Matthew’s fulfillment paradigm is difficult to discern partly because *plērōsis* is not a word he ever employs. He does, however, use the verb πληρόω (to fill or fulfill) sixteen times⁵, and most of these appear in his famous

¹ Huizenga affirms that “the phenomenon of ‘fulfillment’ permeates the entirety of the Gospel of Matthew [...] Every word of the Gospel of Matthew is geared toward fulfillment.” Leroy A. Huizenga, *Behold the Christ* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2019), 70.

² Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 140.

³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 10. For a lengthier discussion, cf. also France, *Matthew* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 166–205.

⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 11.14.

⁵ Matt 1:22, 15, 17, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35, 48; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54, 56; 27:9.

‘fulfillment citations.’⁶ The difference between ‘fulfill’ and ‘fulfill-ment’ is worth pondering. The four-letter suffix implies an abstraction (or conceptualization). The very existence of the word *plērōsis* reflects the desire to grasp a particular essence, what it involves, and how it works.

Some scholars describe fulfillment as the “climax of Israel’s story.”⁷ But this description – albeit a decent starting point – is too vague and ultimately unsatisfying. What makes this high point ‘high’? The metaphor is only helpful if this question is answered more concretely. Is Israel’s peak measured in terms of material prosperity, unblemished happiness, worldly power? If not, then what is ‘full’ about this place of fulfillment? Most exegetical literature does not adequately answer this question.

In response to this lacuna, I will argue that, *for Matthew, the fullness Israel enjoys through Christ is a share in the fullness of God.*⁸ God himself is the measure by which Israel’s ‘high point’ is defined. Insofar as God’s kingdom people *participate* in his life – and thereby live out his righteous deeds of love and mercy – Israel is truly fulfilled. ‘To participate’ means to possess in a partial and inferior way what another possesses in a total and superior way.⁹ Accordingly, the risen and enthroned Messiah is ‘fulfilled Israel’ par excellence. But since the eschatological shepherd-king is forever with the disciple-shepherds commissioned as agents of his kingdom activity (28:20), the Christian flock is also *fulfilled Israel*.

Let us clarify this terminology immediately. The word ‘Israel,’ which appears a total of twelve times in the First Gospel,¹⁰ debuts in 2:6 (cf. Mic 5:2–4): “From you [Bethlehem] shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”¹¹ Indeed, in most occurrences, ‘Israel’ refers to God’s covenant family. The expressions “sons of Israel” (27:9), “tribes of Israel” (19:28), and “house

⁶ Matt 1:22, 2:5*, 15, 17, 23; 3:3*; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14*, 35; 21:4; 26:31*, 54, 56; 27:9. The asterisk (*) indicates that the verb *πληρώω* is not present – 13:14 has *ἀναπληρώω* – even though an ancient text or saying of a prophet is referenced. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, AYBRL (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 98.

⁷ Such expressions are common in the admirable work of N. T. Wright: “‘the time is fulfilled.’ The gospel story is the climax of Israel’s story, however surprising and unexpected it may have been.” N. T. Wright, *How God Became King* (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 94.

⁸ The word ‘fullness’ is intentionally generic. It can be parsed in different ways, as we shall see. It can be appropriate to speak about a creaturely share in divine power, authority, love, law, righteousness, virtue, mission, activity, life, etc.

⁹ For further clarification of this term, cf. p. 88, n. 50.

¹⁰ Matt 2:6, 20, 21; 8:10; 9:33; 10:6, 23; 15:24, 31; 19:28; 27:9, 42.

¹¹ The expression *ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαὸν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ* (2:6) approximates Micah 5:3 MT/LXX: “and he will shepherd his flock,” *יְהוָה הֵן יִשְׁׁרָאֵל, וְהוּא יִשְׁׁרָאֵל, וְהוּא יִשְׁׁרָאֵל*, where ‘his flock’ clearly corresponds to “Israel” (Mic 5:1 MT/LXX) and “the sons of Israel” (Mic 5:2 MT/LXX). As we shall see in the ecclesiastical discourse (Matt 18), the evangelist’s redaction of Micah 5 in Matthew 2:6 suggests that the evangelist regards ‘flock,’ ‘people,’ and ‘Israel,’ as three distinct labels for one and the same reality (cf. ch. 7).

of Israel” (10:6; 15:24) all refer to a human community. The evangelist also alludes to “the God of Israel” (15:31). Matthew’s passion narrative refers to Jesus as “the King of the Jews” (27:11, 29, 37) and “the King of Israel” (27:42). Given the kingdom of Israel motif, with its territorial associations, it is unsurprising to find references also to “the land of Israel” (2:20, 21) and the “towns of Israel” (10:23). Also regarding the kingdom of Israel motif, with its eschatological associations, we must lay stress on a chronological detail of 19:28. There “Israel” appears as the *post-paschal* covenant people of God.¹² This verse alludes to the messianic era inaugurated by Jesus’s enthronement at the right hand of Power (cf. Excursus on the New Genesis, p. 116). Only *after* this pivotal moment will twelve disciple-shepherds rule “Israel” (19:28). This verse sheds retrospective light on the future verb in 2:6: the messianic king “will shepherd [his] people Israel” (2:6) in the inaugurated eschaton.

Scholars outside of Matthean studies have already argued this position convincingly, namely, that the church of Christ is a family of new covenant Israelites.¹³ What some have concluded from Paul I conclude from Matthew. I argue that Christ’s covenant people of the *παλιγγενεσία* (i.e., his new-creation community) is *fulfilled Israel*.

Let us now clarify the meaning of the modifier, ‘fulfilled.’ The process by which men are made agents of Christ’s theandric activity is aptly called *plērōsis*.¹⁴ This christifying, perfecting process (*Christōsis*, *teleiōsis*) is better

¹² Per James D. G. Dunn, *Parting of the Ways* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 203–4, “It is also important to recall that Matthew alone of the Evangelists uses *ekklēsia*, ‘church’ (16:18; 18:17), and that behind it lies the familiar OT concept of the *qahal Israel*, ‘the congregation of Israel’. In other words, we see a claim that the Matthean community represents the eschatological people of God (cf. also Matt. 19:28). This is certainly a *claim from within the heritage of second Temple Judaism, not from ‘outside’*” (emphasis original). That is not to say that God has rejected ethnic Israel or revoked his gifts and calling.

¹³ Cf. Brant J. Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid, *Paul, a New Covenant Jew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019). For a robust theological approach reaching similar conclusions, cf. Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021). To speak of Christ’s church as ‘fulfilled Israel’ in no way implies that non-Christian Jews today are rejected by God or that his gifts and calling have been revoked, as if Jews were no better off than pagan nations (*pace* William S. Campbell, “Israel,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016], 442–43). Indeed, “Matthew never states or implies that the nation [Israel] as a whole has rejected Jesus.” Campbell, “Church as Israel, People of God,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 207. But fulfilled Israel is present wherever people are in communion with Christ.

¹⁴ ‘Theandric’ means of or pertaining to the God-man. Historically, the term has been used to modify the subject (agent) or his operation (activity). Of the two natures in Christ, who is but one subject (contra monophysitism), Pope Leo famously affirms in his *Epistle to*

grasped in light of Matthew's paradigm of fulfillment. Here we may introduce my main thesis: *according to a triplex via of fundamental continuity, radical discontinuity, and transcendence-completion, the God of Israel, in and through the Messiah of Israel, has filled inaugurally, is filling perpetually, and will fill consummately his kingdom with his own divine fullness.* This dense statement will be unpacked and substantiated in due time. For the time being, suffice it to say that two major interpretive hurdles have curtailed a consensus reading of Matthew: 1) some exegetes conflate inaugurated and consummated fulfillment; 2) interpreters often come to an impasse when one side emphasizes continuity (restored Israel) and the other discontinuity (replaced Israel) but neither articulates precisely how continuity and discontinuity can coincide.

Interestingly, the Second Vatican Council (*LG* 9) regards "Israel according to the flesh" as "the Church of God" (2 Esd 13:1; cf. Num 20:4; Deut 23:1ff) and "the new Israel" as "the Church of Christ" (Matt 16:18).¹⁵ This magisterial text does not affirm two numerically distinct entities. Rather, it refers to two stages in the life of one covenant family. On this view, the church gestating in OT times was "born" from the side of Christ crucified (cf. *CCC* 766; *LG* 3). The distinction between old and new Israel is analogous to that of Jacob and Israel, or that of a life in and out of the womb, or that of an engaged bride and a married wife. The use of the term 'Israel' today throughout the *Roman Missal*

Flavian, "For each form does what is proper to it in communion with the other. That is, the Word operates what pertains to the Word, and the flesh carries out what pertains to the flesh" (Ep. 28.4, my translation). The Third Council of Constantinople (680–81 CE) declares further against monothelitism: "We confess two natural, indivisible, unconvertible, unconfused, and inseparable operations in the same Lord Jesus Christ our true God" (Act 18); i.e., the divine and human operation. Aquinas enunciates the principle thus: "the moved shares in the operation of the mover, and the mover makes use of the operation of the moved, and, consequently, each acts with the assistance of the other" (cf. *S. Th.*, III, q.19, a.1, resp.). Supernatural life/agency perfects but does not destroy natural life/agency.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the numerical unity of pre- and post-paschal Israel is not always articulated clearly. Antoine Lévy, OP, *Jewish Church* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 17 – who wrongly exegetes Paul's epistle to the Romans and the Second Vatican Council – affirms that "the entity formed by the people of Israel" is "a reality *extrinsic* to the Church." This phrase is infelicitous because, for the Council, the Church of Christ *is* the people of Israel. Per Lévy: "the Church is grafted on the heritage of Israel as the 'wild shoots' on the 'root' of the well-cultivated olive-tree (Rom 11)." For Paul, however, the wild shoots grafted in "among the others" (Rom 11:17) refer specifically to Gentile believers, not the church generally (cf. p. 133, n. 82). Furthermore, *Nostra Aetate* 4 never distinguishes "Israel as an ethnic entity" from "the new people of God." It says, rather, that "the Jews *in larger number*" did not accept the Gospel. Of course, *some Jews* did accept the Gospel. With Gospel-accepting Gentiles, these too are in Christ and so form part of God's covenant family, the church of Christ. This church is rightly regarded as fulfilled Israel.

reflects the understanding that the post-paschal church is “the new Israel, gathered from every people.”¹⁶

This study is an attempt to analyze fulfillment in Christ according to the First Gospel, taking Matthew’s opening chapter as a gateway into the pervasive theme. The subject is as complex as it is crucial for understanding Matthew’s Gospel and his reading of Scripture. Per Pennington:

Matthew chapters 1 and 2, which serve as the introduction to the book (and the NT canon), are designed to show that the frame by which to interpret Jesus is “fulfillment” – that all that he is, says, and does should be understood as fulfilling what God has said in the past.¹⁷

Though fulfillment is recognized as central to Matthew in general and to his introduction in particular, its definition is often absent altogether from the exegetical literature on the genealogy (1:1–17).

The absence is comprehensible for – even though it is commonplace for exegetes to note that Jesus, presented as the climax of the genealogy, is the ‘fulfillment’ of Israel’s story¹⁸ – no form of πληρώω appears in the opening verses. To conceptualize Matthean fulfillment exhaustively, one would need to survey every instance of πληρώω in the Gospel and every passage where the theme of fulfillment appears. This task is often too broad to address in an article or commentary. When examined directly, fulfillment is usually discussed in relation to the πληρώω-formulas.¹⁹ According to Donald Senior, the unfortunate upshot to this approach is that one is often ‘lured’ into conceptualizing fulfillment only in light of passages where a formula appears, even though the

¹⁶ Cf. Pentecost, Vigil Mass, Prayers after the Readings. Cf. also Eucharistic Prayer II for Use in Masses for Various Needs. This same use appears throughout the Liturgy of the Hours: e.g., the saints are “the children of Israel whom God has chosen as his own,” cf. Solemnity for All Saints, Morning Prayer, Antiphon 3.

¹⁷ Jonathan T. Pennington, “The Per Se Voice of the Old Testament and the Gospel According to Matthew: Abiding Witness and Recontextualization of Torah in the New Covenant,” in *The Identity of Israel’s God in Christian Scripture*, ed. Don C. Collett et al., Resources for biblical study 96 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 258.

¹⁸ In lieu of ‘story,’ commentators also speak of the fulfillment of Israel’s (messianic or prophetic) hopes, expectations, promises, prophecies, history, and Scripture. Joseph Ratzinger adds ‘mystery’ to the list: “In Jesus’ origin we see the perfect fulfillment of the mystery of Israel.” Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 350. The ‘mystery’ is the reality signified by the ‘sacrament.’ Cf. CCC 1075.

¹⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel*, NovTSup 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967); George Soares Prabhu, “The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1–2,” *AnBib* 63 (1976); Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Ramsey, NJ: Sigler Press, 1991); Zach C. Phillips, “Filling Up the Word: The Fulfillment Citations in Matthew’s Gospel” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2017).

theme of Scripture’s fulfillment is present throughout the Gospel.²⁰ Senior’s warning could be carried one step further: since Matthew does not limit *plērōsis* to the fulfillment of Scripture, neither should his readers. Jesus’s opening words in 3:15, which manifest the intention “to fulfill all righteousness,” provide a strong *prima facie* reason to construe Matthean fulfillment more broadly than the filling up of the prophetic word. I will argue that, for Matthew, Jesus (as the fullness of God) is the fulfillment of Israel. For he fills up his people with his own divine fullness. His public ministry – all he says and does – is ordered to this end.

I. Plērōsis as a Movement

This study aims to construe a paradigm. That commentators often refrain from defining the Matthean concept of fulfillment is understandable in a way. Paradigms are the fruit of philosophical reflection on the metaphysical nature of certain realities. Such a task is challenging. Philosophy is not to be conflated with semantics, much less morphology, though the three fields are interrelated. While morphology regards how a word is formed, and semantics what a word means, philosophy asks what a reality is. What *is* fulfillment?

The morphology of *plērōsis* attests to the nature of fulfillment to some extent. The -σις suffix in Greek denotes “action” (or process), whereas the -μα ending designates “object, result of action.”²¹ This distinction is grasped readily by observing the recurring pattern:

Verb	Action/Process	Object/Result
πράσσω (to do, act)	πρᾶξις (deed, activity)	πρᾶγμα (deed, act)
δίδωμι (to give)	δῶσις (act of giving; gift)	δῶμα (gift)
ποιέω (to do)	ποίησις (act of doing; deed)	ποίημα (deed; work, creation)
κλάω (to break)	κλάσις (act of breaking; fracture)	κλάσμα (fragment)
κτίζω (to create)	κτίσις (act of creation)	κτίσμα (creature)
γίνομαι (to become)	γένεσις (becoming, origin)	γένημα (fruit, produce)
γεννάω (to beget)	γέννησις (birth)	γέννημα (offspring, brood)
ἐνδύω (to put on)	ἐνδυσις (act of putting on)	ἐνδυμα (clothing)
καυχάομαι (to boast)	καύχησις (act of boasting)	καύχημα (boast)
πίνω (to drink)	πόσις (act of drinking)	πόμα (drink)
ὑστερέω (to lack)	ὑστέρησις (need, lack, poverty)	ὑστέρημα (what is lacking)
χράομαι (to use)	χρησις (use, function)	χρήμα (money, wealth)
πληρόω (to fill)	πλήρωσις (act of filling)	πλήρωμα (fullness)

²⁰ Cf. Donald Senior, “The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-Assessing Matthew’s Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as Test Case,” in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. C. M. E. Tuckett (Leuven: Leuven University Press: Peeters, 1997), 89–115.

²¹ Warren C. Trenchard, *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 2–3. Since the *-tio* ending in Latin can mean “the action or result of the action of the verb,” *adimpletio* corresponds to “fulfilling, fulfillment” in English. Cf. Charlton T. Lewis et al., *A Latin Dictionary* (Chapel-en-le-Frith: Nigel Gourlay, 2020), 36.

Each word in the middle column refers to a kind of *kinesis*.²² Though hard to hear in English, ‘fulfillment’ is a kind of movement. As the lexica bear witness, πληρώω means literally “to make (completely) full.”²³ And κενόω means literally “make empty and is the antonym of πληρώω.”²⁴ *Plērōsis* and *kenosis* are thus anti-parallel movements. To underscore the action/process implicit in *plērōsis* and *kenosis*, one could accurately render the Greek with the English gerunds, ‘filling’ and ‘emptying.’²⁵ The gerund helps highlight how ‘filling’ involves the movement (or change) between the extremes of empty and full. When an empty container (e.g., a net, cf. 13:47f) is being filled, a passive potency is being actualized, but it is not yet fully actualized. Since ‘filling’ is the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency, it is a *movement* in the philosophical sense.²⁶

Plērōsis (the act of filling; fulfillment) implies a movement towards *plērōma* (fullness).²⁷ This observation helps specify Matthew’s central theme. Just as movement requires a mover, and just as action requires an agent, so too filling requires one who fills. Moreover, just as movement requires that one is moved, and just as action requires that one is acted upon, so too filling requires that one is filled. To affirm simply that fulfillment is Matthew’s central theme

²² *Kinesis* (= movement) implies the reduction of potency to act. It need not be understood as locomotion (physical movement of a body from here to there). Metaphysically, as Aristotle explains and Thomas Aquinas makes explicit, movement is *actus existentis in potentia secundum quod huiusmodi*, i.e., the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency. Aristotle, *Physics*, 3.1. Cf. Rudi A. te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 56.

²³ Gerhard Delling, “πληρώω,” *TDNT* 6:287. According to Louw-Nida: “to be made complete.” For *BDAG*: “to be completed, to have reached its end.” The English word “fulfill” means to fully fill: “The primary meaning of the English word ‘fulfil’ is simply *to fill* – by a pleonasm, *to fill (until) full*.” Robert Mackintosh, “Fulfilment,” in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 625–29.

²⁴ Michael Lattke, “κενόω,” *EDNT* 2:282.

²⁵ Nathan Eubank proposes this interpretation of πληρώω not only in 13:48 and 23:32 (which most translations render ‘to fill’) but also in 3:15 (which most translations render ‘to fulfill.’ For Eubank, Jesus’s phrase to John the Baptist “would then be translated ‘to fill up all righteousness.’” Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 124. I would extend this interpretation to all instances of πληρώω in Matthew. As the Greek suggests, the general meaning of the verb is ‘to make full or complete.’

²⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1065b.16.

²⁷ For example, Paul uses the word *plērōma* to speak of “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10). He also claims that “the fullness of God” dwells bodily in Christ (Col 1:19; 2:9). Paul prays that Christian disciples “may be filled [πληρωθῆτε] with all the fullness [πληρωμα] of God” (Eph 3:19). John’s Gospel contains a similar idea: “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). Though Matthew makes no such explicit statement, one must ask if his Gospel reflects a similar understanding.

is too vague. Who or what fills? Who or what is filled? With what is one filled? One must carry these questions into the First Gospel.

Of course, interpreters of Matthew must move beyond morphological and philosophical observations about fulfillment and must grapple with the text itself. *Plērōsis* is certainly a movement for Matthew. As his introduction makes clear, the path to consummation is marked by milestones. In the genealogy, three eras – beginning with Abraham’s fatherhood and passing through king David and the deportation to Babylon – climax in the coming of Christ the king (1:17). These epochs suggest that Matthew (like his Markan source) regards time (καιρός) as that which is fulfilled on account of Christ’s coming.²⁸ Of course, καιρός is not reducible to mere chronometry. According to Herman Ridderbos, the expression “the time is fulfilled” indicates “that the threshold of the great future has been reached, that the door has been opened, and the prerequisites for the realization of the divine work of consummation are present; so that now the concluding divine drama can start.”²⁹ In this way, Matthew hints from his own genealogy that Israel’s history is fulfilled when Christ comes to fill it.

Even as a preliminary survey reveals, the evangelist develops the theme of fulfillment in Christ throughout the entire infancy narrative (1:1–2:23). The Davidic Messiah born of Mary (1:16) is also begotten of the Holy Spirit (1:20), according to the angel of the Lord. “All this took place to *fulfill* what the Lord had spoken to the prophet” (1:22). The evangelist then cites Isaiah 7:14 to show that Mary’s son is worthy of the name Emmanuel, which means “God with us” (1:23). Furthermore, Jesus Emmanuel is Israel’s promised shepherd-king (2:6) and the son of God (2:15). But his destruction is sought by a powerful anti-king (2:17f). Though exiled to Egypt for a time, he returns to Galilee and grows up in Nazareth (2:19–23). This took place – the refrain returns – ὅπως πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, “so that what was spoken by the prophets might be *fulfilled*” (2:23). Here, the prophetic word is filled up, and the Christ event does the filling. In other words, Emmanuel actualizes the telic sense of Israel’s (hi)story.

Thus, the infancy narrative ends with a crystalline focus on fulfillment in Christ, which invites the attentive reader to note how the structure of the first two chapters sheds light on Matthew’s multifaceted *plērōsis* paradigm. Five pericopes follow the genealogy, at least four of which contain a fulfillment

²⁸ Not only is this a common usage of πληρόω in the OT, but Matthew’s source also makes this explicit statement in the context of Jesus’s baptism (cf. Mark 1:15). Per Gundry, “the already used reference to repentance [in 4:17] causes Matthew to jump over ‘The time is fulfilled.’” Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 43.

²⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 48.

citation³⁰: 1) the birth of Jesus Christ (1:18–25), 2) the visit of the magi (2:1–12), 3) the flight to Egypt (2:13–15), 4) Herod’s slaughter of the children (2:16–18), and 5) the return to Nazareth (2:19–23). According to R. T. France, most of these short stories – all of which are peculiar to Matthew – “seem to exist solely to provide a basis for the [fulfillment] quotation.”³¹ Thus, six sequential fulfillment-themed pericopes prepare the reader for Jesus’s first words in the Gospel, which, significantly, contain the key lemma πληρῶω. He tells John the Baptist: “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill [πληρῶσαι] all righteousness” (3:15). The *telos* of theandric activity, like Matthew’s Gospel, is strongly anchored on one motif: *plērōsis*.

Plērōsis is a movement for Matthew. The beginning of his story alludes to a new beginning, as the βίβλος γενέσεως of 1:1 makes clear. And the end of his story alludes to a fullness which endures to “the end of the age” (28:18–20). Accordingly, the fulfillment of Israel involves a movement. In a first moment, Christ sends empowered disciples to proclaim his kingdom kerygma only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5–8; cf. 4:17). In a second moment, risen from the dead and seated in power, Emmanuel commissions emissaries to disciple all nations (28:19). There is an element of continuity in both sendings: in each case, divine ‘with-ness’ powers the work of the apostle. To enter into the ongoing work of their master, disciple-shepherds require communion with the shepherd-king. However, there is also an element of discontinuity between the two commissions regarding those addressed: the post-paschal sending extends the pre-paschal sending not only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel but also to all nations. This expansion and transfiguration of Christ’s earthly ministry as carried forward by his disciples signals an upward movement in stages.

Rephrased simply, the beginning of Matthew is related to its end. More specifically, it is ordered to its goal. These two bookends – the *genesis* and the *telos* – reveal a vector between them. Appropriately, Matthew’s bookend passages speak of the inaugural and consummate limits of a process.³² As such, they shed light on *plērōsis*.

³⁰ “Whether 2:5–6 constitutes a formula quotation has been debated.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 1988a), 1:242.

³¹ France, *Matthew*, 180.

³² To avoid ambiguity regarding the various moments throughout the process of fulfillment (*plērōsis*), I am careful here to refer to “the inaugural and consummate *limits* of a process” and not simply ‘inauguration’ and ‘consummation.’ Often, the noun ‘inauguration’ is used to refer to the initial limit of this process, and ‘consummation’ is used to refer to the conclusive limit of this process. Yet, since the whole process – the vector between the two limits – refers to the final stage which inaugurates consummation or which

In my view, Matthew's story from beginning to end is essentially about the fulfillment of the kingdom of Israel in Emmanuel (God-with-us). But what does *plērōsis* mean? What paradigm of fulfillment is operative in Matthew's mind?

I propose a pedagogical approach to this question. Though it is impossible to access the intentions of the author directly, an analysis of the intentionality of his work (the *intentio operis*) is not beyond the reader's reach. According to the intuition of compositional criticism (reinforced by redaction critical data), this investigation gives special attention to the beginning and the end of the gospel, prioritizing the most patent structural signs embedded in the text.

This juxtaposition has already shed some light on the overarching literary itinerary and the predominant theological theme: fulfillment in Christ. *Plērōsis* seems to presuppose an initial luminous moment (viz., the genesis of Christ the king), which may be seen as signaling a definitive watershed (like the passage from darkness to light). But what lies beyond this point cannot be described as lifeless stasis. Rather, *plērōsis* is also an ongoing, dynamic process which admits of stages (like the passage from bright to brighter). From virginal conception to enthronement at the right hand of Power (cf. 26:64), Jesus's entire life may be regarded as a luminary process by which he is progressively

consummates inauguration, such designations are ambiguous. Inauguration and consummation also occur at every point between the two limits.

For example, consider the process of 'fulfilling' (i.e., fully filling) a balloon. The illustration is especially apt because a gas expands to (fully) fill its container. *Plērōsis* implies an initial point in time (at which the empty balloon becomes full) and a conclusive moment (at which the balloon is as big as it can be). In between these two moments, no matter the measure of the balloon, the balloon is fully filled. At any point during the process of *plērōsis*, one might say that fullness is being inaugurated or consummated, such that one could meaningfully describe the ongoing process in terms of inauguration and/or consummation.

To avoid the ambiguity that comes with the use of noun forms, it is helpful to use the past participles instead. Thus, while the process is ongoing, fulfillment has not yet been 'consummated,' but the future result (*plērōma*) has already been 'inaugurated' in a certain measure (by the act of *plērōsis*).

I would propose that participation in divine life, i.e., new creation (*plērōsis*), is analogous to creation (*ktisis*), the act by which a creature is. "[God] upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3). The principle applies equally to the natural and supernatural orders: just as continuous creation always implies a participation in being, even while there are different modalities of being as creatures continue to be, so too continuous new creation always implies a participation in the divine *plērōma*, even while there are different modalities of participation in the fullness of divine life as new-creatures continue to be supernaturally. Thus, the inaugurated beatitude during one's earthly life involves walking by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7), but the consummated beatitude on the last day will involve face-to-face vision (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2). Inaugurated and consummated beatitude differ by degree, but not by kind: both belong to new creation.

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