

THE CHURCH TOWARD IT'S FULLNESS

FULLNESS - Unity - Development

Title: **Towards fullness**

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Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

By a curious irony of history, all the terms used to describe the movements aspiring to a new future have the prefix "re-": **renaissance, reform, revolution, reawakening (revival), renewal... restoration.**

As someone has said, "They sought their future in the past and shaped the renewal of the present by a dream that was looking backwards." A dream that nevertheless produced something that up to that point had not existed. There was a longing to regain the "origins" and this unwittingly produced the future.

A new season

Perhaps for the first time in the history of Church reform movements (with the possible exception of Gioacchino da Fiore), different leaders of the movement known by the name of "restoration" are aware of the novelty of the project on which they say they are working.

This is not a mere return to the past, whether that of Revival, or Reformation, pre-Tridentine or post-Vatican II Catholicism, or the sub-apostolic church or even the original church.

What is involved in fact is the ushering in of a "**new time**", the building of a completely new future, the summing up, the summarising, a going beyond and crowning of the march of the people of God through these last two thousand years to come out of Egypt and the desert of the various cultures, idolatries and traditions which have delayed the entry into the Promised Land of God's plan for His Church.

There is an ever-growing conviction that the **various histories** are converging on a **single future.**

The problem of roots

We are evangelicals and recognise our heritage in the various biblical, enthusiastic, radical and reforming movements that have leavened and stimulated the path of western Christianity, both before and after the Reformation.

We recognise in this "tradition" a nature and a quality that is prophetic, indispensable for the fulfilment of God's purpose for His Church and the world.

We have no desire, therefore, to deny our evangelical inheritance, but build on it, progressing towards the goal.

It is precisely as "**sons of the prophets**" that we are aware of how radical the God of Abraham is. We know that He is the One who can put '*the axe to the root of the tree*' to cut down its trunk, yet still leaving life in it to bring forth a branch or shoot; he can cut off the branches of the natural olive tree and graft in a wild olive; he can take the Kingdom away

from people, movements or churches who do not bear the fruits of repentance, to give it to a people who will listen to Him, obey Him and work with Him to build His kingdom.

As "sons of the prophets" we also know that the people of God have a **priestly** and **royal** element, invaluable for **the continuity** of the Church.

We face the future with the memory of all our heritage. While we look forward to and build the future, we are nevertheless not forgetful of our relationship to the past lived out by **all** our brothers who have preceded us and the present experience of **all** those who are today a part of the Church.

- The Protestant Reformation rediscovered **the Word**
- The "enthusiastic" charismatic and pentecostal movements rediscovered **the Spirit**
- The radical movements, both Catholic and Evangelical, insist on **the visibility of the Church** and take seriously the **demands of discipleship**.

The Word, the Spirit, the Church: all for **the achievement of the fullness** that is at the centre of God's heart and his purpose for the future. (*)

The theme of fullness

The term and the concept of fullness (Greek *pléroma*) in the New Testament bring us back in the last analysis to God Himself as the root, source and basic resource ("*God's solid foundation stands firm*" 2 Tim 2:19), inheritance and ultimate goal of the universe ("*For he must reign until...so that God may be all in all*")¹.

A project in which the whole of the Trinity is involved – the purpose of God ("his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ")².

1. **The Father** from whom everything proceeds and to whom everything returns – *Unity*
2. **The Son**, the face (character) of the Father, the fullness of holiness – *Quality*
3. **The Holy Spirit**, God's mission/church (man, the believer, the fellowship, creation), the increase of the kingdom – *Quantity*

In brief, the fullness of the life *which is in God and proceeds from God* (the kingdom) manifested in Christ, which must be manifest in the believer, in the church, on the earth and the whole universe. A God, that is, who desires to enter the world, who is already the Lord of the "external" universe, but desires to become the Lord and "inhabitant" of the "internal" world as well.

Unity – Quality – Quantity

We can imagine this by saying that the term and concept of fullness is like something in three dimensions, suggesting an alternating but continuous and increasing process (movement) of unity, quality and quantity.

¹*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet... The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he has put everything under his feet. Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all" 1 Cor 15:25-28.*

²*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One whom he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory" Eph 1:3-14.*

Unity: fullness firstly involves unity, and its practical expression, which is "love" ("together with all the saints to grasp...³).

From God's unity (which is in God), to the unity of the Spirit⁴ (from unity with the Spirit), to the unity of the faith⁵, to the unity of the Body⁶, to the unity of all things⁷.

Quality: Then comes quality, or, if you like, **holiness** ("high and deep" Eph 3:18). And here the concept is in relation to the full measure of maturity, to the man as an adult, fully mature, to the completeness of the indwelling of God, to the riches of his grace.

This quality is present in a full measure in Christ.⁸ The fulness of Christ is the quality of Christ. He is the measure of all things (people and fellowships). He is the face of the Father. All the fulness of the divine nature is manifest in him. "For God was pleased to have *all his fulness dwell in him*", Col. 1:19; and "For *in Christ all the fulness of the deity lives in bodily form*", Col. 2:9.

The fulness of the person is the quality of the mature believer (person) in Christ. And this involves *being conformed to Christ*⁹– being filled with Christ¹⁰– the full stature of Christ¹¹.

³...out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that *Christ may dwell in your hearts* through faith. And I pray that you, *being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge* – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" **Eph 3:16-21**

⁴"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called –one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" **Eph. 4:1-6**

⁵"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **until we all reach unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" **Eph 4:11-14**

⁶"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is **his body, the fulness** of him who fills everything in every way" **Eph. 1:22-23**

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 **From him the whole body, joined and held together** by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" **Eph 4:15-16**

⁷"...made known to us **the mystery of his will** according to **his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ**" **Eph 1:9-10**

"**And God placed all things under his feet** and appointed him to be his head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him who **fills everything in every way**" **Eph 1:22-23**

⁸"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" **Gv1:14**

⁹"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been **called according to his purpose**. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" **Rom 8:28-29**

¹⁰"**From the fulness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.**" **Jn 1:16**

"His divine power has given us everything...so that...**you may participate in the divine nature...**" **2 Pt 1:3-5**

¹¹"...that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit **in your inner being**, so that *Christ may dwell in your hearts* through faith. And I pray that you, *being rooted and established in love, may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge* – that **you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God**" **Eph 3:16-19**

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 **to prepare God's people** for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole**

The fulness of the church (the fellowship) is the quality of God's life expressed in the Body of Christ. The Body filled with the life and supernatural works of Christ¹² (character and charisma; *dunamis* and *exousia*)

Quantity: quantity has to do with **the complete measure in terms of numbers** ("how wide" Eph 3:18): "basketfuls"¹³; "the full number of the Gentiles" and "all Israel"¹⁴.

What? Christ, the Body of Christ.

From what has been said thus far it is clear that two things are at the centre of God's attention:

Christ – *The person as God's dwelling place* – "In his image and likeness".¹⁵

The Body of Christ – *the fellowship as God's dwelling place* – "a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit".¹⁶

As it is written: "Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said *"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;...Then I said, "Here I am...to do your will, O God."* First he said, *"Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire..."* Then he said, *"Here I am, I have come to do your will."* Heb 10:5.

"A body you prepared for me" – **Christ**

"A body you prepared for me" – **The body of Christ** (a collective person)

"A body you prepared for me" – **The believer** ("Offer your bodies"¹⁷; "...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you"¹⁸).

And the church is the historical agent of the Kingdom of God, the ultimate purpose of God. ("I will build my church"; *"Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known"; "the fulness of him who fills everything in every way"*).

measure of the fulness of Christ" Eph 4:11-13

"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" **Ph 1:6**

¹²"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure" **Heb 6:11**

The church "which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way" **Eph 1:23**

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18 may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God" Eph 3:17-19** ("So that you become that which is completely filled of the powerful working of God")

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ" **Eph 4:11-13**

¹³ Cf. the use of the term *pléroma*: "and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish" **Mk 6:43**; "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up? They answered, 'Seven.'" **Mk 8:20**.

¹⁴"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved" **Rom 11:25-26**

¹⁵"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" **Gn1:26**

¹⁶"being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." **Ef2:22**

¹⁷**Rm12:1**

¹⁸**1 Cor. 6:19**

How? The means

What are the instruments that God uses to realise his kingdom in historically, that make it possible for His will for mankind and the world to be carried out?

Someone has expressed it thus:

1. **The grace of God** and
2. **The gratitude of man**

1. Grace speaks of the primacy of God, His sovereignty, the priority of His initiative over Man's response. *The grace of God visits (visitation/s !!!) man.* It is God who manifests Himself and intervenes.

- **It is the primacy of importance** of God's intervention in the fulfilment of His plan for the history of mankind and the earth, and
- **It is the priority that belongs to God's initiative** over man's response.
 - **The grace is God visiting man. Visitation!**
 - **The grace is God who manifests Himself and intervenes!**

The Christmas story: Mary

*"Greetings, you who are **highly favoured!**"*

*"Do not be afraid, Mary, **you have found favour** (grace) with God" Lc 1:28,30*

kecharitomène!

God is *charis* / God is grace!

At the heart of the Christmas visitation is God and His grace:

God who gives grace!

The initiative is His! The gift is His!

"Mary is the living proclamation that at the start of everything, in the relationship between God and His creature, is grace"¹⁹

"Grace is the action by which God stretches out and leans towards His creature (a person, a race, a nation, a continent, etc.); the convex angle that comes to fill the concavity of man's desire for God. God is love, as St John says (1Jn 5:8), and as soon as one leaves the confines of the Trinity, that is the same as saying that God is grace"²⁰

"The God of the Bible non only gives grace, but is grace".

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" Ex 33:19b

See for example, in the Old Testament: the call of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, the choice of Jacob, the calling of Moses, the choice of David... **And in the New Testament:** the choice of the apostle Paul... Paul's dream that takes him into Macedonia...

For the Church too...

Grace is the profound nucleus of His being and the root of His existence.

Grace is that by which it is what it is: ***"But by the grace of God I am what I am"*** 1Cor 15:10

By the grace of God the Church is what it is, the movement in Brazil, in Argentina, in the South of the world, is what it is...

¹⁹ (p.17 R. Cantalamessa)

²⁰ (p.18 *op. cit.*)

For this reason I personally believe that to explain the different revival movements it more accurate, in terms of the macro-system, to speak of 'visitation' rather than 'revival'. It is interesting that Torrey, I think it was, speaks of revival in terms of visitation:

"A Revival is a time of God's visiting his people.

By the power of His Holy Spirit He imparts new life to His people, and through them reaches out to sinners".

In short, a true revival is new life from God: "*from the presence of the Lord*"²¹. Having said that, some of the classic works on revival have made a distinction between **partial revival and general revival**. In the category of **partial revivals** we could quote, by way of example, *the Great Awakening* (with Wesley and Whitefield), *the Second Awakening* (with Finney, Moody and the Salvation Army), and then *the holiness movement, the pentecostal and charismatic movement*, and the various subsequent "waves" up to our own time. The **general revival** is still to come:

"A GENERAL AWAKENING, on the other hand, takes place when the new life from God is not confined to particular isolated regions, but belongs to the whole of Christianity throughout the world"²²

Is that not very similar to the scenario of the ultimate fulness?
Just think:

"The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house" Hag 2:9

"Be patient... until... the autumn and spring rains" James 5:7

2. The gratitude of man. The second element is man's response. **Man's personal and collective response: *The individual*** (persona) **and *the Body!*** The contribution and collaboration of the life, gifts, offices, ministries. "*By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect*" 1 Cor 15:10.

God challenges us, and requires an answer. The requirement for *this answer makes us responsible*. For the Son of God to become incarnate required **Mary's "yes"**! Grace generates responsibility: *responsibility for an answer*. And faith is the necessary and indispensable response to bring in and fulfil God's will in the world. Man is called to respond with initiatives to fulfil the calling that God gives him. God has chosen to make us his fellow-workers.

When? The time

The question now is "when", "at what point in time" will God's visitation come?

To understand this better it will be useful to investigate these two key concepts in the Scriptures:

1. "Kairos"

2. "Fulness of time"

²¹"...that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" **Acts 3:19-21**

²² R.A. Torrey, *Prayer and Revival*

1. "KAIROS": "there is a time!"²³. It has to do with the time of the visitation and the fulfilment of the will of God. So that, in the **Old Testament**, it sometimes indicates the moving or decisive time given by God²⁴, the time fixed by God²⁵, the moment determined by God once and for all²⁶. In the **New Testament**: *the fateful, decisive moment of God's visitation, with the enormous human responsibility to discern it*: for example in *Jerusalem*, which did not recognise its hour of salvation²⁷, of recognising the *time of the Messiah*²⁸. Remember Jesus and his waiting to know the times established by God for him: "My time has not yet come"²⁹ / "The time has come"³⁰. Jesus' death comes "**at just the right time**"³¹.

So, God's kairòs, truly given by God, cannot be determined by man's autonomous decision.

It is God who decides beforehand the decisive "moment" in which to actuate his plan of salvation, for the glorious manifestation of Christ³², the times he has reserved for himself³³, the times and boundaries of the nations for them to seek him³⁴.

²³"The time has come" **Mt1:15**

"What will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" **Mt13:4**

"My appointed time is near" **Mt26:18**

"Because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." **Lc1:20**

"How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" **Lc12:56**

"You did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." **Lc19:44**

"Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come" **Gv7:6**

"Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time" **1Cor4:5**

"Until the time set by his father." **Gl4:2**

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" **Gl6:9**

"That he may be revealed at the proper time." **2Tess2:6**

"The time has come for my departure." **2Tm4:6**

"External regulations applying until the time of the new order" **Eb9:10**

"The prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing" **1Pt1:11**

"In the last times there will be scoffers" **Giuda 18**

²⁴"He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. **Dan 2:21**

²⁵"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away" **Ecc1 3:1-14**

²⁶"But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." **Gen 17:21**

²⁷"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes... your enemies will... encircle you and hem you in on every side... because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." **Lc 19:42,44**

²⁸"How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?" **Lc 12:54-56**

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near." **Mt1:15**

²⁹**Jn 7:4**

³⁰**Mk 1:15**

³¹"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" **Rm 5:6**

³²"Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time" **1Tim 6:14-15**

³³"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" **At 1:7**

³⁴"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.... For he has set a day when he

But the believer can recognise the Kairos determined by God for the decisive moments of his personal life: 2 Tim. 4:6 "*The time has come for my departure*"; the Kairos of the fulfilment of personal promises from God: Zechariah fails to see it and is punished³⁵. Therefore it is important to be vigilant "*for you do not know the day or the hour*" Mt. 25:13.

Thus the philosopher Pittaco says, "**Understand the value of time**". He who does not, destroys himself and goes to ruin.

GOD HAS ESTABLISHED DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

- FOR PEOPLE
- FOR CHURCHES
- FOR NATIONS

BE SURE NOT TO MISS THEM!!

BE SURE TO LAY HOLD OF ALL THE BLESSINGS AND ALL THE GRACE PREPARED FOR YOU!!

2. THE FULNESS OF TIME (the concept of) – This is in relation the complexities of the specific historical context prepared by God for the realisation of his plan. The N.T. speaks of:

- The fulness of the Jews³⁶
- The fulness of the Gentiles³⁷
- The fulness of time for the incarnation of Christ: "**But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his son...**" Gal. 4:4
- The ULTIMATE fulness of time / the moment of a powerful historical, theological and spiritual coming together³⁸: "**The mystery**" to be "**fulfilled when the time was fully come**".

The example of Jesus' incarnation

1. The *political contribution* of the Romans
2. The *intellectual contribution*:
 - A universal language (Latin and Koiné Greek)
 - Greek culture
3. The religious contribution of the Roman, Greek and Hebrew religions

Contemporary examples:

Argentina, Brazil, Chile...: two interesting "textbook cases". This can be extended to the whole of the **Southern World**.

Why now?

What is the political, intellectual and religious context?

- **IS IT THEIR KAIROS? A visitation?**

will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed." **At 17:26-27,31**

³⁵ "And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." **Lc 1:20**

³⁶"But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!" **Rm11:12**

³⁷"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in" **Rm11:25**

³⁸"The mystery... to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." **Ef. 1: 9-10**

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law" **Gl. 4:4**

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" **Fil.1: 6**

"Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" **Lc.1:45**
(Accomplishment of the purpose and temporal fulfilment)

- IS IT THE FULNESS OF TIME FOR THEM concerning the Gospel?

Does this concept of "kairòs" or "fulness" necessarily imply the impossibility of extending this movement geographically or historically (that is in space or time)?

No! Not necessarily!

Because we are on the frontier of the future! And if we live out our "visitation" to the full we can become a blessing for the whole earth and for future generations!

- Become a "detonator" for a GENERAL AWAKENING!
 - a) From a partial visitation to the general one.
 - b) From the church in one nation (or part of the world) to the church throughout the world.
 - c) From the South to the North of the world!

In past centuries:

the wind from the Middle East
the wind from the North
to the East
to the West
to the South

the wind from the South

Has the time come for the wind to blow from the South to the North?

But we do know for certain:

"As surely as I live...the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth" Num 14:21

THE FINAL PERSPECTIVE

What does the future hold for us then?

We believe in the coming of the Kingdom. We believe in the restoration of the church (**not** in "Restoration churches"). We believe that the "times of restoration" that, according to the Scriptures, precede the Return of Christ, will continue. We believe that the Kingdom, even though in ways that are at times hidden and mysterious, is continuing to grow.

So, "work in progress". Therefore it is vital to remain open, **aware of the "pasts" but at the same time free from them**, ready to *bring out of the storeroom new treasures as well as old³⁹* with which to build the future.

Our past is in the whole of Christianity

Our future is in the God of hope, with His promise to "make everything new".

Our present is to actively listen to what the Spirit is saying, today, to the churches.

The horizon

The virtue of Hope

The ministry of Reconciliation

The final bringing together (*anakephaleòsastai*)

"He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" Eph 1:9-10

The Kingdom of God and the church

The kingdom of God is *already with us* with Christ's coming into history, but we must continue to pray and work so that **his kingdom may come and be manifested in its**

³⁹He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." **Mt 13:52**

future fulness. We must be vigilant and attentive, each at his own post, like the night watchman in Jesus' parable (Mk 13:33-37)

Only when Christ appears to bring history to a close will we be able to lay down our tools and follow him to a better future. Until that time each of us is called to strain towards the goal that is Christ, the Body of Christ.

"...and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever'"

Man filled

The church filled

The universe filled

The person – *"in the image and likeness" of God*

The fellowship – *"a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit"*

The earth – *"As surely as I live...the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth" Num 14:21*

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" Mt 6:10

The Kingdom of God and the Church

