

Paul's "Fullness of Time" (Gal 4:4) and "Fullness of Times" (Eph 1:10)

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Abstract: The expression "the fullness of time/times" is problematic because it was used for the first time in all of Greek literature by Paul, the Apostle to the Nations. A similar expression can be found only in certain papyri, where "the completion of times" was the expression used to call, among others, the end of a loan period. The only key to understanding the connotation of "the fullness of time/times" is an in-depth analysis of the immediate textual contexts of both Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10, the two places where this novelty is found. This article is an attempt to interpret the "fullness of time/times" in Galatians 4:4 and Ephesians 1:10 (with the addition of Mark 1:15). Our conclusion is that in Galatians 4:4 "the fullness of time" should be considered as "the end of the domination of Law." As for Ephesians 1:10, there are multiple valid proposals for explaining "the fullness of times," and we have not limited ourselves to any one in particular.

Keywords: fullness of time, time, fullness of times, πλήρωμα, καιρός, χρόνος, Letter to Galatians, Letter to Ephesians

The study of "time" by means of the Bible pages is most often confined to the search for significant differences or diverse interpretations between two Greek nouns: καιρός and χρόνος.¹ Lexicographers and exegetes, who contend with these terms, share the conclusions that: καιρός is interpreted by them as "a point in time," "definite time," "a moment (pivotal)," "the period marked by an important event/crisis" whereas χρόνος is understood as "indefinite time during which an event occurs," "period," measurable "time lapse," "duration."² These terms, being somewhat ephemeral, however evade lexical boundaries imposed on them, which is why they require to be considered within a context on a case-by-case basis.

Something, that may be claimed about them with certainty, refers to their numerical quantity – καιρός is repeated 570 times in the Holy Scripture, χρόνος – "only" 194 times.³ Even limiting one's work to very *Corpus Paulinum*, with καιρός

¹ See Eisele, "Chronos und Kairos," 468–491; Eynikel – Hauspie, "The Use of καιρος and χρόνος," 369–385;

² BDAG, "καιρος," 497–498 and "χρονος," 1092.

³ It bears noting that the trend is inversely proportional to the preserved Greek sources in which the term καιρός was evidenced less frequently than χρόνος. It means the proportion of slightly above 34% of καιρός to almost 66% of χρόνος, according to TLG [access: 03.02.2020].

repeated 30 times and χρόνος – 9 times, will not encourage anyone to select the semantic analysis as the major research method since it may turn out to be a reckless undertaking. Therefore, these are neither καιρός nor χρόνος that will serve the basis for our studies but the expression that emerges from and is usually translated into “fullness of time/times” – τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου/τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν, that is found only twice in the biblical literature as a whole (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10). This paper will therefore be the attempt to study the semantics in its entirety, instead of dividing it into detailed studies on καιρός and χρόνος that have been satisfactorily explained by the theological literature.⁴ We shall endeavour not only to answer the question what each of the terms means, but also to analyse them within a context, to study what their position is in the rhetorical structure of texts, and what results from it, what the source of terminological diversity is, especially the one arising from the use of καιρός in one instance, and the use of χρόνος in the other one. The primary objective is to answer the question what is hidden behind the expressions τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου and τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν, both in terms of the linguistics and theology.

The study workflow will be as follows. We shall first consider whether the distinction between καιρός and χρόνος, being the major words making up the typical Christian expression “fullness of times,” was equally strongly depicted in letters composed by Hellenistic Jewish authors,⁵ and whether they contribute in any way to the understanding of these words. Next, we shall study how the term πλήρωμα should be understood and whether it has a considerable impact upon correct interpretation of the two aforementioned time-related phrases. We shall subsequently take a direct literary context into account, analysing how it influences understanding of the phrases and how τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου in Gal 4:4 differs from τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν in Eph 1:10, and we shall arrive at final conclusions to the extent of semantic nuances in the case of both linguistic constructs.

⁴ See e.g. Eisele, “Chronos und Kairos”; Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*; Eynikel – Hauspie, “The Use of καιρος and χρονος.” The Greek terminology concerning time has also been scrutinised over time in two slogans of Gerhard Delling’s “καιρός” (TDNT III, 455–462) and “χρόνος” (TDNT IX, 581–593) and in “αἰών” by Hermann Sasse (TDNT I, 197–209). It also bears noting that the Hebrew archetypes καιρός and χρόνος are analysed in detail by Gershon Brin in his monograph *The Concept of Time*.

⁵ This limitation does not only obviously result from the huge number of terms καιρός and χρόνος in the Greek literature *in genere*, but also from the fact that these terms gain separate specificity in relation to the history of the Chosen People, that Hellenistic Jewish Writers must have interwoven with their colloquial but philosophical meaning, straight from Greek (pagan) thinkers and writers. See TLG [access: 27.12.2019].

1. Time and Its Fullness in Non-Biblical Literature

Similarly to many other expressions, a different "fullness of time/times" should be first found in the Jewish Non-Biblical literature. It, however, turns out that neither τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου nor τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν appears in such a configuration in letters preceding the New Testament or contemporary to it – either in the Jewish literature or the pagan one. The exception results from the combination of the noun χρόνος with various forms of the verb πληρώω, which may be traced in the case of Aesop (*Fab.* 47.13), Marsilius (*Fr.* 2.18) and Polybius (*Hist.* 4.40.6.1). The use of a similar phrase usually in the form of χρόνου πληρωθέντος (*genetivus absolutus*; "upon fulfilment/lapse of the time") may also be traced in papyrus texts, each of which refers to transactions, time-constrained contracts – sheep and goat rental (P. Amst. I 41 of 10 BC), internship at a weaving workshop (P. Fouad I 37 of 48 AD), loan facilities (P. Monts. Roca IV 78 of 49 – 54 AD; P. Oxy. XIV 1641 of 68 AD; SB XVI 13041 of I/II century AD and SB XVI 13042 of 29/30 AD).⁶ Two out of the aforementioned texts are briefly analysed by Michel Gourgues who concludes that the phrase used in them refers to the expiry of the loan period – "the time that has elapsed" or rather more precisely "the expiry of the credit/loan term."⁷

As far as literary texts are concerned, apart from Gal 4:4 and Eph 1:10, and earlier on Mark 1:15, the issue of the "fullness of times" was first addressed by the Church Fathers, beginning with Irenaeus (*Adv.* 3.24; *Fr. dep. op.* 38.1), Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 1.6.33.4.8) and Origen (*Fr. comm. Eph.* 5.59–52; *Comm. Matt.* 10.9.20),⁸ mainly in their interpretations of the above mentioned Biblical texts. Since the expression "fullness of time/times" was not used by the Greek or Jewish writers, it is worth analysing these terms separately but affiliating to the cultural circle being definitely closest to Paul – namely Hellenistic Jewish Writers who undoubtedly were the LXX translators (the majority of them, however, having been regarded as the Biblical writers),⁹ the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus – chronologically closest to the very Apostle – in order to compile the comparable dossier for Paul's understanding of these terms. Thus, we are coping with the question how are the respective terms πλήρωμα, καιρός and χρόνος understood in those texts?

⁶ [http://papyri.info/search?STRING=\(%CF%80%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%81\)&no_caps=on&no_marks=on&target=text&DATE_MODE=LOOSE&DATE_START_TEXT=50&DATE_START_ERA=B-CE&DATE_END_TEXT=1&DATE_END_ERA=CE&DOCS_PER_PAGE=15&STRING1=%CF%87%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%BF&target1=TEXT&no_caps1=on&no_marks1=on](http://papyri.info/search?STRING=(%CF%80%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%81)&no_caps=on&no_marks=on&target=text&DATE_MODE=LOOSE&DATE_START_TEXT=50&DATE_START_ERA=B-CE&DATE_END_TEXT=1&DATE_END_ERA=CE&DOCS_PER_PAGE=15&STRING1=%CF%87%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%BF&target1=TEXT&no_caps1=on&no_marks1=on) [access: 30.12.2019].

⁷ Gourgues, "La «plénitude des temps»,", 104.

⁸ TLG [access: 30.12.2019].

⁹ Depending on the degree of association in the translation they presented.

The first of them, that is common for both expressions contained in Paul's letters, πλήρωμα, though definitely most associated with gnosis¹⁰ but, however, not originating from it, is usually translated into one of the nouns – "fullness."¹¹ The noun πλήρωμα is neither used by the author of *the Letter of Aristeas* nor Flavius Josephus. While, Philo repeats the word πλήρωμα thirteen times. In his works πλήρωμα is used variedly, referring to material reality (shipped commodity; Phil. *Mos.* II 62; Phil., *Spec. Leg.*, IV 186; also used metaphorically; Phil. *Quod omnis Probus* 41 and 128), abstract notions (abundance of, for instance, hope; Phil., *Abr.* 268; fullness of soul sacrifice; Phil., *Spec. Leg.* I 272; fullness of knowledge; Phil., *Spec. Leg.* II 200; perfection of soul, Phil. *Praem.* 65),¹² time (fullness of celebration; Phil., *Spec. Leg.* II 213), to community (fullness of family, Phil. *Praem.* 109; crew, Phil. *Quod omnis Probus* 142). The term πλήρωμα used by the Alexandrian philosopher absolutely indicates fullness of capacity referring to a set even when he writes about abstraction notions, although in that case it is better to talk about totality, although Derek Overfield sees the idea of unity in it, too.¹³ This term may, therefore, be translated not only into the word "fullness," but also ale "entirety," "full measure," "mass," "totality," as well as "what is filled."¹⁴ This fullness always appears in texts that are positive or neutral in nature – Philo does not mention, for instance, "fullness of evil."¹⁵ The lack of interest in πλήρωμα, that is noticeable in the texts by the Alexandrian author, may merely result from the fact that this term did not arouse any interest among philosophers – even Plato.¹⁶

The Jewish writers much more frequently use the terms referring to time, inter alia καιρός and χρόνος. Does their meaning in this case semantically divert from the meaning found in the dictionary, that has already been referred to? It definitely does not. The superficial review of these terms within contexts clearly indicates the point-based and specific meaning of καιρός and linear/continual, unspecified χρόνος. In *the Letter of Aristeas* (*Arist.*) the term χρόνος is used in the expressions "certain time" (*Arist.* 17,1), "brief time" (*Arist.* 10,4), "time of dominance" (*Arist.* 35,4; 119,3), "life time" (*Arist.* 186,3) whereas καιρός refers to "appropriate time" (*Arist.* 12,1; 187,1), "right time" determined by God (*Arist.* 190,6), "moment" (*Arist.* 200,5). This difference is well depicted by the following sentence: "I admired these men tremendously, the way in which they gave immediate answers (ἐκ τοῦ καιροῦ) which needed a long

¹⁰ Furthermore, Derek Overfield ("Pleroma," 384–385) notes that the term πλήρωμα is not so popular in the Gnostic texts as one could think, taking into account the significance of this doctrine in the Gnostic cosmology and theology in *genere*. See Bogdasavich, "The Idea of Pleroma," 120–121.

¹¹ Even if its meaning is a bit broader and encompasses "satiety," "ship crew," "integrality," etc. Abramowiczówna, *Słownik*, III, 557–558.

¹² GE, "πλήρωμα," 1684.

¹³ Overfield, "Pleroma," 388–389.

¹⁴ See Delling, "πλήρωμα," *TDNT* VI, 298–299.

¹⁵ Data available at TLG [access: 10.09.2018].

¹⁶ Platon used it only twice (*Crit.* 119b,5; *Rp.* 371e,6), exclusively in relation to vessels and polis. A similar case is with Aristotle (e.g., *Oec.* 1353a,19). See TLG [access: 31.01.2020].

time (to ponder), and while the questioner had thought out details in each case, those answering gave their replies immediately one after another (πολλοῦ χρόνου)¹⁷ (*Arist.* 295,3). A similar case is with Flavius Josephus who often uses the expression ἐκεῖνος ὁ καιρός – “that specific moment” (*Ant.* 1,41,2; 1,171,1; 2,205,5, etc.), “time of rebellion” (*Bell.* 1,4,3), “time of disputation” (*Bell.* 1,31,2), etc. However, when he tells about χρόνος, he refers to the times he lives in (*Bell.* 1,15,2) and uses the terms similar to those in *the Letter of Aristeas*, such as “longer time” (*Bell.* 1,265; *Ant.* 1,256,3), “over time” (which is certainly much longer when it refers to the time of birth of three sons, *Ant.* 1,304,4) or “upon the lapse of time” (*Ant.* 2,202,4), etc. It is not much different in the case of Philo, in respect of χρόνος (vide *Phil. Op.* 13,2; 161,7) and καιρός (cf. *Phil. Cher.* 92,6; *Sacr.* 99,5).¹⁸ Why doesn't the third one to mention at least use the expression “fullness of times” or “fulfilment of time”? Because the terms fullness and time do seem to match since πλήρωμα is a specific term meaning capacity, number, abundance, possibly totality (even when it refers to such notions as “evil” or “hope”)¹⁹ whereas time, that is an abstract term understood by us in linear or possibly recurring terms and is so hard to grasp, has sustained to develop into the great plurality of philosophical definitions. Even if it is measurable it is intangible for human perception. It is thus no wonder that such a specific term as πλήρωμα has not been combined with absolutely abstract “time” or even “moment.” Should it be supposedly concluded that such a phraseological relation has not existed because there has not been any reality that it could have matched?

2. Time and Its Fullness in the Greek Bible

The situation that may be similar to the Non-Biblical Jewish letters may be noticed in the LXX where πλήρωμα and χρόνος and καιρός hardly interact with one another. Job 14:5, is the exception to contain the account of construction of a house that will not be demolished, as it was the case just before the Babilonian captivity, but will be sustainable “until the fulfilment of the times of this century” (ἕως πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος) – meaning when all the crucial events (prophecies?) in the century – αἰών²⁰ have occurred, when the last καιρός has been fulfilled, which will bring about salvation of Israel (vide Gen 25:24; Lev 8:33; Num 6:5, etc.).²¹ In other words,

¹⁷ *The Letter of Aristeas* (Polish translation Wojciechowski: “List Pseudo-Arysteasza,” 164).

¹⁸ For Philo the time behind the term καιρός used to be the indescribable reality, that is why it was associated by him even with God (*Mut.* 264–267). Keizer, *Life Time Entirety*, 218–220.

¹⁹ See GE, 1684.

²⁰ See Keizer, *Life Time Entirety*. The end αἰών in Job 1:15 is the end of the Babylonian Exile. Moore, *Tobit*, 291.

²¹ Only God defines and determines καιρός in biblical texts. The meaning of καιρός can hardly be separated from the definitely religious context. Delling, “καιρός,” 458.

καιρός may be understood to mean “crucial events”²² that will be complemented (πληρώω) by the current αἰών. Interestingly enough, in this metaphor αἰών is some limited set that is comprised of constituents named καιροί. In the case of the LXX, the relation of the Greek text to the Hebrew text remains to be critical. As Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie note in their criticism of the reduction approach to the subject – that James Barr has fallen into by discontinuing to analyse the Hebrew text and consequent conclusions on inconsistent use of terms by the Greek translators – that the studies on χρόνος and καιρός require the insight into the Hebrew archetype.²³ The authors claim that behind χρόνος and καιρός very specific Hebrew terms are hidden. In the case of καιρός (477 times in the LXX), these are עַתָּה (198 times), מוֹעֵד (25 or 27 times), definitely less frequently evidenced זְמַן, פֶּעַם, עֵדָן. Furthermore, καιρός substitutes for the Hebrew קֵץ five times and יוֹם – merely three times.²⁴ Many of the archetypes of καιρός indicate a very specific time, moment or minute. They emphasise chronological transience of some events, that, however, does not refer, as E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie claim, to each of these terms and as such does not always refer to the very καιρός that sometimes means “period, time interval” (for instance, human life expectancy in 1 Kgs 11:4).²⁵ Based on the original books of the Greek Bible, researchers argue that such implications for καιρός result exclusively from mechanical translation into the Hebrew terms, the undertone of which is more nuanced. It is evidenced by the fact that authors writing in the Greek language maintain the traditional undertone of καιρός and χρόνος.²⁶ In the case of χρόνος, some inconsistency of the Greek translators is noticeable, too. Although χρόνος often substitutes for the noun יְמֵים, understood as “life time,” “period” or “century,” it has become to be the equivalent to the astonishing קֵץ קֹצֵר (Isa 54:7) that exactly means “a brief moment” and פֶּעַם – “once,” which obviously does not match the characteristic continuity of χρόνος.²⁷ In another case, semantic inconsistency results from the necessity to use more than one term defining time in respect of the Hebrew expressions, for instance, in Eccl 3:1.²⁸ However, it seems that vague boundaries between καιρός and χρόνος do not arise from translators’ carelessness but diverse understanding of these terms in the language of the Bible, that is far from defining them in the category of “continuity” and “transience.” From the point of view of semantics, they may overlap

22 Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie (“The Use of καιρος and χρονος,” 385) conclude that καιρός always expresses something more than merely the aspect of time.

23 As long as the Masoretic text, that is *de facto* younger than the LXX, may be perceived in such categories.

24 Delling, “καιρος,” 458.

25 Eynikel – Hauspie, “The Use of καιρος and χρονος,” 377.

26 The following may serve as examples: Wis 2:5; 7:18; 19:22; 2 Macc 1:5; Eynikel – Hauspie, “The Use of καιρος and χρονος,” 385.

27 Delling, “χρονος,” 586.

28 Eynikel – Hauspie, “The Use of καιρος and χρονος,” 383–384.

and their otherness rather approximates to generality and specificity, which is in each case dependent upon the context.

As far as the meaning of the terms is concerned, χρόνος and καιρός cannot come down exclusively to differentiation between "period, indefinite time, duration" and "a minute, crucial moment," respectively. As for the last term πλήρωμα, accounting for "fullness of time/times," its meaning in terms of capacity covers material, abstract, and metaphoric reality in the LXX. The former semantic set includes: sea life (1 Chr 16:23; 95:11; 97:7), water in a tank (Song 5:12); all that fills in the earth (Ps 23:1; 49:12; 88:12), all that is found on the earth (Jer 8:16; 29:2; Ezek 30:12); the latter one – fullness (Ezek 12:19), prosperity (Ezek 19:7); the third set, that is metaphoric, refers to handfuls of life's necessities (Eccles 4:6). Thus, looking at the meaning of the noun πλήρωμα, one has this irresistible impression that in the LXX language it is restricted exclusively to what seemingly appears to be countable and measurable, in reality goes beyond mathematical capabilities of man – in respect of the number of animals, capacity of bodies of water, and even fairly subjective "fullness" of prosperity. This also relates to the majority of its 17 references found in the New Testament.²⁹ So, what did the authors of the New Testament mean by linking πλήρωμα with the terms χρόνος and καιρός, that evade numerical quantities?

3. Time Fulfilment (Mark 1:15)

Paul is the first and only to have used the expression "fullness of time/times" in the Biblical texts and this may have been him to influence adaptation of a similar expression by Mark³⁰ who, however, gave up the form of the noun in favour of the form of the verb, that human imagination is more familiar with – or may he have claimed that since Paul wrote about fullness, he must have taken glorified Jesus as the starting point for his Christology, he himself should, giving the account of and theologising on the earthly life of Jesus, tell about fulfilment of time instead of its fullness? It is also puzzling that Mark chooses the term καιρός instead of χρόνος since he may have known Paul's τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου in Gal 4:4 – the words that are definitely older than those that he himself used. It is hard to presume the causes underlying those choices with any dose of certainty, however, the attempt to clarify the content of the same expression and to pick out the content facilitating to understand Paul's intention is something that one may take the effort to muster up.

²⁹ See Overfield, "Pleroma," 390–391.

³⁰ Although Mark and his Gospel used to be rather linked with Peter's account not with Paul's account. See Malina, *Ewangelia według św. Marka*, 54–56; 60–62.

The mention of “fulfilment of time” – πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρός in Mark’s version is the first one in the canonical order (but not in the chronological order because Paul’s letters are older).³¹ It is found in the summary description that is the opening one for the section devoted to activities of Jesus in Galilee (1:14).³² The first issue that draws attention is the verb form of πληρώ – *indictativus perfecti*, which, in Piwowa’s words, means “effects of past action, that have continued to last at the present time or the current status quo that results from past action.”³³ Having taken into consideration a very laconic context of anticipating voice “crying out in the desert” (1:3; Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4; cf. Isa 40:3) within the event of arresting John the Baptist, we may assume “fullness of time,” that is synonymous with the arrival of the Kingdom of God, to have occurred and to last. The voice seems to be challenging because in the *perfectum* tense, the sentences in the active and passive voice are formulated in the same way. In this case we either deal with emphasis: “time has fulfilled” (and is fulfilled) or “time has been fulfilled” – implicitly by God, according to commentators who in this phrase see *passivum divinum/theologicum*.³⁴ Thus, it is time that is fulfilled: καιρός instead of χρόνος. In line with their previously outlined meaning, καιρός is identified with “pivotal moment/event in time,” which Mark appears to agree with³⁵ – moreover, the Evangelist used this term deliberately, probably regarding χρόνος as excessively indefinite, lacking specificity.³⁶ Therefore, καιρός must be identified with the Messianic Age as such, notwithstanding numerous suggestions of commentators,³⁷ which Mark explicitly implies in 13:33, giving the account of the arrival of the Son of Man.³⁸ So, commencement of public activities by Jesus must be considered to be the moment of time fulfilment, which has already taken place in accordance with the verb form, and the current consequence indicated by *perfectum* is

³¹ This phrase is not found in the case of the other Evangelists, although they sometimes use the verb πληρώ in other contexts: in Matthew in the scene of the baptism of Jesus in Jordan (Matt 3:15), while, in Luke in the scene of the announcement of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:21; cf. Mark 14:49). It bears noting that a similar construct is found in the Book of Tobit – fulfilment of the time of times (14:5).

³² Gourgues, “La «plénitude des temps»,” 94–95.

³³ Piwowa, *Skladnia*, § 340.

³⁴ Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka*, 115.

³⁵ In Mark 10:30 καιρός is synonymous with νῦν – “now,” the moment marked by the decision to follow Christ; in 11:13 καιρός indicates a specific season of the year in which fig trees did not fruit; in 12:2 it defines the moment of rental fee payment; in 13:33 it indicates Parousia.

³⁶ Such understanding of χρόνος is indicated by the Evangelist in Mark 2:19 and 9:21. In the former case, χρόνος is the period of presence of the bridegroom at the wedding party – the presence that should not rather be associated with the Messianic Age (Malina, *Ewangelia według świętego Marka*, 197); in the latter case – the time, in which a boy was tormented by an evil spirit, over the whole of his life he has lived so far.

³⁷ The moment that has matured for the onset of the Kingdom (Gould, *Mark*, 16); The moment foretold by prophets (Black, *Mark*, 49); In the key verb in Isa 49:8 and in relation to the Scroll of Melchizedek from Qumran, *kairos* is the “Salvation Day” (Collins, *Mark*, 154–155); the critical moment (France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 91).

³⁸ Gourgues, “La «plénitude des temps»,” 100–101.

nothing else but the continually proclaimed Good News. This idea is well depicted by Ezra P. Gould, implying that "fullness of times" must be understood as "maturity of time" in terms of the definitive approximation (verb ἐγγίζω) of the Kingdom of God³⁹ that has been embodied in the Son of God.⁴⁰ Πληρώ meaning that some defined phase (vide Job 10:1) has been fulfilled (and even overfilled), has been completed (cf. John 7:8)⁴¹ but its consequences will have an impact upon future generations.⁴²

It is, however, hardly possible to admit that M. Gourgues was right, referring to the traditional understanding of καιρός and χρόνος, to claim that "reaching maturity" would take longer, namely χρόνος instead of καιρός – and since we deal with the latter, we should even speak not so much about maturity as about "onset, arrival, in progress/fulfilled." Notwithstanding these reservations, the construct of "maturity of time" seems to be more justified since having reached maturity is such a moment (καιρός) in human life, that alters everything that happens afterwards; on the other hand, when harvest is referred to, this maturity also entails abundance – the characteristic feature of the Messianic Age. Thus, it does not matter whether time has fulfilled or matured since implications are the same – the critical moment has come, ending some sequence of events and having impact upon future events.

It still remains to answer the question why Mark-dependent Mathew and Luke did not mention the construct of "fulfilment of time"? Michel Gourgues argues that Mathew could understand Mark's words even if he had not intended that, in the early eschatological key (imminent Parousia), for this Evangelist it would be synonymous with fulfilment and completion of God's plan.⁴³ That intuition may have been derived from Job 14:5. If the term αἰών contained therein were to be understood as "time of the existence of the world," these words would adopt the explicitly eschatological meaning.⁴⁴ This train of thought did not, however, fit in the eschatological visions in

³⁹ Gould, *Mark*, 16.

⁴⁰ About the idea αὐτοκρατορία does Origen mention, who is in turn invoked by Antoni Tronina ("«Pelnia czasu» (Ga 4,4)," 65).

⁴¹ The verb πληρώ means fulfilment in numerous layers: spatial (Sir 33:17), numeric (multiplication; Ps 109:6), time-related (e.g., the end of the fixed number of days; Gen 29:21; Lev 12:4), existential (Sir 26:2), emotional (Jer 13:3), sacred (consecration, Num 7:88), etc. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 565.

⁴² Such understanding of πληρώ seems to be confirmed by the phrase "fulfilment of Letters," namely the second and the last line in which Mark used the aforementioned verb. Other derivatives of this term also confirm them just like the adjective πλήρης (4:28) evidencing harvest maturity and the consequent abundance πλήρης (4:28). This abundance derived from maturity also manifests itself in the event of filling twelve baskets with leftover pieces (8:19).

⁴³ Gourgues, "La «plénitude des temps»," 95–96. The demolition of the temple in Jerusalem is the obvious critical moment here.

⁴⁴ The noun αἰών is abundant in meanings – almost all of them refer to the longer period of time, thus the Polish translation "age" may be erroneously associated with a century. The term αἰών may mean eternity, a long time, but in the biblical literature it most often refers to the time during which the world exists, which is why it is sometime translated by means of the word "world" without direct chronological appositions, although in this case it bears noting that the Bible also denotes a future αἰών that belongs to su-

the times in which the Gospel of Matthew was being conceived.⁴⁵ So, how Mark's "fulfilment of time" impacted Paul's understanding of "fullness of time(s)" in Gal 4:4, in which καιρός was replaced with χρόνος, and in Deutero-Pauline Eph 1:10, in which stricter terminological compliance with Mark 1:15 is noted? How does fullness of χρόνος differ from fullness of καιρός? What are the consequences of the terminological diversity for the theological understanding of these phrases?

4. Fullness of Time (Gal 4:4)

"Fullness of time/times" is referred to twice in *Corpus Paulinum*. The first reference is made in Gal 4:4 which raises no doubts in terms of the provenance of Paul. It is worth noting the terminological difference from the aforementioned text of Mark's. Paul, instead of the form of the verb πληρώω uses the noun – πλήρωμα, and instead of defining time by means of καιρός, uses the noun χρόνος. That means that disregarding a context, we may speak about fulfilment of time identical with long duration of indefinite beginning, which the notion of moment does not fit in. If it is the case, we cannot presume that "fullness" here means "maturity." How is this preliminary conclusion reflected in the text? For the analyses to be grounded, the meaning of these two terms in the case of Paul himself must be referred to since they do not have to overlap with the hitherto depicted semantics of both terms.

The noun πλήρωμα is noted 12 times in both Proto – and Deutero-Pauline letters. Due to the capacity of the issue, we will make use of the outcome of the research conducted by David S. Lima who differentiates five semantic categories of the term πλήρωμα: 1) fullness of space (1 Cor 10:26); 2) full amount (Gen 11:12.25; 15:29⁴⁶); 3) fullness of Law, namely its perfect fulfilment (Rom 13:10; according to the words of Jesus in Matt 5:17); 4) fullness of time which the presented text is dedicated to (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10); 5) fullness of Divinity, namely "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" (Col 1:19), as the title of Christ Himself (Eph 1:23), "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature" (Eph 4:13), the aim "that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19).⁴⁷ The term πλήρωμα thus refers to Christ Himself – the Persona, the time of His activity, the after-effect of His deed – as well as the Church united around Him. While, the term χρόνος has been evidenced 9 times, its content – except for the analysed fragment Gal 4:4 – encompasses: human life ex-

pernatural reality and then it can hardly be associated with time *sensu stricto* (Mark 10:30; cf. Luke 18:30). This dualism originates from the Jewish apocalyptic literature. See Sasse, "αἰών," 197–207.

⁴⁵ See Gourgues, "La «plénitude des temps»,» 95–96.

⁴⁶ In the last instance "the fullness of the Blessing of Christ" should be associated with assembly.

⁴⁷ Lim, "Pelnia," 588–589.

pectancy (Rom 7:1; 1 Cor 7:39), duration of foregone centuries or *primaevality* (Rom 16:25; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:2), period of infancy (Gal 4:1), unspecified duration of Paul's visit (1 Cor 16:7). *Χρόνος* appears thus to be extensive and imprecise, time that can hardly be determined "from-until,"⁴⁸ not synonymous with *καιρός* (1 Thess 5:1).

As far as the place of the phrase in the content of the letter is concerned, the starting point will be to agree with Ben Witherington III who recognizes this fragment as a part of the second of the arguments *probatio*, covering sections 3:19–4:7.⁴⁹ According to M. Gourgues pursuing the similar logic – in order to properly understand "fullness of time" in v. 4:4 it is necessary to retract to v. 3:19, in which the symptomatic question is posed "What is Law for then?," to which Paul answers in vv. 19–29⁵⁰ – the preceding *passus* in 4:1–7. Therein the role of Law is explained by means of the metaphor of the educationist "that was supposed to lead to Christ" (v. 3:24) – the role of this tutor lost, however, its significance with the moment of leap of faith (3:25). This thread is subsequently continued in 4:1–2 in the vision of a minor heir who, until the moment of adulthood, and rather the date fixed by father (Greek *προθεσμία*),⁵¹ enjoyed freedom so limited that he barely differed from a slave. Paul does not command readers/listeners to guess who is hidden behind the images of the minor and the heir. He is frankly speaking in 4:3 "and just [like] us," namely Christians born as Jews, under the Law,⁵² and returns to metaphors in v. 4:7: "So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir" – by virtue of the deed of adoption (*υιοθεσία*),⁵³ let us add. The moment of the switch from the status of the slave to the heir was fulfilled in the deed of Christ, redemption fulfilled by Him (*ἐξαγοράζω*; 4:5), the time appropriateness of which (*προθεσμία*) was decided by Father. It is worth to mention the interesting structural interpretation that is indicative of the concentric configuration of the fragment 4:1–5, the literary and theological centre of which is obviously found in v. 4. It denotes

⁴⁸ Maybe except for the duration of infancy because the moment of maturity was and still is governed by law.

⁴⁹ Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 281nn; the place of Gal 4:4 in *probatio*, notwithstanding the differences in the presented structures of the letter, is not subject to any discussion. See e.g. Betz, *Galatians*, 19.

⁵⁰ According to Ben Witherington III, it is still argument II.

⁵¹ The noun *προθεσμία* in Gal 4:2, that is aptly translated by a translator in the NAS version into "the date set by the father," is in the form of *hapax legomenon* in the whole Greek Bible. However, based on John K. Goodrich ("As long as," 74–75), who argues with rather Jewish than Greek concept of James M. Scott (*Adoption as Sons of God*), it should be emphasised that due to the lack of data it is impossible to unequivocally determine whether *προθεσμία* is linked with the moment of ending the period of the guardianship at the due age of a person or whether it is merely the determination of "the ultimate/fixed-in-advance deadline."

⁵² Although the Law is not straightforwardly referred to as the cause of the enslavement but it is the reference to the subjection to "the four elements" (*ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου*; 4:3) that exegesis experts interpret variedly, we are not going here to address that outstanding issue but we will devote separate studies to it. Let us only note that they may be understood *per analogiam* as *ὑπὸ νόμον* in 4:5 but also in relation to the aforementioned gods in 4:8, that do not exist (*μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς*).

⁵³ More on the issue of adoption in the Greco-Roman world, see Heim, *Adoption*, 112–147.

the critical moment in the history of humanity, the event that influenced the radical change “in the position of humanity.”⁵⁴

Gourgues righteously differentiates two missions indicated by the verb ἐξαποστέλλω – the former: of Christ (v. 4), while the latter: of Spirit (v. 6). How does the above information correspond with the phrase “fullness of time” used by Paul? As we have already noted, studying the non-biblical literature and the LXX, the noun πλήρωμα has the unchangeable meaning expressing “fullness,” that constitutes its Polish most popular word equivalent understood as “abundance,” some “complete reality.” It is similar with πλήρωμα in the case of Paul, who, however that abundance and completeness elevates to a higher level – beginning with the Law, that thanks to Christ has gained its fullness through disclosures of its true content in the Person of Christ (vide Rom 13:10) to the Fullness-Person who brought about Deification of the whole humanity united with Him (Col 1:19; Eph 1:23; 3:19; 4:13).⁵⁵ Is thus D. Overfield right to claim that the latter element, that is “time” – χρόνος,⁵⁶ has a larger theological capacity than πλήρωμα in Gal 4:4? Taking into consideration the extent of this term, this claim can hardly be agreed with, which will be further discussed below.

In the context under consideration, it is no wonder that Paul took advantage of χρόνος *instead of* καιρός. Χρόνος defining this time in the History of Redemption, that precedes arrival of Christ and appearance of the Holy Spirit, a long period, that Paul compares to infancy and adolescence. It is hard to state unequivocally who/what is subject to transience χρόνος and to whom/what does “fullness of times” refer to – to the world, or to a human, or maybe to the history itself? Staring from the axiom that the History of Redemption is the history of complicated relation of a human with God, affecting the whole created world and taking into account that Paul, referring to the child and the heir, *de facto* writes about people, we should consider them to have achieved that fullness. This statement, though could fit in the direct context, would require the semantics of χρόνος, that is the equivalent to the History of Redemption as such one that definitely goes beyond the history of humanity, to be considerably narrowed. In what way did the History of Redemption accomplish its fullness? To this question, I reckon, there is only one answer – in effect of God’s arbitrary decision – God acknowledges that the world is not as much ready as it needs Christ and Spirit. So, it is hard to identify “fullness of time” with maturity on the part of humanity or the world – this fullness lies on the part of God who made the decision to end a certain stage of the History of Redemption.

In understanding what τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου concerns, the aforementioned papyrus texts appear to be useful as they semantically correspond with Paul’s ter-

⁵⁴ Ordon, “Kiedy zaś nadeszła pełnia,” 106–107.

⁵⁵ See Tronina, “«Pełnia czasu» (Ga 4,4),” 68.

⁵⁶ Cf. Overfield, “Pleroma,” 391–392.

minology, facilitating their interpretation. The commentary delivered by aforementioned M. Gourgues appears to be extremely valuable as he notes that the forms of *participium* derived from πληρώω and the noun χρόνος, as found in papyri, relate to the end of the loan repayment period, therefore behind τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου no lofty idea is hidden, which in the case of Gal 4:4 would not be Incarnation but the idea of ending, which perfectly fits in the entirety of Paul's argument. Χρόνος being, according to Gal 3:19–4:7, the time of subordination to the Law of Moses.⁵⁷ The period marked by enslavement came to an end – reached πλήρωμα.⁵⁸ Therefore, it is neither arrival of Christ nor appearance of Spirit that constitutes τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου – since instead of χρόνος Paul would certainly use the monumental καιρός – but these events follow accomplishment of the said fullness by χρόνος. Two aorists in Gal 4:4, ἦλθεν and ἐξαπέστειλεν (came and sent), define the events occurring one by one – the fullness first came to end the relatively long χρόνος of the domination of the Law and the Son was subsequently sent and Spirit delivered.⁵⁹ Why, telling about the end of the domination of the Law, didn't Paul use the term τέλος (vide Rom 10:4)? For telling about the end would assume that the time of the Law is ended and inaccessible, free from the influence of Christ, while this is merely only Him to allow for accomplishment of "fullness of time" making the appropriate sense out of the whole lapse of χρόνος. As long as papyrus texts allow to define the chronological framework of πλήρωμα, theology πλήρωμα in the case of Paul reveals that its meaning definitely goes beyond it. Christ once and for all breaks legal ties coming forward with fullness of freedom – from this perspective τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου relates to both the ended stage of the History of Redemption, as referred to in Gal 4:4 and the one that came with His Incarnation. In this way "freedom and dignity of God's infancy" are also achieved by those who died before Christ.⁶⁰

5. Fullness of Times (Eph 1:10)

The analysis of Gal 4:4 and the previously compiled data regarding the semantic differences between χρόνος and καιρός arouse the righteous intuition that the purport of the phrase τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν must differ from τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου,

⁵⁷ The construct πληρωθέντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου in P. Lond 1168:10 of 44 AD; Cf. P. Oxy. 1641:8–10 of 68 AD), Gourgues, "La «plénitude des temps»," 104.

⁵⁸ From the Greek perspective we would name it "bringing to full circle," in the Jewish perspective it is plausible to state that the period of the rule of the Law has come to an end.

⁵⁹ This concept fits in Mark 1:15 in which the fulfilment of time is concurrent with the moment of Incarnation or the commencement of activities of Jesus, which occurred at the fullness of time. The Event of Christ is determined by the definitive chronological critical moment within the period of the rule of the Law.

⁶⁰ Cf. Tronina, "«Pełnia czasu» (Ga 4,4)," 69.

but be synonymous with Mark 1:15? Apart from the fundamental terminological difference between Gal 4:4 and Eph 1:10 (καιρός in the place of χρόνος), the form of the noun “time” also proves dissimilarities, as it was not used as a singular noun, which was the case with the Epistle to the Galatians, but as a plural noun (*genetivus pluralis*). It is as much significant that in relation to the term χρόνος within the meaning of “the period of the Law-governed captivity,” it is hardly possible to use a plural noun as we identify only one such a period in the history of humanity.

The term καιρός, according to what has already been determined, should mean “definite, appropriate time.”⁶¹ Is it also the medium of such a meaning in Deutero-Pauline letters,⁶² especially the Epistle to the Ephesians that is of interest for us? That question must be answered affirmatively because καιρός is fairly unequivocal, indicating the passed, ended period (2:12),⁶³ the opportunity of a convenient moment (5:16; cf. Col 4:5) whereas ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ understood as “any time,” seems to imply specific moments of life (Eph 6:18). In other words, the meaning of the term does not change in this case, either.

The phrase τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν appears in the section that B. Witherington III considered to be *exordium*⁶⁴ in respect of the rhetoric, however the considerable number of experts in biblical exegesis and commentators discern simply elaborative eulogy in it (Eph 1:3-14).⁶⁵ The former does not exclude the latter, the so more as the intratextual constraints remain to be identical in both cases. In compliance with the balanced proposition of understanding the structure of this unit made by Romano Penny, the phrase under consideration is found at the end of the first part of the benediction (Eph 1:4-10), that Penny depicted by words as “God’s secret will in order to unite everything in Christ.”⁶⁶

Concluding based on the hitherto discussed fragments, “fullness of times” should mean the ending of not so much some period (because it is rather denoted

61 Not necessarily always short, notwithstanding 1 Cor 7:29.

62 That including the Letter to the Ephesians.

63 The period marked by extraordinary events – that is why rather καιρός than χρόνος. Eynikel – Hauspie, “The Use of καιρος and χρόνος,” 385.

64 Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon*, 227–237.

65 Gourgues, “La «plénitude des temps»,” 105; Penna, *Lettera agli Efesini*, 81–85. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 10–16.

66 It is worth paying attention to the remarks regarding the intertextual structure of the benediction in which two essential parts are noted (Eph 1:4-10 and 11-14), out of which each can be additionally divided. After the introductory construct and the preview of the subject matter (v. 3), the author comes forward with the first part referred to by Romano Penna (*Lettera agli Efesini*, 85) as “three moments of God’s benediction.” The first moment is the choice of Christians and their adoption as sons in the pre-existence of the world (vv. 4-6a), the second – Redemption Through the Blood of the Beloved (vv. 6b-7), and the third one is God’s secret will in order to unite everything in Christ (vv. 8-10). The second part defines the historico-redemptive impact of God’s benediction again in three parts corresponding with specific groups of the worshippers: those who “beforehand” put their trust in Christ (vv. 11-12) = Judeo-Christians; pagans baptised through the Holy Spirit after having heard the message of truth and putting the trust in Him (v.13); the community that received the presaged makings of the Holy Spirit in the eschatological perspective.

by means of the term χρόνος), as ending the sequence of important events, which definitely is evidenced by the plural of the term καιρός. Markus Barth suggests that the "fullness of times" does not only imply the ending, but also the onset of times in which all God's promises and prophecies contained in the Bible will be ultimately fulfilled.⁶⁷ The *Clue* to proper understanding of temporal implications of the "fullness of times" appears to be the variedly understood phrase εἰς οἰκονομίαν,⁶⁸ although the major axis of his interpretation is related to the fact of God's superintendence over reality and, particularly in the Letter to the Ephesians, with God's plan for the entire world (universe).⁶⁹ In this context, the constructs indicating the technical purport of the term οἰκονομία⁷⁰ do not surprise, according to which Christ Himself must be understood in the category of God's Trustee (οἰκονόμος).⁷¹ According to Andrew T. Lincoln, οἰκονομία may be limited to three semantical nuances and understood as: 1) the deed of superintendence; 2) what is superintended, an agreement or a plan; 3) an office or the role of a trustee, human resources management (vide Eph 3:2; 1 Cor 9:17; Col 1:25).⁷² However, contrary to A.T. Lincoln's opinion on the difficulty in making the decision on the meaning of this term, it is not hard to exclude the third option – namely the office. The two remaining ones, notwithstanding the differences, are possible to be applied. Walter Bauer assumes that the latter meaning, namely "the plan or the office"⁷³ best fits in the challenging Eph 1:10. Even when the problematic semantic extent of the term οἰκονομία is narrowed, the phrase εἰς οἰκονομίαν is still the source of difficulties due to ambiguity of the preposition εἰς.

The preposition εἰς in combination with the noun in the accusative case may be understood in respect of time, as "to, until"; the boundary/place "to, around, toward,

⁶⁷ Interestingly enough, Markus Barth (*Ephesians* 1–3, 88) decides to translate "the days of fulfilment" instead of "the fullness of the times." The consequences of such a decision are directly reflected in the interpretation that puts the emphasis on those days on which "fulfilment" is achieved or "fullness" is accomplished and not on the very fact of accomplishment of the fullness of times that is pursued by means of unification in or subjection of everything to Christ.

⁶⁸ The meaning of the term οἰκονομία changes depending on the letter and context.

⁶⁹ MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 202; BDAG, "οἰκονομία," 698–699.

⁷⁰ Margaret Y. MacDonald (*Colossians and Ephesians*, 202) and Otto Michel ("οἰκονομία," *TDNT* V, 152) unveil still another cast of this term in Col 1:25 in which οἰκονομία is affiliated with God's dispensation that made Paul the Apostle or, in simple words, the minister. However, it is hard to favour the proposition of Thomas K. Abbott (*Ephesians*, 18) that οἰκονομία meant "appropriation of goods." Such activity is indeed linked with assets management, however, such a semantic restriction of this term is not exemplified in any way whatsoever in the text of the Bible. It is worth paying attention to Jules Cambier's notes ("La Bénédiction d'Eph 1:3–14," 85), who associates οἰκονομία not so much with function as with management. He arrives at this conclusion based on the verb ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι indicating the activities of Christ.

⁷¹ See BDAG, "οἰκονομία," 698.

⁷² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 31; these two semantic ranges are depicted somewhat differently by Walter Bauer, narrowing down οἰκονομία to mean: household administration, management (cf. Luke 16:2–4); management, a pre-set arrangement or plan (Eph 3:9); to drill someone, to qualify someone (1 Tim 1:4)" (BDAG, 698–699).

⁷³ BDAG, 698–699; Romanello, *Lettera agli Efesini*, 55–56.

in the vicinity of”; to the relationship/relation “relative to, as far as, with reference to”; the manner “in the way, as far as possible” and the purpose “for, toward, to.”⁷⁴ Therefore, it seems that εἰς οἰκονομίαν would mean “according to the plan/in compliance with the plan.” However, such translation does not match the preposition εἰς but κατά.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the message about the existence of God’s plan was already expressed in v. 1:9: κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ – “the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.” It seems that the intuition related to superintendence is more relevant whereas εἰς must be translated as purposeful “for.” A similar idea was reflected in the Polish translations, in the enigmatic “for [fulfilment]” (BTP; BSP) or “for [accomplishment]” (BE).⁷⁶ Such translations obviously change the understanding of the very “fullness of times.”

By means of the semantic implications of the preposition εἰς, assuming that οἰκονομία is the technical term related to superintendence or management, the phrase εἰς οἰκονομίαν should be understood:

1. Temporarily: “to [the deed of] superintendence” or “to [fulfilment of] the plan” – such understanding makes “fullness of times” dependent on activities or decisions of the Trustee who decides on the time it is made “the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ” and this phrase defines the time limit for God’s will to be manifested by Christ, and its peak moment was the Event of Christ, allowing to onset or determining the end of what the author means by the “fullness of times” – understood as respective, subsequent events in the History of Redemption, constituting God’s cohesive plan.⁷⁷ While, the existing “fullness of times” provides for the opportunity of uniting humanity (as long as τὰ πάντα refers to it – “everything/all things?”) in Christ.
2. Territorially “to, toward” should rather be excluded because οἰκονομία is the term that is not related to any topography, being a rather abstract than specific term.
3. Purposefully: “in order to superintend/for the purpose of superintendence” – in this case it seems that accomplishment of the “fullness of times” is not possible to be limited to temporal categories. God showed good will in Christ “for the purpose of superintendence of the fullness of times” whereas what the response to God’s wishes will be, will remain at a human’s discretion. In this scenario, the “fullness of times” seems to be rather related to the stage of “uniting everything in Christ,” that is the times of the Church under the auspices of which the unity becomes the reality – and if so, then the “fullness of times” will be achieved only in eschatological events. Some ecclesiological καιροί has not ma-

⁷⁴ Abramowiczówna, *Słownik*, II, 40; GE, “εἰς,” 610–611; cf. BDAG, 289–291; cf. Piwowar, *Składnia*, § 224.

⁷⁵ See Piwowar, *Składnia*, § 228,2.

⁷⁶ BUG makes the proposition of “in the dispensation,” BPZ – ungrounded “upon arrival” whereas BWA – “upon the onset.” Markus Barth (*Ephesians* 1–3, 87–88) argues with the propositions of that kind.

⁷⁷ Thomas K. Abbott (*Ephesians*, 18) imagine that fact by means of the integrity comprising καιροί, out of which the last missing part was the arrival of Messiah. See Romanello, *Lettera agli Efesini*, 55.

tured yet, which ultimately God decides on – the Only one appropriate moment (vide Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32). Εἰς οἰκονομίαν has undoubtedly eschatological connotations, according to M. Barth's apocalyptic determinism,⁷⁸ assuming time finiteness – termination χρόνος and expiry καιροί.

4. Comparatively/relatively: "due to the superintendence" – such a meaning implies that "his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ" evidenced by God, that is the Event of Christ was pre-conditioned by "the superintendence of the fullness of times." Thus, in this case "the superintendence of fullness of times" is nothing else but God's eternal plan, and Paschal Incarnation and Events – subsequent, consecutive but not the final stages of its fulfilment. So, the eschatological interpretation should be complimented on again and the "fullness of times" should be linked with "the Lord's Day."

It is hard to definitely favour one of the interpretations, although two of them – the temporal and purposeful ones (to a certain extent, also the 4th one, that corresponds with it) – seem to be most convincing. Although they apparently contradict one another, they complement one another from the theological perspective. In so far the first one assumes the entirety (πλήρωμα), including the respective καιροί (that occurred in χρόνος in Gal 4:4), to be ended due to the Person of Jesus, the second one assumes the existence of καιροί of the Church, that will complement πλήρωμα till/in the moment of the onset of the Lord's Day.⁷⁹ Therefore, we should favour the polysemy of the phrase εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, that refers to the events anticipating the arrival of Christ, καιροί linked with His Epiphany and "the epoch of the Church begun with the Resurrection."⁸⁰

Conclusion

The "fullness of time/times" is undoubtedly the phrase that has accounted and still accounts for numerous difficulties encountered by both ancient and contemporary interpreters. It results from its originality for a kindred formula has not been noted in any other ancient writing preceding the New Testament. It may also be presumed that its author is, in the form of the noun, the Apostle of Nations who was certainly inspired by the very words of Jesus, that were preserved only by Mark (1:10). Notwithstanding some nuances in the LXX, that must have arisen from literal translation of Hebrew equivalents of the word "time," the meaning of Greek terms καιρός and χρόνος has been considered to be rather intelligible and not causing any major dif-

⁷⁸ Barth, *Ephesians* 1–3, 87.

⁷⁹ See Cloete, "Exegesis and Proclamation," 55.

⁸⁰ Tronina, "«Pełnia czasu» (Ga 4,4)," 71.

ficulties – the semantics of πλήρωμα seems to be equally clear. Thus, the difficulty with the interpretation of the phrase “fullness of time/times” does not result from semantics but rather from the original context.

Based on the above analyses it should be concluded that the texts of the New Testament, in which the analysed phrase appeared (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10, supported by Mk 1:15), are compatible. Mark, recalling one καιρός, notes that it has been fulfilled in salvific deeds of Christ. Paul in Gal 4:4 emphasises that the period of history – χρόνος concurrent with the rule of the Law of Moses, ended, having accomplished its fulfilment. The author of the Letter to the Ephesians mentions that fullness was achieved (according to the temporal interpretation) or will also be achieved (according to the purposeful interpretation) by means of all καιροί, namely important events constituting God’s cohesive plan in which the culmination καιρός is the Event of Christ (according to Mark 1:15). The period of uniting in Christ thus occurred thanks to the achievement of τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν or is integrated with the entirety of those καιροί, out of which some are still reserved for the ecclesiastical community. Favouring the second interpretation it is worth posing a question whether in this case it is not all about the critical καιρός in the life of every man, namely the decision to cling to Christ? Since this question surpasses the framework of the translated article, let it remain an open conclusion and invitation for further studies.

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