

The Hymn of Christ the King (Christ the King, Year C)

Colossians 1:12-20—The Hymn of Christ

...Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* (Col 1:12-20)

1. The “Hymn” of Christ:
2. Creation: Christ is Creator
 - a. “all things” (Greek *ta panta*) created “in” him (1:16)
 - b. “all things” created “through” him (1:16)
 - c. “all things” created “for” him (1:16)
 - b. “all things” hold together “in him” (1:17)
3. Christology: both New Adam and God incarnate
 - a. “image (Greek *eikōn*) of the invisible God” (1:15; cf. Gen 1:27-28)
 - b. “first-born (Greek *prōtotokos*) of all creation” (1:15)
 - c. he is “before all things” (1:17)
 - d. he is “the beginning” (1:18)
 - e. he is “preeminent” (Greek *prōteuō*) in “everything” (1:18)
 - f. “the fullness” (Greek *plērōma*) dwells in him (1:19)
4. Soteriology: cosmic redeemer
 - a. all things are “reconciled” “through him” (1:19)
 - b. “peace” is made “by the blood of his cross” (1:20)
5. Ecclesiology: mystical body of Christ
 - a. he is “the head” of “the body,” the “church” (1:18)
6. Eschatology: first fruits of the resurrection
 - a. he is “the first-born from the dead” (1:18)

Living Tradition

Gregory Nazianzus: He is called “image” because he is of one substance with the Father; he stems from the Father and not the Father from him, it begin the nature of an image to copy the original and to be named after it. But there is more to it than this. The ordinary image is a motionless copy of a moving being. Here we have a living image of a living

being, indistinguishable from its original to a higher degree than Seth from Adam (cf. Gen 5:3) and any earthly offspring from its parents. Beings with no complexity to their nature have no points of likeness or unlikeness. They are exact replicas, identical rather than like. (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 30.20; trans. F. W. Norris)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Christ the King, Year C)

1. What does it mean to refer to Christ as the “image” of the invisible God (Col 2:15)? How is this similar to Seth being the “image” of Adam (cf. Gen 5:3)?

For Further Reading

1. F. W. Norris. *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Leiden and New York: Brill, 1991.
2. Matthew E. Gordley. *The Colossians Hymn in Context: An Exegesis in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Hymnic and Epistolary Conventions*. WUNT 2.228. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007.