**Colossians 1:13-20 The fullness of Christ**

*‘There is not a square inch over which Christ cannot say, “It is mine”*(a). This is one of the famous phrases of Abraham Kuyper, one of the most influential reformed personalities of late 19th century Holland. The phrase says that there is no area on earth, in heaven, in the macro-cosmos and micro-cosmos, in the visible and invisible world, where Christ is not fully Lord. Kuyper has not invented anything and has not exaggerated. He has given voice to what we find in this hymn we read.

It is a hymn to the primacy of Christ that Paul included in his letter. Scholars debate whether he composed it or adapted an existing one. We do not even know whether it was sung or recited. In any case, it is a powerful hymn to the lordship of Christ. The key word in this hymn is ‘fullness’ (v.19), indeed: ‘all the fullness’. Fullness was at the centre of much discussion in the church at Colosse. What is fullness? Where is it to be found? How is it experienced? These were the questions that were asked. With this hymn, Paul tells us who the fullness is. The fullness is not an abstract concept or a thing: it is a Person who has a name and a surname. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God become man. To approach fullness, one must not do things or avoid things, but one must know a Person: that of Jesus.

In what sense is Jesus Christ the “fullness”? The hymn contains three keys to entry into the world of the fullness of Christ.

**1. Fullness of God**

There can be no fullness except in God. If fullness is my unit of measurement, what I think of fullness is not true fullness. Only God is fullness in his divinity; only in God is there fullness in the Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; only from God comes fullness for those who believe in him. This is the first truth of the hymn. Here the Son is said to be ‘the image of the invisible God’ (v.15): in Jesus Christ God is fully reproduced and, as a human person, is also visible. Jesus became man while remaining fully God. In becoming man, the Son did not lose the fullness of divinity. He is also the First of every creature (v.15). Immediately after, we are told for the Son all things were created (v.16) and He is First of all things (v.17). Being the First of every creature does not then mean that He was created first, but He created everything with the Father and is First as Lord and Head of every creature.

The fullness also lies in Jesus Christ because ‘all things subsist in Him’ (v.17b). He is the Person through whom everything is together, everything is regulated, everything functions, everything moves in a coordinated manner: the law of gravity, the mathematical rules (1+1=2), the processes of heavenly and earthly life (‘heavens and earth’) but also spiritual (‘thrones, lordships, principalities, invisible powers’, v.16). The whole of life has in Jesus Christ the regulating principle.

Therefor Jesus Christ can claim all divine fullness: not a lesser god, not a half-god, not just any religious teacher: Jesus is God, fully God, fully Creator, fully Lord. Where else can you find fullness but in Jesus Christ, the Son of God become man, in whose Person is “all the fullness” of the Creator? Other fullnesses are fallacious, reduced, polluted, disappointing. Only in Jesus Christ is there ‘all fullness’.

1. A.Kuyper, Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring (´The Principle of Sphere Sovereignty´), (Amsterdam, 1880, 35).

**2. Fullness of authority**

Fullness of divinity, fullness of authority. As fully God, Jesus Christ is also fully Lord of all and overall. Here the key words are ‘HEAD and ‘FIRST´ (v.18). He is before everything and above everything. For Him everything exists, in Him everything ‘works’ and everything is accountable to Him. To Him everything must and will be accountable.

There are two areas of the full authority of the Son of God: the universe (both visible and invisible) and the church. Jesus is Lord over the one and the other. Remember what Kuyper said: ‘there is not a single square inch on which Jesus Christ cannot say: it is mine’. There is no space of life that is foreign to the lordship of Christ. In the universe, Christ's authority is delegated to individuals, to families, to magistrates, to the state, ... there are various subjects who are given a certain relative and limited authority. Ultimately and ultimately, whether they are aware of it or not, all will sooner or later be accountable to Him.

The same applies to the church: Christ is the head of the church. The church is not an anarchy where everyone does what they want, nor is it a political empire with a pope at the top. The church is the body made up of various members with various roles and held together and coordinated by the head who is Christ. To Him the church is accountable in its witness and mission. We who are members of the church have a head (the Lord Jesus) and to Him we give an account of our time, resources, energy, ambitions, commitments. That is why we urge each other to walk fully and together, behind Him and with Him.

The point of the hymn is that the fullness of life is not found outside Christ's rule or against Him. Fullness lies in finding our joy, satisfaction and fulfilment in submission to Christ. The more we are submitted to Christ, the more empowered we are as citizens, workers, students, mothers, fathers, church members. Submission to Christ fills life with responsibility and energy. Submission to other self-styled fullness sucks life energy and pits one against the other.

**3. Fullness of salvation**

Fullness of divinity, fullness of authority. There is a final key with which this hymn speaks of the fullness of Christ. It is the fullness of salvation that Jesus Christ bestows.

This salvation is ‘deliverance from the power of darkness’ (v.13), ‘redemption’ (v.14), ‘forgiveness of sins’ (14), “reconciliation” (20), ‘peace’ (20). There is no area of life that salvation does not touch: the power of evil, the burden of sin, guilt, conflict. Jesus came to fully save those who believe in Him. Salvation begins here and now and extends into eternity. Let us thank God for such a great salvation. Let us explore its riches. Let us share its treasure with others.

The hymn says that the full salvation that Jesus obtained was paid for at the price of ‘the blood of his cross’ (v.20). The Son, fully God and fully Head, humbled himself to the death of the cross to pay the price of our sin. How wonderful! The fullness of our life comes through the blood of the cross. This is the only channel from which to receive it as a gift. It is not by power; it is not by merit; it is not by status: it comes through the blood of the cross of the Lord Jesus shed for the sins of the world.

*Do you recognise Christ and his divine fullness? Do you submit to Christ and the fullness of his authority? Do you believe in Christ and benefit from the fullness of his salvation?*