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## Editors' Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

There is a song we rarely sing entitled "Dying with Jesus." The words of the first stanza are:

Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine;  
 Living with Jesus, a new life divine;  
 Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine,  
 Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

The chorus then declares,

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;  
 Moment by moment I've life from above;  
 Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;  
 Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

Could words better echo Paul's language in Colossians 3.3, "for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"? There is hardly a comparable writing in the New Testament that affirms more vividly and paradoxically the mystery and the security of our new life that is hidden "with Christ in God."

J. Paul Sampley, a leading Pauline scholar, believes that at the "heart of Colossians is a christological dispute over whether what has already been accomplished in Christ has actually and completely liberated the believers from the powers of the universe and given them proper access to God."<sup>1</sup> Certainly, Colossians is written to oppose false teachings and activities surrounding ascetic practices, worship of angels, cosmic elements, and a full knowledge of God. We believe, however, that more than being argumentative, the letter is one that exhorts and encourages an early Christian community to live up to its new life in Christ. Colossians, like Paul in prison, preaches, admonishes, and instructs. What Paul claims for himself, "It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (1.28), the letter actually accomplishes as well.

Your editors, desiring to do an issue on Colossians, could not have picked a more competent guest editor than Ron Cox. Dr. Cox, a New Testament scholar and teacher at Pepperdine University, did his dissertation on the Christ hymn (1.15–20). He has "lived" with this letter over time, thinking afresh its meaning for the Christians at Colossae and our lives today. Before having Dr. Cox introduce the issue and its writers, we note that our next two issues will be devoted to Christian missions and the Old Testament writing of Jeremiah, respectively edited by Dr. Sonny Guild and Dr. Paul Watson. The Jeremiah issue grows out of the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures—a *Leaven* tradition.

As a footnote: your editors have included in this issue articles by **LYNN ANDERSON** and **CURTIS MCLAIN**, as well as a prayer by **MARKUS MCDOWELL**.

1. J. Paul Sampley, "The Letter of Paul to the Colossians," *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, Fully Revised & Updated, general ed. Harold W. Attridge (San Francisco: Harper, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 1998.

**GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION**

RON COX

It may seem a silly question, but asking where Jesus fit in our religion seemed to take place rather frequently during the first centuries of Christianity. Perhaps the most concise yet among the most compelling answers is found in Paul's Letter to the Colossians. Here we have one of the most exalting portraits of Jesus, describing him as creator and savior of the universe (1.15–20), and yet Paul focuses it directly toward the needs of the Colossians. This letter is a testimony of theology performed for the church. With this in mind, we have assembled a collection of writings inspired by Colossians which themselves focus on bringing the message of Christ to the life of the church. We set the stage with my introduction to the letter by focusing on the Christ hymn in Colossians 1.15–20, with which Paul works to move the Colossians from a state of anxiety to one of thankfulness. Colossians 1.24–2.5 offers an introspective glance at how Paul understands his ministry; **DWIGHT ROBARTS**, a veteran minister himself, considers how Paul's introspective moment helps those who minister today. **R. TODD BOULDIN** finds in Paul's argument against the Colossian troublemakers (2.6–23) an answer to Christianity's present-day cultured despisers, namely the mysterious power of Christ's weakness. **THOMAS OLBRICHT** brings his nearly forty years of published research on Colossians to bear on Colossians 3.1–17 and helps us see the practical import of Paul's message for living the Christian life. **SHELLY EVANS COX** provides a real-life glimpse of the messiness of God's household through recounting her experience giving her first public communion meditation and offers a hopeful message about how God brings beauty out of our mess. **RON ALLEN** offers a sermon which encourages us to "make the most of the time" (Col 4.5) through following Paul's example of declaring the mystery of God in spite of or even by his imprisonment. **LINDY EMERSON** finds inspiration in the details of Paul's conclusion (Col 4.2–18) for the challenging work that she does among the diverse, often poor, and always surprising people of the Bronx. **MARK MANASSEE'S** essay on ministry and the Gospel of Mark is "as one abnormally born" since it is not on Colossians. Still, it is an important contribution because it shows us, by that Gospel's narrative and by our author's pastoral experience, something of what it means that God has chosen to reconcile us to himself "in [Christ's] fleshly body through death" (Col 1.22). With the hope that this issue has whetted readers' appetite for Colossians, **RON TYLER** provides a helpful orientation to further reading on the letter. **LEE MAGNESS** supplies another superb liturgical reading based on Colossians. Finally, **STUART LOVE** offers a meditation based on Colossians, given at the most recent Pepperdine University Easter Service.

