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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

A famous New Testament scholar of an earlier generation, C. H. Dodd, once called Ephesians the “crown of Paulinism.” Raymond Brown writes, “Among the Pauline writings only Romans can match Ephesians as a candidate for exercising the most influence on Christian thought and spirituality.”¹ Truly Ephesians is an encompassing writing. It begins with a view of God’s plan from a vastly cosmic portrayal (1.3-23); it continues by affirming the inclusion of all Christian believers, all of humanity, Jews and Gentiles, reconciled in the church by means of the death and resurrection of Jesus (2.1-3.21); it then explicates the Christian life, including relationships within the Greco-Roman household viewed from the vantage point of God’s great cosmic plan (4.1-6.9); and, finally, it employs the figurative language of warfare, armor and weapons, to describe how each believer should stand watch and make preparations for battle in God’s power and in God’s way by means of the gospel of peace (6.10-20).

Ephesians exalts the church, not the church down the block, but the universal church, the body of Christ. Ephesians refers to the universal church nine times. Christ has been made “all things for the church” (1.22) of which he is “head” and “savior” (5.23, 24). By means of the church, the wisdom of God is manifest to all things including the angelic powers (3.10). At the close of his doxology, Paul, thinking of Christ, praises God—may God be glorified “in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever” (3.21). Husbands are to love their wives “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (5.25). Christ cleanses the church with the washing of water by the word, so as to “present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish” (5.27). Christ nourishes and tenderly cares for the church (5.29). All of this mighty work relates to the “great mystery,” that is to “Christ and the church” (5.32). Thus, God’s final purpose is reconciliation, unity and harmony throughout his creation, and the church is his means of accomplishing this great end. In the face of such a sweeping view we are thankful, but we are also driven to our knees in penitent prayer!

This issue is quite diverse. The originating impetus for choosing Ephesians took shape at a New Wineskins Retreat, a gathering of African-American preachers among Churches of Christ, which took place in Costa Mesa, California, nearly five years ago. The issue has evolved to include a variety of perspectives on Ephesians, as well as a thanksgiving sermon by **GARY SELBY**, an article in an ongoing series on ministry from the Gospel of John written by one of the general editors, **STUART LOVE**, and a liturgical reading for Ephesians by **LEE MAGNESS**.

Perspectives on Ephesians begin with a study by **IRA J. JOLIVET**, who affirms that the great inspiration and doctrinal purposes of Ephesians known by Christians through the centuries “emerge only when we are able to read the letter as Paul intended it to be heard by his original audience, that is, as a unified persuasive argument or speech.” To accomplish this goal, Jolivet believes “we must see that a story underlies and gives coherence to the theological arguments of the first major section of the letter (1.1-3.21) and the seemingly unrelated ethical instructions and exhortations in its second major section (4.1-6.24),” a coherence that grows out of Israel’s story as told by such writers as Ezekiel. We are grateful for the work of **DAVID G. HOLMES**, Associate Professor of English at Pepperdine University, who gathered the next two

1. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York, et al.: Doubleday, 1997), 620.

articles from the New Wineskins retreat mentioned above. Using Paul's doxology in Ephesians 3.14-21 as his text, **JERRY A. TAYLOR** writes out of the African-American preaching tradition and challenges churches of Christ to repent of the "carnal tactics" that often are used for "establishing the supremacy of one's doctrinal conclusions." Such behavior is diametrically opposite to the practice of love called for in Paul's prayer. Taylor concludes, "As Churches of Christ we must walk in the Spirit of the love of Christ." **RICK HUNTER** explores Ephesians 4.1-6. Hunter believes Paul is concerned with the "intensely practical," the "daily walk of the Christian journey." He affirms that Ephesians is concerned for the everyday conduct of Christians as they "engage in the mission and purpose of Christ in the daily activities of living." Hunter insists that the "true church shows itself through genuine discipleship, and Christ's disciples intentionally practice the truth of God by submitting to the sovereignty of Christ and by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through them." **ADAM BARON**, a master of divinity student at Pepperdine University, beautifully connects the narrative of his family with a theology of marriage that features themes from Ephesians 5. **GARY EDWARD WEEDMAN** is Senior Vice President and Professor of Religious Studies, TCM International Institute, Heiligenkreuz, Austria. **WEEDMAN** applies to Ephesians what is coined the "new perspective on Paul." A number of scholars have taken up, Weedman affirms, "a major thesis...critiquing the 'traditional' understanding of Judaism as a legalistic religion of works-righteousness, extending it to new understandings of the role of the apostle Paul and of his writings." Weedman believes no one has attempted to apply this new perspective to any of the disputed writings of Paul, of which Ephesians is an example. He hopes through his study to add to this scholarly discussion. Future issues of *Leaven* include the 2006 Pepperdine Lectures based on 1 John and the Future of the Restoration Plea, an issue edited by David Fleer.

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers!

