

**COLOSSIANS:
MORE THAN ENOUGH**

LESSON TWO

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY NOTES

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Michael Bird, in the *New Covenant Commentary*, expounds on what is known as a Christ hymn:

This passage is probably a Christian hymn or poem about Jesus Christ. The use of relative clauses in verses 15 and 18 is indicative of other confessional and hymnic materials in the New Testament (e.g., Rom 4:25; Phil 2:6; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 2:21-24). Paul is probably using some traditional material given the unique vocabulary, the liturgical feel, and the near intrusion of the text upon the immediate literary context. However, it is almost impossible to gauge what the original “poem” was and what Paul has added, subtracted, or rearranged.

The religious-historical background of this pre-Pauline poem is disputed in scholarship (some even suggest that it is a pre-Christian text that has been taken up by Christians). First, there have been proposals that the background to the poem lies in a gnostic redeemer myth where an archetypal human comes to redeem the human race from corruption and the mortal condition. This is improbable because: (1) There is no extant pre-Christian evidence of a gnostic redeemer who entered into the world of darkness in order to redeem the sons of light by becoming the “redeemed Redeemer.” There was then no gnostic redeemer myth that was waiting in the wings to be taken up, Christianized, and applied to Jesus. This “redeemed Redeemer” is himself a “myth” of mid-twentieth-century German scholarship. (2) It is not a “supra-historical” perspective or elements of a “metaphysical drama” that typified Gnosticism, rather, it was an “anti-cosmic dualism” that drove a wedge between the good god of salvation and the malevolent god of creation that lay at the core of Gnosticism. (3) A gnostic hymn would be unlikely to trace creation and reconciliation to the same divine being. (4) It is impossible to excise all Christian traits from the poem as “firstborn” and “reconcile” are near technical Christian terms here.

Second, others have argued that it reflects mediator figures from Hellenistic Judaism, most notably personifications of Wisdom extant in Jewish wisdom literature (e.g., Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon) and the *Logos* from Philo. The problem is that while the parallels with Wisdom are numerous they are often oblique. For example, Wisdom is often regarded as a created entity (Prov 8:22-23; Sir 1:4, 9), whereas in the poem Jesus is closer to the role of creator and is not part of the created order. What is more, there is no known reference to the world being created for Wisdom.

Third, others argue that the poem represents a christological interpretation of Genesis 1 and the language of “image” and “beginning” finds suitable parallels there. C. F. Burney proposes that the poem understands the figure of Wisdom in Prov 8:22 in light of Gen 1:1. He makes much of the Hebrew compound word *bereshith* (“in the beginning”) in highlighting the instrument of divine agency in creation. Overall, I find this third option the most likely. The poem is evidently rooted in the Jewish framework of monotheism, creation, and intermediaries with clear echoes of Gen 1:1, 26-27. As such, Jesus is the “image” of the new eschatological humanity and the “beginning” of the new creation. Though I admit that links with wisdom traditions are simply too plain to ignore. I suggest, then, that it is precisely because Jewish wisdom theology was so indebted to Jewish views of creation that links between Col 1:15-20 and Sirach, Proverbs, Philo, and Wisdom of Solomon can be found. The most analogous text, however, is probably 1 Cor 8:6. Taken together, 1 Cor 8:6 and Col 1:15-20 provide an affirmation of a Jewish creation scheme, Jewish monotheism, and God’s action through intermediaries. Yet this well-known paradigm is radically redrawn around a particular view of Israel’s Messiah as participating in the divine acts of creation and redemption.

The structure is particularly hard to determine, mainly because the wording is asymmetrical, and the shift from vv. 12-14 to vv. 15-20 is hardly abrupt. The most likely option appears to be that the poem is framed in two major strophes (vv. 15-16; 18b-20) both beginning with a relative clause and with two lines (vv. 17-18a) sandwiched in the middle functioning as an abridgment. In my opinion, the coherence and unity of the poem is based around certain key motifs in both strophes that are activated by certain words.

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He is ... Divine Personhood: The identity of Jesus in relation to God.

Firstborn Divine Preeminence: The supremacy of Jesus over creation and new creation.

Because Divine Perspective: An explanation of how Jesus relates to the prerogatives and presence of God.

In him Divine Agency: What purposes God works out through the Son.

Whether ... Divine Authority: Signals the extent of the Son's reign over creation and salvation.

In terms of a rhetorical function, this passage operates much like a *propositio*, which sets forth the central thesis of the epistle. It also has some affinities with Asiatic rhetoric, which tended to be far more ornamented, flowery, and even pompous at times. This rich tapestry of highly poetic and poignant christological imagery is set forth in order to persuade the Colossians of the sufficiency and supremacy of the Messiah over all things in creation and make him the exclusive agent of salvation. Socially the poem functions here to reinforce the ideological boundaries between the "faith" of the Pauline churches and the deviance of the philosophy that devalues the place of Christ in the cosmological order. Indeed, Paul's inclusion of this poem is intended as a polemic primarily against a particular cosmology upon which the teachers' aberrant Christology is based. The issue is far more than, "Is Jesus God or is he only quasi-divine?" More appropriately, it asks what place Jesus occupies in the cosmological order in relation to the one God of Israel, and to various spiritual entities with varying degrees of power and authority as well. The poem is deployed here in aid of creating a symbolic universe that is defined chiefly by a "christological monotheism" over and against the angelology of the philosophy.¹⁴ All this through a short piece of primitive Christian hymnody!¹

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

N. T. Wright, in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, shows us how Christ is the sustainer of all the universe:

15. It remains to fill in the details of the poem, to show how this wealth of theology was actually expressed. *He*, the Son of God in whom we have redemption, *is the image of the invisible God*. No-one has ever seen God, wrote John in his Prologue (1:18), but God the only Son has made him known. Humanity was made as the climax of the first creation (Gen. 1:26-27): the true humanity of Jesus is the climax of the history of creation, and at the same time the starting-point of the new creation. From all eternity Jesus had, in his very nature, been the 'image of God', reflecting perfectly the character and life of the Father. It was thus appropriate for him to be the 'image of God' as man: from all eternity he had held the same relation to the Father that humanity, from its creation, had been intended to bear. Humanity was designed to be the perfect vehicle for God's self-expression within his world, so that he could himself live appropriately among his people as one of themselves, could rule in love over creation as himself a creature. God made us for himself, as Augustine said with a different, though perhaps related, meaning. The doctrine of incarnation which flows from this cannot, by definition, squeeze either 'divinity' or 'humanity' out of shape. Indeed, it is only in Jesus Christ that we understand what 'divinity' and 'humanity' really mean: without him, we lapse into sub-Christian, or even pagan, categories of thought, and then wonder why the doctrine of incarnation causes us so much difficulty. Paul's way of expressing the doctrine is to say, poetically, that the man Jesus fulfils the purposes which God had marked out *both* for himself *and* for humanity.

Upon Jesus Christ, then, has come the role marked out for humanity, and hence for Israel: Christ is *the firstborn over all creation*. The title 'firstborn' is given to Israel in the Old Testament (Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9; cf. Psalms of Solomon 18:4; 4 Ezra 6:58), and also, once, to the coming Davidic Messiah (Ps. 89:27). Burney (see above) argued strongly that it referred to the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22. It therefore conveys the idea of priority in both time and rank, and we should not foreclose on either of these options (niv, in its paraphrase, allows only the idea of rank): to opt for temporal priority does not imply that the pre-existent Son of God is merely the first created being. The continuing temporal sense of the word is clear from verse 18 (cf. Rom. 8:29), and gives a parallel idea to that expressed in the neb translation of John 1:1, 'When all things began, the Word already was'. It is *in virtue* of this

¹Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 48-51.

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eternal pre-existence that the Son of God holds supreme rank.

16. That this is the correct way to read verse 15 is immediately confirmed: *for by him all things were created*. He is not simply part of the created world itself. All that God made, he made by means of him. Paul actually says 'in him', and, though the word *en* can mean 'by' as well as 'in', it is better to retain the literal translation than to paraphrase as niv has done. Not only is there an intended parallel with verse 19, which would otherwise be lost: the passive 'were created' indicates, in a typically Jewish fashion, the activity of God the Father, working *in* the Son. To say 'by', here and at the end of verse 16, could imply, not that Christ is the Father's agent, but that he was alone responsible for creation.

All things, which in the Greek has an article indicating that Paul sees this created world as a single whole (i.e. 'the totality'), is now further specified: *things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*. (niv obscures the parallel between this verse and 2:15 by translating archai in 1:16 as 'rulers' and in 2:15 as 'powers'.) Wherever you look, or whatever realities you think of, you discover entities which, even if they do not acknowledge the fact, owe their very existence to Christ. They are his handiwork. Paul has here chosen to mention especially what we today call the power structures of the universe.

The identity of these 'powers' is much debated. Some of the terms Paul uses here belonged to complex metaphysical systems in contemporary non-Christian thought. It is not easy to separate the different terms clearly. 'Thrones' is probably superior to 'powers', 'rulers' to 'authorities'; and while 'thrones' and 'rulers', in the Greek, connote the position held, 'powers' and 'authorities' indicate the presence of those over whom authority is exercised. Paul, however, is not concerned so much with listing them in a particular order, or with distinguishing carefully between them, as with asserting Christ's supremacy over them. As to their referent, in our modern age it has often been taken for granted that Paul's language about supernatural power-structures needs to be demythologized, to be turned into language about (say) international power politics or economic 'structures'. This is quite legitimate, since for Paul spiritual and earthly rulers were not sharply distinguished. In his view, earthly rulers held authority (in the sense intended by John 19:11; Rom. 13:1-7) only as a trust from the creator. At the same time, we should not ignore the supernatural or 'demonic' element in these 'powers'. Anything to which human beings offer the allegiance proper only to God is capable of assuming, and exerting, a sinister borrowed power. For Paul, the 'powers' were unseen forces working in the world through pagan religion, astrology, or magic, or through the oppressive systems that enslaved or tyrannized human beings. (See below, on 2:13-15.)

No power structures are, however, independent of Christ: *for all things were created by him and for him*. Again 'all things' has the article, so that we might translate it as 'the totality'. 'By him' is, this time, properly *through* him; 'for him' is properly *to* him. 'Were created' is, this time, a perfect tense ('have been created') in contrast to the aorist ('were created') at the start of the verse. The difference is that, whereas before Paul referred to the initial act of creation, he here refers to the result of that initial act: 'all things *have been brought into being* through him and to him'. The weight of the sentence falls, therefore, on to the final phrase 'to him'. Creation, called into existence for the sake of Christ, exists in the present in order to give him glory. Verse 16 thus moves the thought of the poem from the past (Christ as agent of creation) to the present (Christ as the one to whom the world owes allegiance) and to the future (Christ whose sovereignty will become universal). Though the powers are now in rebellion, he remains their true Lord. This is confirmed by the next stage, the first of the two short central sections of the poem.

17. Paul now sums up his statement of Christ as the intermediary of creation, before setting in parallel to this the fact of his work in the new creation. *He* (NIV omits the 'and' at the start of the line, thus losing the exact parallel with 18a) *is before all things, and in him all things hold together*. 'Before', like 'firstborn' earlier, is ambiguous, and probably refers again to primacy of both time and rank. The second clause, asserting that the world is now sustained and upheld by Christ, transfers to him one more aspect of 'wisdom' thought (see Wisdom 1:7; Eccclus. 43:26; and in the NT cf. Heb. 1:3). The verb, again, is in the perfect, indicating that 'everything' has held together in him and continues to do so.

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Through him the world is sustained, prevented from falling into chaos. No creature is autonomous. All are God's servants (Ps. 119:91) and dependents (Ps. 104).

18. It is to this Jesus Christ, none other, that the Colossians now belong in belonging to the church. This is the moment when, according to the careful structure of the poem, the thought moves from creation to new creation. Paul starts where the Colossians are, as members of the one world-wide people of God. If God's people are the new humanity, the metaphor of a human body is utterly appropriate to express not only mutual interdependence (as in Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12ff.) but also, as here, an organic and dependent relation to Christ himself. Hence: *And he is the head of the body*, the church. Paul, as is well known, is good at mixing his metaphors (see, e.g., Eph. 4:14, with the comments of Caird): he is also apparently good at adapting them to fresh uses.³⁶

Paul has been exploring the different meanings of the Hebrew *re'shit* ('firstborn', 'sum-total', 'head'), and he now reaches the final stage: *he is the beginning and* (there is no word for 'and' in the Greek, and it might have been better not to add it, but to leave the next clause as an explanation of, not an addition to, 'the beginning') *the firstborn from among the dead*. This assertion dominates the remainder of the poem. The word 'beginning' is too thin to do justice to *arche*, which means 'first principle', 'source', 'creative initiative', and again indicates priority in both time and rank. (It is actually the singular noun from which is derived *archai*, rulers, as in v. 16 and 2:15.) This part of the poem refers particularly to Christ's rule over the final great enemies of mankind, sin and death. With Jesus' resurrection, the new age has dawned. The new man has emerged from among the old humanity, whose life he had shared, whose pain and sin he had borne. For Paul, as throughout the Bible, sin and death were inextricably linked, so that Christ's victory over the latter signalled his defeat of the former (see Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:12-28). 'Firstborn' here, particularly when taken closely with *arche* in the sense of 'beginning', implies that Christ's resurrection, though presently unique, will be acted out by a great company of others. Those Jews who expected a resurrection from the dead (certainly the Pharisees, and quite possibly many others) had seen it as a large-scale, single event at the end of time. Paul, however, believed that God brought forward the inauguration of the 'age to come', the age of resurrection, into the midst of the 'present age', in order that the power of the new age might be unleashed upon the world while there was still time for the world to be saved.

Jesus' resurrection was thus accomplished *so that in everything he might have the supremacy*. That which he was by right he became in fact. God's plan is not merely to sum up the old creation, but to inaugurate the new creation, in and through him. The paradox of Christ's being 'before all things' (v. 17) and yet *becoming* pre-eminent in his resurrection is to be explained on the basis of Philippians 2:5-11. The exaltation of Christ after his work on the cross gives him, publicly, the status which he always in fact enjoyed as of right. The puzzle is caused by sin: though always Lord by right, he must become Lord in fact, by defeating sin and death. Compare Romans 1:3-4: Jesus was 'Son of God' even while being 'a descendant of David as to his human nature' (it is as Son of God that he dies on the cross, Rom. 8:3, etc.); in his resurrection this Sonship was powerfully, and publicly, demonstrated. The 'so that' in our present passage implies that behind Jesus' resurrection there stands the divine purpose, which is now explained as a purpose of reconciling love.

19-20. Just as verse 16 explains the appropriateness of what was said about Christ in verse 15, so verses 19-20 explain the appropriateness of verse 18b ('who is the beginning ...'). Paul here expresses evocatively and colourfully what in 2 Corinthians 5:19 he stated bluntly ('God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ'): *For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross*. About this difficult little passage there are five things to be said.

i. There is no word for 'God' in the original of verse 19, but the grammatical subject ('fulness') must be a circumlocution for 'God in all his fulness' (see 2:9). It is appropriate that Christ should hold pre-eminence, because God in all his fullness was pleased to take up permanent residence (this is the best way of taking the Greek verb) in him. The full divinity of the man Jesus is stated without any implication that there are two Gods. It is the one God, in all his fullness, who dwells in him.

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ii. The sequence 'in him ... through him ... to him ...' echoes the same sequence in verse 16. This deliberate balance has created a problem of ambiguity, it being unclear whether the repeated 'him' refers to God or to Christ. The answer is probably that the final 'him' is to be taken as a contraction of 'himself' (*auton* in place of *heauton*), a verbal switch not without parallel. God dwelt fully in Christ in order to reconcile all things to himself (i.e. to God) through him (i.e. Christ).

iii. In rearranging the order of phrases (see the full layout of the poem above), niv has omitted the awkward extra phrase 'through him', which occurs in most manuscripts after the words 'his cross' and before 'whether the things on earth or the things in heaven'. But the phrase, easy to omit in copying but odd to add, should probably be retained. It re-emphasizes the fact that reconciliation was achieved through Christ alone.

iv. In what way are 'all things' reconciled to God through the cross? This question breaks down into three more: (a) how does Jesus' death effect reconciliation between God and his human creatures? (b) does 'all things' include the non-human creation? and (c) does it imply automatic salvation for all human beings?

(a) There is no problem, from the vantage-point of other Pauline statements (e.g. 2 Cor. 5:21), in answering this first question. On the cross, God took upon himself that which stood as a barrier between himself and his human creatures, i.e. sin. The worst that sin can do is to kill: dying, Jesus exhausted its power. The word 'blood' also suggests the ideas of the sacrifice which makes peace between God and man and of God's new covenant, which stands at the heart of the new creation. (See further on 1:22; 2:11-15, where this summary statement of the achievement of the cross is considerably amplified.)

(b) What, then, is the scope of this new creation? Because humanity plays the key role in the ordering of God's world, human reconciliation will lead to the restoration of creation, just as human sin led to creation's fall (compare Rom. 8:19ff.). At present, as Paul in prison knew only too well, the world as a whole remains unaware of the reconciliation achieved on the cross, of the fact that God will eventually remake the world and its power structures so that they reflect his glory instead of human arrogance. That is why he can speak both of the reconciliation of the 'powers' and also of God's victory in Christ over them as hostile forces (2:15). God plans for an eventual complete harmony, new heavens and new earth. All evil is to be destroyed through the cosmic outworking of the crucifixion: all creation is to be transformed in the cosmic results of the resurrection.

(c) The process of reconciliation between God and man, however, does not simply happen by some automatic process. Paul clearly believed that it was possible for human beings to reject God's offer of salvation, and that at the last judgment some, having done so, would thereby be themselves rejected (see Rom. 1:18-2:16; 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:5-10). Since he never tells us how he would harmonize this with the reconciliation of 'all things', it is risky to guess what he might have said. But the present passage, and the parallel in 2 Corinthians 5, suggest two comments. First, he is emphasizing the universal scope of God's reconciling purposes; nothing less than a total new creation is envisaged. Secondly, 'reconciliation', the re-establishing of a mutual relationship, cannot occur 'automatically' in the world of human relations from which the metaphor is drawn. In theological terms, reconciliation occurs 'when someone is in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:17), which elsewhere (e.g. Rom. 3:21-31; 6:1-11; Gal. 3:26-29) is correlated clearly with faith and baptism. The expansion of our present passage in Colossians 2:9-12 suggests that this is the right approach. See also the commentary on 3:6, below.

v. The extraordinary events of incarnation and cross were not a *faute de mieux*, undertaken with reluctance or merely because there was no other possible course. God not only acted in this way: he 'took pleasure in' doing so. In taking human flesh in order to bring creation to its climax (1:15-17), he fulfils the eternal purpose whereby he made humanity to be master of the world. As he had been 'pleased to dwell' on Mount Zion, so he is now 'pleased to dwell' among his people in human form (compare John 1:14). Behind the mystery of sin, then, there stands the loving wisdom of God. In making a world which he could appropriately enter, he made man and woman in his own image.

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The creation of such beings entailed the possibility that they would rebel against him. Such rebellion could not baffle or perplex him, nor confound his purposes: it would evoke that quality above all others of which he had no lack, namely, the generous love expressed on the cross. He came, therefore, to defeat sin in the territory it had made its own, that of Adam, of human flesh and blood. Reconciliation, effected through the death of the Son, reveals most clearly the love of the Father (Rom. 5:6-10). It is this revelation that calls forth the praises of heaven, to which Paul now invites the Colossians to join their voices.

We are now in a position to survey the poem in its totality, and to assess the contribution it makes to the developing thought of the letter. The Colossian Christians (and their modern counterparts) are to thank God, because in Jesus Christ he has revealed himself to be the one God of all the earth, the Creator and Redeemer of all. He is not one more rival (specifically, a Jewish one) to the gods of paganism. He reigns supreme over all. He has given himself to his world in loving self-sacrifice, to create out of sinful humanity a people for his own possession, with the intention of eventually bringing the entire universe into a new order and harmony. All this he has done in and through Jesus, his Son, his own perfect human self-expression.

Out of the many points here which could be developed further, Paul highlights two. First (2:6-23), Jesus has taken the role assigned by Judaism to 'Wisdom' and the law. No Christian should think to consolidate his or her freedom from the spiritual tyrannies of the world by taking on the 'extra' protection of the Jewish law. Monotheism, election, Torah, the three pillars of Judaism, have all been redefined in and through Jesus Christ. Possessing him—better, being possessed by him—the Christian is already 'complete' (2:10, av). Second (3:5-4:6), the new life in Christ is nothing less than the beginning of the new creation. And, if new creation, new humanity. Christians already share in the new age which began on Easter Day. This is worked out in terms of practical holiness, which does not thwart or cramp full humanity, but facilitates and enhances it.

If we wished to apply what Paul has here given us to further questions relating to the last quarter of the twentieth century, we might do so in a variety of ways, recognizing that such matters are not questions simply of exegesis, but of possible applications of exegesis. Thus, for instance, monotheism, often taken for granted, is once again a live issue. To assert today that the one Creator God has revealed himself fully and finally in Jesus Christ is to risk criticism on the grounds of arrogance or intolerance. The mission of the church, however, does not commit Christians to the proposition that there is no truth to be found in other religions. Colossians 1:16 implies that all philosophies or religions which have some 'fit' with the created world will thereby reflect in some ways the truth of God. It does not, however, imply that they are therefore, as they stand, doorways into the new creation. That place, according to 1:18, is Christ's alone.

A further application concerns the church's task in the world. There is no sphere of existence over which Jesus is not sovereign, in virtue of his role both in creation (1:16-17) and in reconciliation (1:18-20). There can be no dualistic division between some areas which he rules and others which he does not. 'There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.' The task of evangelism is therefore best understood as the proclamation that Jesus is already Lord, that in him God's new creation has broken into history, and that all people are therefore summoned to submit to him in love, worship and obedience. The logic of this message requires that those who announce it should be seeking to bring Christ's Lordship to bear on every area of human and worldly existence. Christians must work to help create conditions in which human beings, and the whole created world, can live as God always intended. There is a whole range of ethical norms which God built into his world: respect for persons and property, maintenance of family life and of the ecological order of creation, justice between individuals and groups. Christians must be in the forefront of those working to promote such causes. Many opportunities to speak about Jesus will occur in the undertaking of such work, as it becomes clear that the gospel provides a coherent and satisfying underpinning for those standards which uphold and enhance a truly human life.

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The basic target of Paul's polemic, the main thing that the gospel was bound to attack, was idolatry. Anything put in the place of the one God of all the earth becomes an idol, be it never so useful, beautiful or sacred. Even the God-given Torah could become an idol: how much more the man-made political and economic systems of Paul's world or ours. To apply the gospel to the idolatry of our modern world will take more prayer, discernment, humility and wisdom than it is usually given. Not to apply it in this way is implicitly to deny it.

Colossians 1:15–20 gives the church not merely an exalted view of Jesus, and hence of humanity, but of God and his world. God, man and the world are each now to be understood in relation to Jesus Christ. He makes the invisible God visible; he fulfils the Father's reconciling purpose on the cross; he is the Father's agent in creation and redemption. He is the truly human being, the true Image of God. He is Lord of old and new creation, being in himself the beginning of the latter, the first created being to attain the state of perfection which will one day be shared by 'all things in heaven and on earth'. It is this Lord that the Colossians have come to worship, his 'image' that they will one day fully share (3:10). This is the fact to which Paul now turns, applying the poem to the young church he is addressing.²

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIVAC
Douglas Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, Pillar NT Commentary
David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT
Robert Bratcher and Eugene Nida, *A Handbook of Paul's Letter to the Colossians*, UBSH
Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, IVP New Testament Commentary
Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Application Commentary
James D. G. Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIGTC
Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians and Philemon*, The Bible Speaks Today
Clinton Arnold, *Colossians*, Word Biblical Commentary

² N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 74–85.