



Colossians and Ephesians (Sacra Pagina Series)

Margaret Y. MacDonald

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No two works in the Pauline Epistles resemble each other as closely as Colossians and Ephesians. Often recognized for their majestic tone and powerful theological statement, Colossians and Ephesians also present many challenges of interpretation. Most commentaries on these letters seem preoccupied with the same few issues, particularly the question of authorship. As MacDonald addresses these classic questions, she offers a fresh perspective on Colossians and Ephesians by making use of insights from the social sciences. Moreover, by paying attention to subtle differences between the two letters, she brings their distinct perspectives into sharp relief.

MacDonald highlights the interplay between Colossians and Ephesians and the social life of New Testament communities. She illustrates how the texts reflect ancient cultural values and are influenced by particular aspects of community life such as worship and household existence. In particular, she reflects on the issues faced by these communities as they formed institutions and interacted with the society around them. She shows the struggles of the New Testament communities to survive and maintain a distinct identity in first-century society.

Chapters under *Colossians* are Greeting (1:1-2)," "Thanksgiving for the Colossians (1:3-8)," "Prayer on Behalf of the Colossians (1:9-14)," "The Christ-Hymn (1:15-20)," "Application of Hymn to the Situation in Colossae (1:21-23)," "Paul's Authority in Colossae and Laodicea (1:24-2:7)," "Debate with the Opponents: The Power of the Risen Christ (2:8-15)," "Debate with the Opponents: Warnings Against Ascetic Practices (2:16-23)," "New Life in Light of the Resurrection (3:1-4)," "Ethical Guidelines for a New Life (3:5-17)," "The Households of Believers(3:18-4:1)," "Prayer, Mission, and Contact with Outsiders (4:2-6)," "Conclusion: Personal Notes and Greetings (4:7-18)."

Chapters under *Ephesians* are "Greeting (1:1-2)," "Blessing (1:3-14)," "Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:15-23)," "The Consequences of Life Together with Christ (2:1-10)," "The Unity of Jews and Gentiles Created by Christ (2:11-22)," "The Apostle as Interpreter of the Divine Mystery (3:1-13)," "Prayer and Doxology (3:14-21)," "The Unity of the Spirit (4:1-16)," "The Sons of Disobedience and the Children of Light (4:17-5:20)," "The Households of Believers (5:21-6:9)," "Doing Battle with Evil (6:10-20)," "Conclusion: Personal Matters and Final Blessing (6:21-24)."

Margaret Y. MacDonald is a professor in the department of religious studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia.

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