

# *In Spite of*

Josh Spoelstra | 26 Nov 2023

# Giving Thanks in Colossians

- May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully **giving thanks** to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints (1:11-12)
- As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in **thanksgiving**. (2:6-7)
- And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him. (3:17)
- Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with **thanksgiving**. (4:2)

# Dead old self | Renewing new self

## Disrobing

But now you must **get rid** of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have **stripped off** the old self with its practices

(Colossians 3:8-9 NRSV)


## Robing

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **clothe yourselves** with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ...Above all, **clothe yourselves** with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

(Colossians 3:12-14 NRSV)

Article

## The Racial Significance of Paul's Clothing Metaphor (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10)

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**Abstract:** This essay proposes a new interpretation of the Pauline expression to “clothe” (ἐνδύω) oneself in Christ (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). The phrase has been understood in terms of putting on virtues and godly characteristics. Other understandings of this phrase appear in terms of a new identity (Gal 3:27). There has been relatively limited study, however, on the significance of clothing and how different racial groups were known and characterized by their dress. Clothing was not just something that one “puts on” to protect the body from the elements or analogously understood in terms of adopting virtues. Clothing was a racial signifier, and the putting on or taking off of clothing signaled a racial transformation. The ability to “put on clothes” would have been understood in terms of the malleable nature of racial identity. By drawing on the insights of Herodotus, Aeschylus, Plutarch, and other Greek and Roman writers, this reading proposes a racial interpretation of Paul’s “clothing” phrases in Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:24, and Colossians 3:10. This essay explores the interpretation of these Pauline passages in contemporary scholarship, describes how the changing of clothing also signified a change of racial identity, and lastly, demonstrates how these insights can impact our understanding of the Pauline expression to “clothe oneself in Christ”.

**Keywords:** race; clothing; putting on christ; jesus; racial malleability; alexander the great; marc antony; barbarian



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### 1. Introduction

What does it mean to clothe (ἐνδύω) oneself in Christ? The term ἐνδύω has close association with literal clothing articles (χιτών [garment], ἐσθής [clothing], στολή [robe], ὄπλον [weapons], and θώραξ [breastplate]) in Greek Literature (Homer *Il.* 2.42; 5.736; 10.21; Herodotus 1.24, 172; 2.42; 3.98; 7.218; Euripides *Bacc.* 853; Hippocrates *Insomm.* 91; Menander, 432; Sophocles *Trach.* 759) and metaphorically appears in several of Paul's letters (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). One can primarily understand these phrases—“put on Christ”, “put on a new nature”, or “put on a new humanity”—in terms of clothing one's life with the virtues or identity that reflect Christ's identity or nature. John Chrysostom, in fact, made the connection between living a morally virtuous life with the metaphor of clothing oneself in Christ. In his homily on Romans, Chrysostom states:

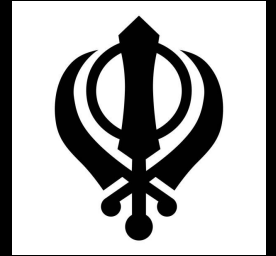
He gives us the Lord himself for a garment, the king himself: for he that is clad with him, has absolutely all virtue. But in saying, ‘put on’, he bids us [to be covered] about with him upon every side. As in another place he says, ‘but if Christ be in you’. And again, ‘that Christ may dwell in the inner man’. For he would have our soul to be a dwelling for himself, and himself to be laid round about us as a garment, that he may be unto us all things both from within and from without. (*Hom. rom.* 24.1–3)

Chrysostom understands the analogous relationship between clothing the body and being united with the Christ, who is “absolutely all virtue.” He likens the “putting on” of Christ to a virtuous identity that believers adorn in their inner and outer life. These

# Racial Significance of clothing



# Sikhism



## Vices

1. Lust
2. Anger
3. Greed
4. Materialism
5. Pride

## Virtues

1. Truth
2. Compassion
3. Contentment
4. Humility
5. Love

# Christianity

- The new self is a divine transformation by faith, and the “new clothing” is the character(istics) of Christ.
- Moreover, it is God who clothes the person of faith—just as the Father clothed the prodigal son.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (3:15a)  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (3:16a)

From the Heart: Jesus

- **what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart...** (Matthew 15:18 NRSV)
  - **Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.** (Proverbs 4:23 NRSV; cf. John 7:38)

From the Heart: Paul

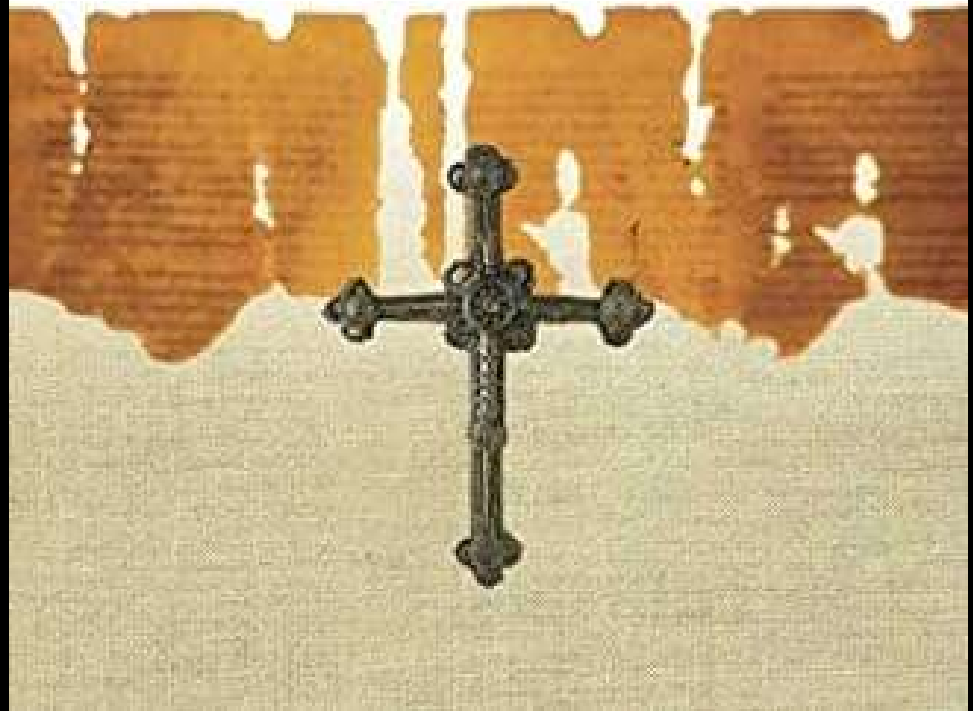
And **be thankful**. ...with **gratitude** in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And ...do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15b,16c-17 NRSV)



SMYTH & HELWYS BIBLE COMMENTARY

# COLOSSIANS

NIJAY K. GUPTA





# What does it look like?

- teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. (Col 3:16b-c)
- Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt... (Col 4:6a)



## ANCHOR HYMNS

# CHRIST BE ALL AROUND ME

VILLAGE LIGHTS

JASMINE MULLEN



FEATURED VOCALISTS

THE ANCHOR HYMNS CHOIR

SARAH KROGER RICKY VAZQUEZ JASMINE MULLEN



FEATURED PLAYERS

ANDREW OSENGA GARRETT TYLER

BRENT MILLIGAN DWAN HILL BRIAN EICHELBERGER

# Exhortation

**“you have stripped off the old self with its practices  
and have clothed yourselves with the new self,  
which is being renewed in knowledge according to  
the image of its creator.”**

(Colossians 3:9b-10 NRS)