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## Editors' Notes

Stuart Love  
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love  
dlove@pepperdine.edu

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## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

References to hymns, psalms, or songs in early Christian worship witnessed by the New Testament are abundant (Acts 2.47; 1 Cor 14.15, 26; Eph 5.19; Col 3.16; Jas 5.13). Perhaps their importance goes back to Jesus who sang a “hymn” with the Twelve at the conclusion of the Last Supper (Mark 14.26; Matt 26.30), just before they went out to the Mount of Olives. Certainly, personal devotion in the form of singing is documented in the example of Paul and Silas who at about midnight “were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them” in the jail at Philippi (Acts 16.25).

Fragments of early Christian hymns are probably cited in several passages: a baptismal hymn in Ephesians 5.14, a creedal-like confession in 1 Timothy 3.16. Further, a number of doxologies can be detected in 1 Timothy 6.15–16, and most notably in the book of Revelation (4.8, 11; 5.9, 12–13; 7.10, 12; 11.15; 19.1–2, 6–8). But in our consideration of hymns, we cannot overlook New Testament passages that probably were based on hymns such as the Prologue of John’s Gospel (1.1–18), the Christological summaries of Paul in Philippians 2.6–11 and Colossians 1.15–20, and the Old Testament texts found in Romans 9.33 and 1 Peter 2.6–7. Our earliest sisters and brothers used these valuable hymns and hymnic forms to proclaim the good news of Jesus and to teach the church about Christ.

And speaking of the Old Testament, was this not the reservoir for much of the hymnody of the early church? We immediately think of the Psalms and other expressions of religious poetry in the Old Testament that informed the stories of the births of John and Jesus in Luke 1–2—the *Gloria in Excelsis* (2.14), *Magnificat* (1.46–55), *Benedictus* (1.68–79), and *Nunc Dimittis* (2.29–32). The *Magnificat* echoes Hannah’s song over Samuel’s birth (1 Sam 2.1–10). In it God is praised for the salvation of the lowly and oppressed as various phrases recall psalms that celebrate God’s victories. Zechariah’s inspired prophecy (the *Benedictus*) answers his neighbors’ question, “What then will this child become?” (1.66). Angels provide heaven’s response to the birth of the baby Jesus—“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on peace among those whom he favors!” (2.14). Simeon borrows language from Isaiah 40–66 to place Jesus’ ministry within Isaiah’s vision of the restoration of Israel that included the Gentiles as well.

This issue of *Leaven* is a basket of varied and wonderful morsels. The central component is four articles presented at Pepperdine University’s 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Bible Lectures at the *Leaven* Symposium on biblical hymns. We begin with the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2.1–10). This great poem of thanksgiving underscores the theme of God’s initiated change of fortune, something that Hannah experienced. ANGELA AND MARK MANASSEE describe how the song of Hannah comes out of a context of barrenness. In their own words, Angela and Mark affirm that her “joyful doxology can only be fully appreciated and reclaimed for contemporary life after her situation of barrenness is fully appreciated.” Following Hannah’s song we turn to the connections and rich images of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1.46–55). KINDALEE PFREMMER DELONG shows how in her praise, “Mary envisions a bold reversal accomplished when God’s mighty arm throws down those who grasp at power (and in so doing oppress others) but lifts up the poor.” Turning to Paul and the Christ hymn of Philippians 2.6–11. ROBERT F. HULL JR. follows the words of Amos Wilder, “Before the message there must be the vision, before the sermon the hymn, before the prose the poem.” Hull states that there is

“something so foundational, so essential, so *effective*, about the vision, the hymn, the poem, that our lives would be impoverished without them, our messages trite, our sermons plodding, our prose powerless.” He then applies these notions to the Christ hymn. Finally, our journey of praise takes us to a variety of apocalyptic scenes of worship in heaven—the Seven Hymns found in Revelation 4, 5 and 7 that give honor to God’s worth (4.11; 7.10, 12, 15–17) as well as to the Lamb (5.9, 12). **MARK S. KRAUSE** sees these hymns as a part of the narrative or story of Revelation—“ . . . John is using them to help tell the story he wants to tell.”

The varied richness of this issue continues. **BETH BOWERS**, out of the personal experience of her own life, believes that as the church worships so she believes. In her own journey, it was a song that took her “to a place of worship, confession and brokenness” that otherwise might not have been possible. **EDWARD WILLIAM FUDGE** shows “how the early church could always be talking and thinking and preaching and studying about Jesus, with the Old Testament as its Bible. In Hebrews, the focus is clearly on Jesus. We *see* Jesus . . . We *consider* Jesus . . . we *fix our eyes on* Jesus, forming a permanent vision to sustain us for the rest of our pilgrim lives (Heb 12.2).” **DAVID PILLAR** explores the missional theology movement through insights of pastoral counseling and care—his field of expertise and love. The practices of the missional movement are many and varied. **MARK LOVE** in a devotional piece paints vividly a portrait of the shepherds and Mary. “Everyone gathered in the ‘church’ barn was amazed. Glad tidings, indeed!” Finally, **LEE MAGNESS OFFERS A READING COMPRISED OF BEAUTIFUL AND POWERFUL POETIC PASSAGES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers. 2010 will include an issue on *Sons of the Prophets* edited by Jerry Taylor, and an issue on the *International Churches of Christ* edited by John Wilson and written by members of this most recent wing of the Stone-Campbell Restoration heritage. We are also working on three issues that will feature the Synoptic Gospels—Mark, Matthew and Luke.

