

1-1-2011

## Editors' Notes

Stuart Love  
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love  
dlove@pepperdine.edu

Mark C. Black

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Love, Stuart; Love, D'Esta; and Black, Mark C. (2011) "Editors' Notes," *Leaven*: Vol. 19: Iss. 2, Article 2.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol19/iss2/2>

This Editor's Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu](mailto:bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu).



## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

Three of our issues this year are devoted to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). We opened with the Gospel of Mark based on the notion that it is the earliest of our gospel writings, and we now continue our journey by studying the gospel that traditionally is placed first in the New Testament canon and, accordingly, is referred to as “the First Gospel,” The Gospel According to Matthew. As you read you will discover how helpful this writing is for a church in transition. As John P. Meier affirms, the First Gospel has as its setting in life the “crisis of a church in transition, seeking to preserve what is viable in its Jewish past as it moves into the uncharted waters of a predominantly gentile future in the Greco-Roman world.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the church behind this writing is a community of believers in a state of spiritual formation.

Our guest editor is Mark Black, Director of the Hazelip School of Theology at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Black has a long-standing interest in the Synoptic Gospels and in particular The Gospel According to Matthew. He received his ThM degree from Princeton and his PhD from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Black thus brings not only excellent academic credentials to this task, but beyond such a basic qualification, he is a “churchman,” having served as a minister for churches in Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee as well as in his present role of training preachers for contemporary church ministry. Page after page of this issue will provide evidence of his skill in selecting writers and formulating topics and themes to unfold a number of contours quite distinctive to this beloved writing. On nearly every page you will discover afresh how the First Gospel is written to train disciples and teachers for the expansion of the kingdom of heaven.

Before Dr. Black introduces the issue we are saddened to announce the loss of a beloved member of the editorial board, Charles E. Cook. We grieve his loss for so many reasons: we were blessed in having him as a guest in our home; we learned how much his devotion to Christ was exemplified by the way he lived—truly he was a Christian gentleman. As a member of our editorial board, Charles E. Cook graciously advanced the cause of Christian unity. His way was devoted single-mindedly to the cause of Christ among Christians of the Stone-Campbell tradition. Shortly before his passing he indicated his desire to no longer serve as one our board members because of his physical limitations. We felt differently, and asked his permission that he remain listed as a member of our editorial board even though he could no longer actively serve. We count him as one of our great friends. We hope for the day that we can see him again in heaven. His work of faith and labor of love follow him. His steadfast hope urges all of us to serve Christ. His life was a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5.2). We extend our love and God’s consolation to his family.

1. John P. Meier, “Matthew, Gospel of,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 4 (K–N), David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief (New York, et al.: Doubleday, 1992), 625.

## Guest Editor's Introduction

MARK C. BLACK

**M**atthew is best known for the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps the most life-changing words ever uttered. *Leaven* devoted an issue to the Sermon in late 2008. But Matthew's Gospel has many other passages and themes that underscore its uniqueness. For example, Matthew includes almost a dozen unique (and often surprising) quotations of the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Jesus. Additionally, many of the narratives about Jesus bring to mind the great narratives of Israel's past. For example, Matthew's stories about the birth and infancy of Jesus are clearly written to echo the stories about Moses and Pharaoh in Exodus. Matthew's interest in the Old Testament and Judaism also leads him to include Jesus' words about the law of Moses and many other Jewish traditions, written and oral. Not surprisingly, Matthew even employs typical first-century Jewish interpretive techniques.

Because of its extreme Jewishness, most scholars are convinced that Matthew wrote his Gospel for Jewish Christians. In other words, Matthew wrote for Jews who had become followers of Jesus the Messiah. Their questions were many: How could a crucified teacher from Nazareth be the Messiah? Do the followers of Jesus keep the law? If so, in what sense? And just what sort of kingdom did this Messiah create?

This issue of *Leaven* deals primarily with questions such as these, questions that arise out of Matthew's essential Jewish point of view. First, **Larry Chouinard** reminds us of the stunning picture of the kingdom that Jesus brings into existence. Inviting us to imagine the community envisioned in Matthew's Gospel, he calls on us to enter into a reality that is often counterintuitive and countercultural.

**Heather Gorman** writes about one of Matthew's repeated themes coming from his Jewish background, the forgiveness to be experienced in the kingdom. Of course, Jesus expands the normal bounds of forgiveness and reconciliation. Demanding that his followers forgive an amazing "seventy-seven times," Matthew at the same time insists that only those who forgive can receive such potent mercy.

**Linda King's** article helps us understand and enjoy Jesus' arguments that may sound strange to our modern ears. Even though his viewpoint was most often the opposite of his critics, he nonetheless used the Jewish exegetical methods of his day.

**Nathan Bills** writes about Jesus' familiar invitation for the weary to accept his yoke and find rest (Matt 11.28–30). Nathan helps today's readers to hear the multi-layered traditions that the first-century readers would have heard, most notably Jesus' call for his followers to enjoy the Sabbath rest of the new creation.

**Lee Blackburn** gives us a glimpse beyond the New Testament period into the very real application of Jesus' words on forgiveness. Looking at the teachings of Tertullian and Cyprian reminds the reader just how costly and difficult Jesus' teachings on forgiveness really are.

**Kindy de Long** takes on the perennially difficult "binding and loosing" passages in Matthew. She argues for a "dynamic process for ongoing, relationship-based moral discernment that enables and challenges the church not only to consider new situations in our ethical decision making but also to reflect deeply how we live out these decisions in the real world."

Finally, **Jeff Peterson** looks at the whole of Matthew by examining the Gospel's last paragraph. Reminding the reader of the higher righteousness demanded by Matthew's Jesus, Jeff assures us that Jesus does not leave us to our own devices in order to reach that goal.

