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## Editors' Notes

Stuart Love  
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love  
dlove@pepperdine.edu

Ira J. Jolivet Jr.  
Ira.Jolivet@pepperdine.edu

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## Editors' Notes

D'Esta Love and Stuart Love

The Epistle to the Hebrews may be one of the most important but neglected writings of the New Testament, at least among contemporary American churches. At the University Church of Christ in Malibu, California, where your editors attend, memory fails us as to the last time an adult Bible class or sermon was devoted to its contents. And yet, the writing was significant to Alexander Campbell as he affirmed that Christians do not live under the covenant of Moses. Perhaps we are not drawn to its contents because of its stress on comparing Christ as high priest to the priests of the Levitical system, or to consider Melchizedek as a type of Christ, or to contemplate that God's promise is immutable, or to compare the sacrificial system of ancient Israel to the sacrifice of Christ. And yet, the sophisticated argumentation involved in these and other themes did as much as anything to establish early Christianity as a distinct religion from Judaism in the first century. Further, the writing at a practical level addresses the danger of apostasy (totally rejecting and falling away from Christ). This danger is related primarily to a growing indifference to the audience's Christian calling (2.1; 4.14; 6.1–12; 10.23–32). Thus the principal theme of the book of Hebrews, the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ (chapters 3–10), is not developed for its own sake but as a means of restoring the recipients' lost fervor and strengthening them in their faith. At any rate, the author of this magisterial treatise possessed a masterly command of the Greek language—to the extent that some would identify him along with Luke as the most “cultured” of early Christian writers.

Your editors were pleased that **IRA JOLIVET, JR.**, a New Testament professor at Pepperdine University, consented to serve as the guest editor of the issue. His work was impeded by a series of life-threatening circumstances. We are grateful to God that, after a long delay in recovery, Dr. Jolivet has returned to his teaching duties. Like Paul's relationship with Epaphroditus (Phil 2.25–30) we are grateful that our brother, coworker, fellow soldier and minister stands beside us once more in the furtherance of the gospel. Together, we have assembled the articles of this issue. We are also grateful for the writers who wrote at a much earlier time, and perhaps wondered if their efforts would ever be printed.

Let us now introduce the articles of our issue; most of the pieces feature the topic of worship. We open with an article by **CLIFF BARBARICK**, who masterfully introduces the theme of worship in Hebrews. Barbarick clearly sets forth his objective, “Hebrews not only speaks about worship and describes the Father and Son whom we worship. It is itself an element of an ancient Christian worship service, and I want to read the document in this light. How did this document function in its original worship setting, and how can that inform what we do in our contemporary worship settings? More specifically, how does the cloud of witnesses, the list of examples in Hebrews 11.1–12.3, function in the sermon, and what does that call us to do in our times of worship?” **IRA JOLIVET, JR.** affirms that “a major line of reasoning in the overall argument of Hebrews involves the contrast between acceptable and unacceptable worship, a conclusion that is supported by the author's proclamation that ‘There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God’ (Heb 7.17–18).” Jolivet maintains that the community of believers may now approach God through a “better hope” and these are “implicit indications that, whereas God rejected worship under the first covenant, he now accepts the worship of his new covenant people.” **NORMAN HUGHES**, a biologist by training, explores Hebrews 1.2–3. Hughes believes that this “intriguing passage makes

two profound assertions. First of all, it asserts that God is the origin of the universe; and secondly, it asserts that he continues his participation in the creation as its sustainer. It also raises a number of questions, especially since God's presence in the natural world may not seem obvious." **JENNINGS DAVIS** admirably shows in personal terms how "the message from God is to be received." Davis states, we "'go to church,' we read and study the Bible and we listen to sermons all to be influenced by God's presence and by his message. Our salvation and our daily life are directly tied to our reception of the teaching and message from God... Worshipping God is a sacred trust and a rarified blessing. We are encouraged to make it an essential part of our spiritual life and to assemble with our sisters and brothers to praise God and receive his message." **STUART L. LOVE** creates an outline of our "word of exhortation" (Heb 13.22) and allows it to guide us in a brief exposition of the writing in its entirety. In doing so he hopes that a "bird's-eye" perspective will benefit *Leaven* readers. His effort is as a non-specialist to this rich, ancient biblical sermon. His hope is that such an effort can be useful because it "possibly demonstrates how all of us who teach and preach the word of God can engage in a profitable study exercise without being experts." At this point, our articles devoted to the Letter to the Hebrews end with a Lord's Supper meditation by **CHRISTOPHER CHESNUTT**.

Turning to other topics, **JOSHUA LOVE** helps us re-imagine participation in the kingdom of God. He calls us to receive the work of God and drink deeply of the Spirit as we, guided and sustained by The Lord's Prayer, move boldly into the world in the name of Jesus. **RANDY HARRIS** provides a brief introduction to the article and the Allelon community which ministers to the poorest in Abilene, Texas. To round out the issue we are pleased to include an excellent sermon by **JEFF MILLER** entitled "Women Count," originally delivered to the opening chapels of Emmanuel School of Religion and Milligan College. Using the story of the Syrophoenician woman in Mark 7, Miller sets forth "how a disciple of Jesus should view and treat women." We believe you will find his sermon to be biblically centered and challenging. It has a message for today. Finally, **BRANDON TSARK** writes a book review on Francis Collins' work, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*.

Great plans are in store for the issues of 2012. We open with *The Gospel of Luke*, edited by **KINDY PHREMMER DE LONG**. It is followed with an issue on 1 Peter, edited by **CLIFF BARBARICK**. The third issue is a bit different. It involves telling the stories of women's inclusion in the life, worship and work of six churches of the *a cappella* tradition. It is guest edited by Kathy Pulley. The final issue features the Pepperdine University Lectures on Romans 5–8, edited by **D'ESTA LOVE** and **STUART LOVE**.

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers. This next year 2012 marks our twentieth year of publication.

