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## Editors' Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

The theme of the Pepperdine University Lectures for 2006, held May 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, was 1 John. This relatively short writing, probably a religious tract or sermon and not a letter or an epistle, was written in opposition to a movement or group that broke fellowship with the church's beliefs about Jesus (2.24). In other words, 1 John addresses a congregation that has suffered a division among its members, perhaps the first documented division in the early church. The opponents, those who held "deceitful" ideas about Jesus Christ, have actually left (2.19). We don't know if the "separatists" went out voluntarily, but their leaving has prompted the author to pastorally reassure those who remain that they are the faithful ones and that those who left are in error (2.19).

Many thoughts cross our minds as we contemplate this short writing. We will mention only two. First, the Stone-Campbell religious heritage has certainly experienced religious division. Among our wing of the Stone-Campbell heritage, there have been divisions over instrumental music, missionary societies, premillennialism, Sunday schools, one cup or multiple cups, kitchens in the building, and the list could grow. It is interesting that none of these divisions, however, was over the identity of Jesus Christ—such a vital matter that actually shapes the core of what it means to be Christian, the nature of our fellowship with God and one another, the basis of our ethical standards, and the ground for our hope in Christ. In contrast, what the "separatists" believed about Jesus in 1 John actually shaped their views of genuine love (2.9-11) and bolstered their claim to be free of sin (3.4-7). Truly, the issues of 1 John over the identity of Jesus Christ make a difference and drive us to consider whether we are Christian.

Second, our thoughts go back to when we studied "baby" Greek. Our first readings in the New Testament were not from Acts or the book of Hebrews. They were from 1 John. The vocabulary was simple, the grammar was quite uncomplicated—and yet the ideas were profound. Here we came to grips with the word of life, fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We learned that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. We learned also the meaning of Jesus' blood as an atoning sacrifice, the pre-eminence of the commandment of love, something of what it means not to love the world, and to guard our lives against false messiahs. We also learned that we are children of God, and as his children we are to love one another and abide in God. We were warned to test the spirits, that is, people who claimed to speak under the influence of God's Spirit. Perhaps, more than anything else we learned that God is love, that he has given us his Spirit, and that it is our faith that conquers the world. Finally, the closing verse of the writing struck home, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (5.21).

We commend this issue and its capable writers to our readers. It begins with an overview of 1 John by **THOMAS H. OLBRIGHT**, the official expositor of 1 John for the Pepperdine University Lectures. Dr. Olbright introduces the writing simply and beautifully. **JOHN YORK** addresses the issue of why the church struggles to keep the love commandment—it is in our failure to grasp sufficiently John's relational understanding of God and Christ and the followers of Christ who share in a relational "abiding" through the Holy Spirit (3.23-24). **D'ESTA LOVE** explores what it means not to love the world in light of both 1 John and the Gospel of John. All of us as Christians somehow struggle with this issue. Love also shows that those who have gone out from the church in 1 John belong to the world. **JAN HAILEY** uses 1 John to explain who Jesus is

and what God is like to a lost world. **BRUCE E. SHIELDS** identifies the rupture that faced the church in 1 John and then draws insights for the importance of doctrinal issues for the unity of today's church and its ministry. **RONALD L. TYLER** draws upon years of reading and reflection to provide a reading resource guide. Tyler believes the "joy of study comes to one who spends the time and effort to discover what is in 1 John." Two of our articles provide variety to the major theme of 1 John. **RAYMOND CARR** reflects theologically on our being confronted by God's presence through his holiness and transcendence as found in Psalm 8. In contrast to "religion" which emphasizes the human pursuit of God, Carr uses the Psalm to demonstrate how the biblical text is concerned with God's pursuit of humanity. **IRA J. JOLIVET, JR.** observes three attributes of God tied to his transcendence: his *holiness*, his *otherness*, and his *freedom*. As churches of the Restoration Movement we have had "little if any problem with discussing God's holiness." We have had difficulty with the "technical theological language such as transcendence or otherness" and we have had also struggled to give due emphasis to God's freedom. **LEE MAGNESS** once more gives us an outstanding liturgical reading based on 1 John.

Our final issue of the year deals with the future of the Restoration plea and will be edited by David Fleer.

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers.

**D'ESTA AND STUART LOVE**

