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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

Stuart and D'Esta Love

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
—Proverbs 1:7

But where shall wisdom be found?
—Job 28:12

*The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness.
Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them.*
—Ecclesiastes 2:14

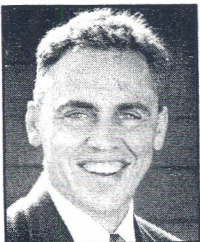
*But the wisdom from above is first pure,
then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield,
full of mercy and good fruits,
without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.*
—James 3:17

*He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue,
so that they were astounded and said,
"Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?"*
—Matthew 13:54

*But we proclaim Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called,
... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
—1 Corinthians 1:23–24

This issue of *Leaven* is devoted to the biblical theme of wisdom, and from just the few quotations cited above, it is evident that biblical wisdom traverses the pages of scripture and is diverse in its meaning and emphasis. Perhaps too often, we have limited the concern of wisdom to daily experience and how to cope with it as expressed in short sayings or aphorisms (two or, at times, three lines in parallelism). This is biblical wisdom, and we need help in understanding proper speech and conduct, as well as the connection between wisdom/prosperity and folly/destruction. But biblical wisdom also pursues the possibility of disinterested righteousness (Job) and the limits and contradictions of life (Ecclesiastes, Psalm 90). Biblical wisdom also understands the difference between human wisdom and the wisdom that is given by God (James). Ultimately, biblical wisdom finds its meaning not in schools or writings but in the person of Jesus Christ our crucified Lord and Savior, the power and wisdom of God (Matthew, 1 Corinthians).

We are grateful for the work of David Fleer, the guest editor of this issue. Since 1995 David has served as professor of religion and communication at Rochester College. Your editors remember David as a graduate student at ACU. We have observed his growth and career for over



twenty years, including his ministry of preaching in churches in the Pacific Northwest, especially Vancouver, Washington (1981–91). His interest in preaching guided his graduate education, culminating in a Ph.D. in speech communication at the University of Washington, 1995. We have observed over time a godly family: David, his wife, Debbie, and their three sons, Josh, Luke, and Nate. Professionally, David is hitting his stride, as evidenced by his teaching; his publications in *Theology Today*, *Journal of Communication and Religion*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, and *Restoration Quarterly*; and the keynote addresses he has made at the Pepperdine Bible Lectures, the Abilene Christian University Lectureship, and the Sunset International Bible Institute. We are thrilled to have him as a member of the Editorial Board of *Leaven*. He has written for *Leaven* before; now, David brings together his experience and his training in preaching to edit this issue on biblical wisdom and ministry.

STUART AND D'ESTA LOVE

Editor's Introduction

One of the great hallmarks of the Restoration movement has been our “back to the Bible” plea. Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone began a legacy that called men and women away from human ingenuity and back to a common ground of scripture. It was a noble plea that attracted followers from all kinds of Christian traditions. In recent years, however, we have discovered that our plea for *sola scriptura* was born in a particular worldview and has been infused with our own peculiar brand of traditions.

Today, churches of the Restoration heritage are at an apparent impasse. Before us we see the wildly popular evangelical branch of Christianity with its emphases on successful outreach and need-meeting sermons and worship. Behind us remains the dry, graceless traditional preaching of yesteryear. The latter perspective is unacceptable to thinking and feeling Christians. The former view is saturated with the individualism and materialism of middle-class American culture. The current issue of *Leaven* is an effort to shed light on an alternative option, one quite in line with our heritage. In this volume, we acknowledge that scripture contains a variety of literary types, with each genre demanding a skillful reading to enable understanding and sensitive application in preaching and teaching. Our focus here is on wisdom literature and its numerous nuances.

Many of our contributors participated in Rochester College's 1998 Sermon Seminar on Wisdom Literature. The following essays and reviews have grown out of the presentations made during that conference.

In the opening autobiographical essay, I argue for a kind of preaching that can be decidedly practical when the preacher stays long with the biblical text. **MARKUS H. McDOWELL** expands on this thesis with a fine overview of biblical studies that underscores his “hermeneutics of faith.”

Beginning with **DAVE BLAND**'s essay, we explore the various features of wisdom literature within specific biblical texts. Providing a model for preaching, teaching, and personal study, Bland demonstrates exegetical skill in working with the traditional wisdom found in Proverbs. **JOHN MARK HICKS** looks to Job for understanding when traditional wisdom does not work out. Hicks walks with Job academically and existentially, through careful exegesis and heart-tugging experience. **JACK REESE** writes from a time of crisis in his ministry. What does wisdom say? Reese suggests two fundamental theologies—one of which addresses his struggle with unfairness in life. He finds solace in the honest expressions of Ecclesiastes. **MARK FROST**'s well-crafted essay is framed with a story of wisdom taught, misapplied, and finally realized. Frost searches through the ministry of Jesus to find applications of a variety of genres of Old Testament wisdom. The fresh writing style of **GARY HOLLOWAY** provides a helpful introduction to reading the wisdom of James. **CURTIS McCLANE** and **ALYCE McKENZIE** round out our essays. McClane's devotional consideration of Job and McKenzie's survey of some fine resources will service the reader at different levels.

Through the lens of one type of literature—wisdom—we hope this issue of *Leaven* will encourage readers to act on the conviction that our deepest needs can be addressed through the literature of the Bible.

DAVID FLEER