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Editors' Notes

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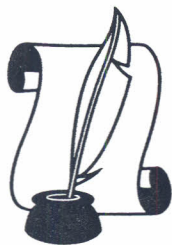


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Stuart and D'Esta Love

One of the primary emphases of the Gospel of Luke is the economic dimension of the gospel. The motif begins in Mary's Magnificat (1:51–53); is stressed in the preaching of John the Baptist (3:10–14); appears again in the Sermon on the Plain (6:34–36); is featured in two banquet settings (11:41; 14:12–14); and finds its climax in the story of Zacchaeus (“I give half of my possessions to the poor,” 19:8 NIV). Only Matthew and Luke declare, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58 NRSV), and only Luke reminds us that Jesus said, “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (14:33 RSV). Such a theme and such statements by Jesus seem more difficult to accept when churches and Christians become increasingly affluent.

Each year one issue of *Leaven* is tied to the Pepperdine Lectures, which this year was entitled “Another King, Another Kingdom: Great Themes from the Gospel of Luke.” As one might expect, a number of sermons and classes centered on the topic of poverty and possessions. This was true as well for the Leaven Symposium, which featured aspects of the birth narrative in Luke's Gospel. So pervasive was this theme throughout the lecture series that we decided to give this issue of *Leaven* the title *Poverty and Possessions*.

We open with a sermon by **JACK REESE** entitled “Tearing Down and Building Bigger: Against-the-Grain Economics.” As you read the sermon, you will be drawn into something of the powerful effect that it had for its original audience. When Reese finished, a prolonged silence was followed by a standing ovation. The speaker confessed that he is “a person who is rich, speaking to a people of wealth.” Reese's sermon is followed by four papers that were presented at the Leaven Symposium. **VICTOR KNOWLES** writes about promise and fulfillment, one of the great themes in the birth narrative that is carried forward throughout Luke and Acts. Knowles reminds us that this theme is vital to God's people of faith throughout the Bible. **BILLIE SILVEY** declares that throughout Scripture God always does the unexpected, especially in the care of the poor. Beginning with Mary's song, she examines several reversals in the birth narrative, traces the theme briefly in the Old Testament, and applies it to the church that Silvey serves in Los Angeles, California. **D'ESTA LOVE** writes about Mary the mother of Jesus as a model for ministry. Mary's model is a portrait of a powerless person favored by a mighty God. Mary “readily believed what was spoken to her by the angel, fully embraced the scandal of faith, and submitted her will to the will of God.” **KELLY CARTER** closes the symposium articles with a change of pace. Carter believes that in the future the results of biblical criticism are going to be better understood and, to some extent, accepted by ministers and churches of the Stone-Campbell

tradition. How does a devoted believer of God's Word engage in ministry in an age of biblical criticism? As Carter develops his answer, using Luke's birth narrative as his example, we are impressed by his faith and devotion to truth.

Two articles continue the theme of poverty and possessions. **TIM KELLEY** asks, "Renounce my possessions? What does Luke 14:33 mean?" In a thorough, balanced, and sensitive study, Kelley leads us more deeply into the theme of discipleship as it proceeds from the words of Jesus, "So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions" (14:32 NRSV). **STUART L. LOVE** explores the larger Lukan context of the healing of the man with dropsy (14:1–6). Love affirms that in Luke's social world, dropsy was not only a physical illness, but, according to the moralists of the time, it was also a metaphor for craven desire—an insatiable greed for money and possessions, as well as gluttony at banquets. So who is ill in Luke's healing story? It isn't the man with dropsy! Jesus sends him away healed. But what about the Pharisees and lawyers at the banquet? Are they spiritually sick like the rich man in the parable of the rich fool (12:13–21)? Are they like the Pharisees, lovers of money (16:14)?

A variety of other articles authored by **JAMES THOMPSON**, **MORRIS YATES**, **LEE MAGNESS**, **MIKE CASEY**, and **RICK KRUG**, **SCOTT LAMBERT**, **JON K. REED**, and **ANDREW B. WALL** round out this issue. Thompson explores Paul's notion of freedom in Galatians and its implications for Christian freedom today. Yates renders practical advice about the study of God's Word—simply stated, but filled with meaning. Magness writes an exquisite and powerful Christmas hymn that unites the cradle and the cross. We hope Christians and churches will use this piece during the Christmas season. Casey gives a Restoration biography of a famous preacher among Churches of Christ, G. C. Brewer. Four young ministers—Krug, Lambert, Reed, and Wall—share their example of planned fellowship and spiritual discipline as Christian men and ministers.

Now a few items of news. The *Lord's Supper* issue has been translated into Japanese, and 150 copies have been distributed among Japanese Christians of the Stone-Campbell heritage. Your editors recently attended the North American Christian Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Over 400 copies of *Leaven* were distributed, and over thirty new subscribers are now reading *Leaven*. We are happy to announce the addition of two Christian couples to our Advisory Board: Dan and Judy Anders of Tyler, Texas, and Paul and Leanne Clark of Clifton Park, New York. Our next issue is entitled *Ministry in Small Churches*, and the guest editor is Don White of Lakeview, Oregon. Our issues for next year are making progress, including the following: *The Mission of the Church*, edited by Charles Taber; *Restoration Themes*, edited by Henry Webb; and *Adult Education in the Church*, edited by Eleanor Daniel.

Keep *Leaven* in your prayers! Do you know individuals who should be reading *Leaven*? Why not give them a Christmas gift subscription?!

D'ESTA AND STUART LOVE