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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

D'Esta Love, Stuart Love

Editors' Notes

Our first issue of Volume Four is on the Psalms, edited by Paul Watson, a member of our editorial board and preaching minister for the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina. Paul holds a Ph.D. in Old Testament studies from Yale University. His formal education and his extensive experience in Christian ministry equip him well for the task at hand. We thank Paul and all those who assisted him in writing articles and preparing the issue for publication! Other guest editors for Volume Four include Lynn Mitchell and Tommy King (Children and the Church) and Dean Smith and Fran Carver (Women in Ministry). The following is Paul Watson's editorial introduction to our issue.

Editor's Introduction

What is a psalm? . . . [Taken collectively], the Psalms are the poetry of the reign of the LORD. They are the praise and proclamation and prayer of those who believe that the confession "the LORD reigns" states the basic truth about the world and life lived in it.¹

Throughout the history of both synagogue and church, the Psalms have played a very prominent role. They stand at the head of the third major division of the Hebrew Bible, The Writings. The book of Psalms itself is entitled *Tehillim*/"Praises." Finally collected and compiled after the return from Exile, these one hundred-fifty compositions served as "the hymnbook of the second Temple."

The Psalms likewise served as a hymnbook for the early church: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. . . as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). They resound throughout the gospels, from Jesus' baptism: "You are my beloved Son" (Psalm 2:7), to his crucifixion: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1).

The Psalms continued to be crucial for the church's understanding and proclamation of "the LORD reigns" in and through Jesus Christ, from Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:34-35, from Psalm 110:1) to Paul's affirmation of the rule of the resurrected Christ until "the end" (1 Cor 15:24-28, from Psalm 8:6) to John's vision of the Lamb who will also "be their shepherd and will guide them to springs of living water" (Rev 7:17, from Psalm 23:1-2).

This issue of *Leaven* is meant to increase both our appreciation and our appropriation of the Psalms. In "What the Text Says" we have two articles which will enrich our comprehension of the Psalms. **Tim Willis** makes available the critical insights of contemporary scholarship on the origins, forms and purposes of the Psalms. **Rick Marrs** shows us how the Psalms are useful, not only for reflection and worship, but also for theological insight, for proclamation and evangelism and for ethics.

The central section of this issue—"Thinking About It"—contains many rich, diverse reflections on specific psalms and groups of psalms. **Tony Ash** challenges us to confront Psalm 88, "the saddest psalm of all." **Carol Shoun** invites us to join the faithful pilgrims who sing Psalm 84. From different directions, **Lori Glenn** and **Don Utley** lead us into the psalms of lament, psalms which help us give voice to our pain, our grief and our vulnerability. By focusing on the metaphors of strength and comfort in the Psalms, **Constance Fulmer** helps us to apprehend the "blessed assurance" of God's people. From her perspective as a counselor, **Elaine**

Denman shows us how the Psalms can stabilize us in times of emotional turbulence, specifically anger. Finally, **Carson Reed** speaks to the power of the Psalter in both the theology and the personal life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

A third section, “Devoting Our Hearts,” offers some examples of how the Psalms may be used in both our corporate worship and our daily reading of Scripture. **Markus McDowell** contributes an order of worship from a service built around Psalm 8. The **Stamford, CT Church of Christ** shares contemporary expressions of praise in the form of psalms composed by members of an adult Bible class. From the **Cole Mill Road** congregation in Durham, NC comes a choral presentation of selected psalms.

Our final section, “Features and Assorted Articles,” begins with **Andre Resner’s** resource-guide to the Psalms and **Amy Bost Henegar’s** review of a contemporary Jewish interpretation of the Psalms by Nahum Sarna.² **Gary Holloway** provides a biographical sketch of T. B. Larimore. Two communion meditations are written by **Stu Warford** and **John Free**.³

I wish to thank all of the writers whose generous efforts have made my work as editor so pleasant. Thanks also to **Stuart** and **D’Esta Love**, our general editors, for their persistent encouragement. And a special word of appreciation to two persons without whom this volume would not have come together: **Carol Shoun**, librarian for our congregation, for her gracious editorial assistance, and **Lori Eldred**, our church secretary, for her abundant technical support.

[Paul Watson]

Notes

¹James L. Mays, **Psalms** (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994) 30-31.

²Other book reviews include Luke Timothy Johnson, **The Real Jesus**, and William H. Willimon, **The Intrusive Word**, reviewed by **Christopher Roy Hutson** and **Mark Manassee**, respectively.

³A Thanksgiving service from Seaver College, Pepperdine University, concludes the section.