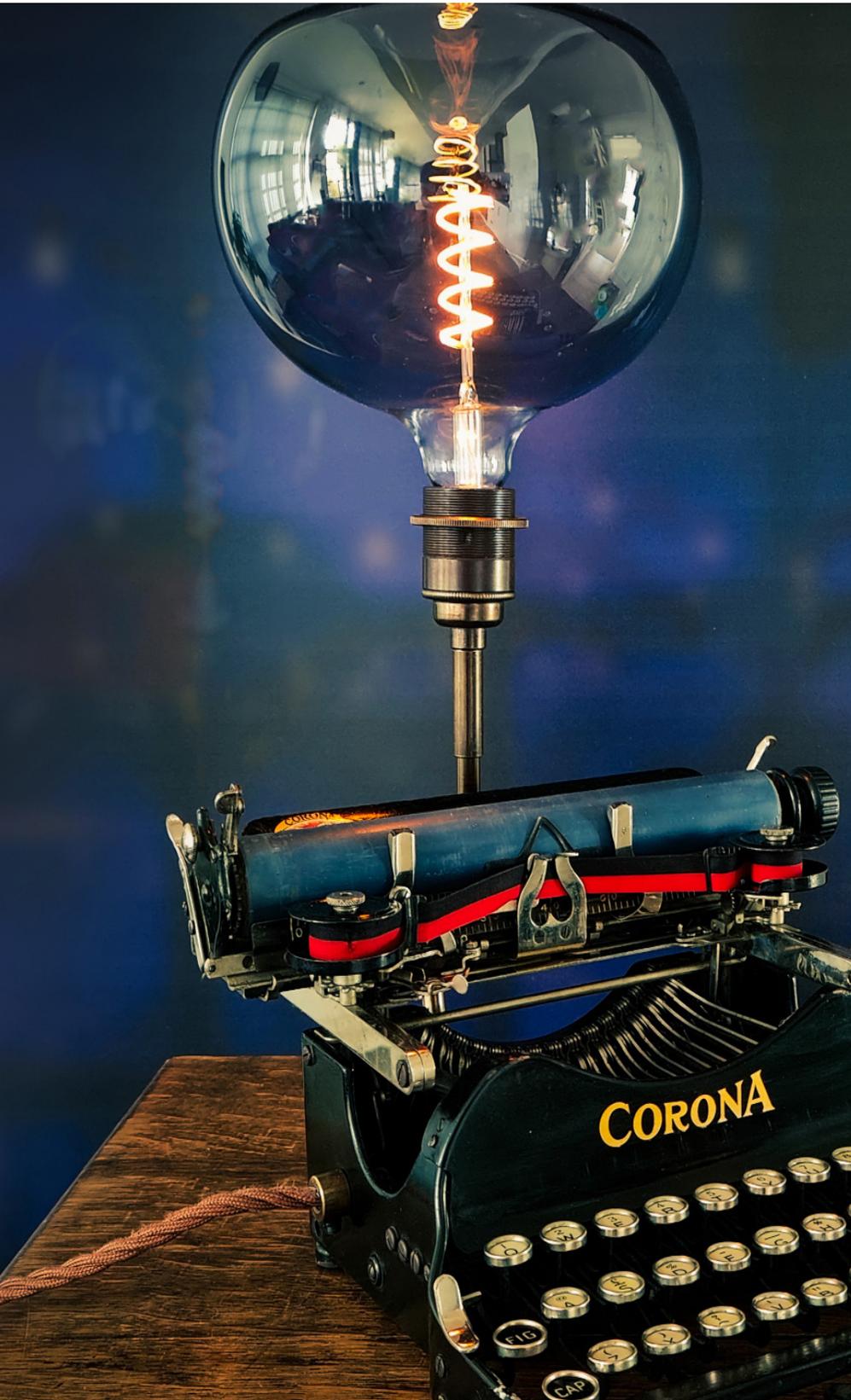


N E X U S

the ACT Research & Scholarship Magazine



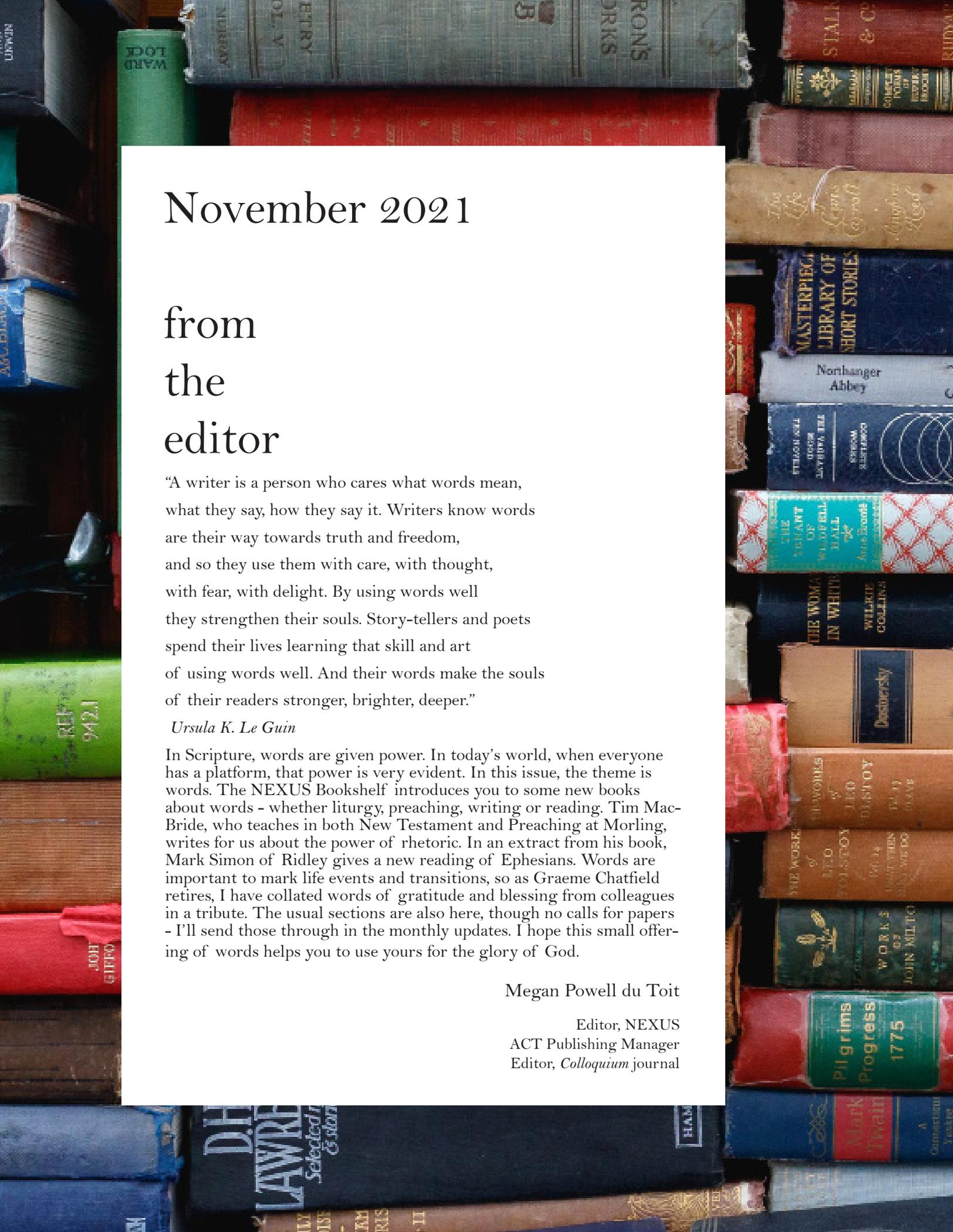
The Bookshelf
2021 Books on Words

Mark Simon
Exclusive Extract

Tim McBride
Words and Worldview

Graeme Chatfield
A tribute

and the usuals
events, ACT people online,
conferrals, publications and
news



November 2021

from the editor

“A writer is a person who cares what words mean, what they say, how they say it. Writers know words are their way towards truth and freedom, and so they use them with care, with thought, with fear, with delight. By using words well they strengthen their souls. Story-tellers and poets spend their lives learning that skill and art of using words well. And their words make the souls of their readers stronger, brighter, deeper.”

Ursula K. Le Guin

In Scripture, words are given power. In today's world, when everyone has a platform, that power is very evident. In this issue, the theme is words. The NEXUS Bookshelf introduces you to some new books about words - whether liturgy, preaching, writing or reading. Tim MacBride, who teaches in both New Testament and Preaching at Morling, writes for us about the power of rhetoric. In an extract from his book, Mark Simon of Ridley gives a new reading of Ephesians. Words are important to mark life events and transitions, so as Graeme Chatfield retires, I have collated words of gratitude and blessing from colleagues in a tribute. The usual sections are also here, though no calls for papers - I'll send those through in the monthly updates. I hope this small offering of words helps you to use yours for the glory of God.

Megan Powell du Toit

Editor, NEXUS
ACT Publishing Manager
Editor, *Colloquium* journal



KIPPLEY
MAYHEW

THE
MAYHEW

THE
CLERK
of
CUTHBERT
P.G.
WOODHOUSE

WILLIE
THE
SHOW
RICHIE
EROMIT

WILLIE
THE
SHOW
RICHIE
EROMIT

THE
MADE
GRAY

THE
MADE
GRAY

FRENCH
VOL. 1. & 2.

C. SCHMIDLER
OF PHAR...

JANE AUSTEN

THE
SON
OF
TARZAN
BOBBI
HERZIG

REVOLUTION
AT
THE
COURT

THE
SON
OF
TARZAN
BOBBI
HERZIG

PSMITH
IN
THE CITY
P.G.
WOODHOUSE

PSMITH
IN
THE CITY
P.G.
WOODHOUSE

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

PSMITH
IN
THE CITY
P.G.
WOODHOUSE

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

DON
QUIXOTE
Vol. 1
CERVANTES

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

THE
THREE
MUSKETEERS
DUMAS

FROM
CAPETOWI
TO
SMITH

FROM
CAPETOWI
TO
SMITH

THE
PERSUADED
HELMERICH

The Nexus BOOKSHELF

This issue we look at 2021 books about words

AUGUST 2021

[*Writing For the Ear, Preaching From the Heart \(Working Preacher Series\)* by Donna Giver-Johnston](#)

Words bombard us every day. Words can be noisy and cheap. And yet, words are all preachers have. In *Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart*, Donna Giver-Johnston addresses the question: How do you capture ears in an era of noise? Many preachers want to get away from their notes and make a more personal connection with their listeners, but they have not been mentored in methods that enable them to do that.

Grounded in a theology of incarnation and articulation and coupled with an awareness of what listeners most need and want to hear, Giver-Johnston explains how preachers can communicate more effectively—how they can write sermons for the ear, with the fewest, most impactful words to craft a memorable message.

[*The Writing Work of the People: Liturgical Writing as Spiritual, Theological, and Prophetic Work* by Jill Crainshaw](#)

What ideas, hopes, dreams, and laments do the words of worship stir in our hearts and minds? What images of God swirl up out of our communal prayers and hymns to shape what we believe and who we are as people of faith? We know that words can heal and draw us together, or words can hurt and divide. Christian communities proclaim and embody this wisdom each time we celebrate God's Word made flesh in Jesus.

Words for worship that arise from worshipping communities themselves, that give voice to their particular laments and joys, hold an oft-overlooked power. These communal words are both shaped by and spiral out to speak to global concerns. Leaders and worshipers in differing contexts write and speak in a wide variety of ways. As such, this book is for pastoral leaders, chaplains, and other ministers who imagine, craft, and offer worship words for each Sunday and in the diversity of everyday moments.

[*Preaching the Headlines: The Possibilities and Pitfalls of Addressing the Times \(Working Preacher Series\)* by Lisa L. Thompson](#)

Preachers often feel stuck when met with quickly shifting and dense media topics that flood the headlines. If and when they determine it is appropriate to address issues that arise in the news cycle, they are often at a loss for how to speak about them from the pulpit. When preachers understand that a responsibility to sustain life is embedded in the purposes of preaching, they discover greater fluidity between the everyday world, the biblical text, and preaching itself. *Preaching the Headlines* reframes preaching as an ongoing conversation between the modern world and the world of the Bible, exploring where the divides between the two may be less rigid than we often acknowledge. The preacher uses what they know about life as a bridge to the text, while life in the text provides the bridge back to faith in the contemporary world.

[*Steeped in Stories: Timeless Children's Novels to Refresh Our Tired Souls* by Mitali Perkins](#)

The stories we read as children shape us for the rest of our lives. But it is never too late to discover that transformative spark of hope that children's classics can ignite within us. Blending personal narrative, accessible literary criticism, and spiritual and moral formation, Perkins delves into novels by Louisa May Alcott, C. S. Lewis, L. M. Montgomery, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and other literary "uncles" and "aunts" that illuminate the virtuous, abundant life we still desire. These novels are not perfect, and Perkins honestly assesses their critical frailties and flaws related to race, culture, and power. Yet reading or rereading these books as adults can help us build virtue, unmask our vices, and restore our hope. Reconnecting with these stories from childhood isn't merely nostalgia. In an era of uncertainty and despair, they lighten our load and bring us much-needed hope.



SEPTEMBER 2021

[*50 Most Important Theological Terms* by J Brian Tucker](#)

Theology can be intimidating, full of big words and lofty ideas. Yet theological terms aren't just for professors to argue about in the ivory tower. These powerful words have important meanings for the everyday Christian, too. They aren't reserved for academic theologians. These terms belong to you! In *50 Most Important Theological Terms*, Moody professors David Finkbeiner and Brian Tucker offer helpful explanations of the *-isms* and *-ologies* of Bible doctrine that you've heard of but aren't sure what they mean.

[*The Storied Church* by Matthew Gorkos](#)

Matthew Gorkos begins *The Storied Church* with this compelling statement: «I believe in the church—in the power of faithful people serving a good and gracious God—and I

believe in the power of a good story. Moreover, I believe, as this book will argue, that church and story—harnessed together—could be an even more powerful force for goodness in our world.» Neuroscientists, anthropologists, archaeologist's, and psychologists all agree. Story is how our brains and our communities make sense of things. Storytelling helps us cope with change and loss. Storytelling helps us transmit lessons and life-skills to the next generation. As human beings, it seems we can't do *without* story.

UPCOMING

[*Topical Preaching in a Complex World: How to Proclaim Truth and Relevance At the Same Time* by Sam Chan & Malcolm Gill](#)

Sooner or later, every preacher will come upon a situation where they need to preach a topical sermon. Yet few are taught to preach topically. Even preachers who are gifted in expositing the Scriptures may struggle to deliver a topical sermon that is engaging, culturally relevant, and true to the biblical text. Worse, many pastors worry these messages undermine confidence in the Bible or its authority, leading to a human-centered rather than a God-focused sermon. But that doesn't have to be the case.

In *Topical Preaching in a Complex World*, Sam Chan and Malcolm Gill answer these objections and chart a path for how preachers can deliver faithful and effective topical messages. First, they address the biblical, theological, and cultural reasons pastors should add topical sermons to their preaching repertoire. Then, they introduce a straightforward, four-fold approach for preaching a topical message

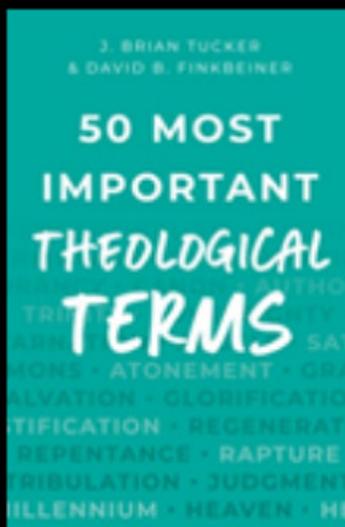
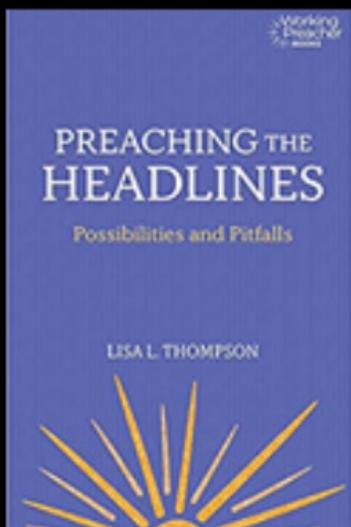
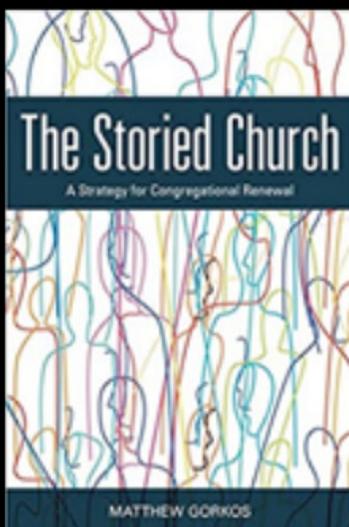
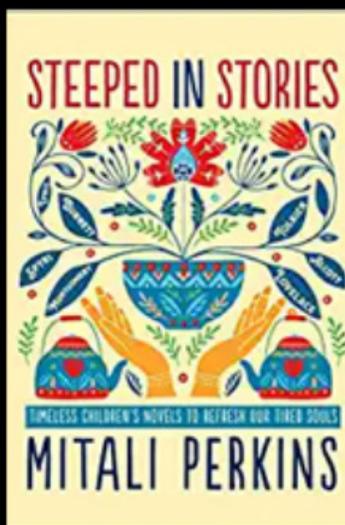
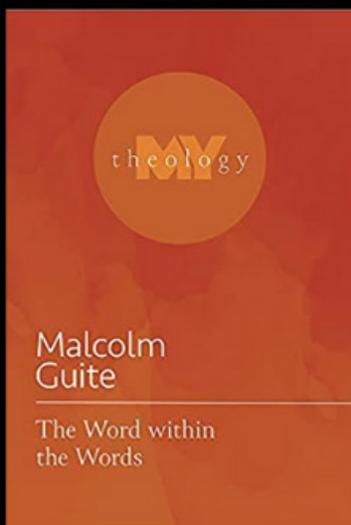
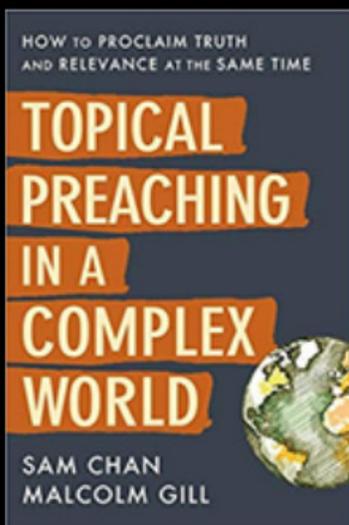
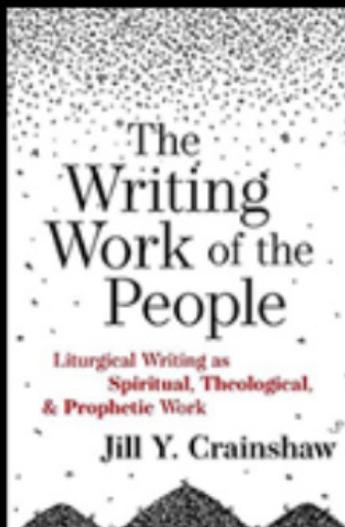
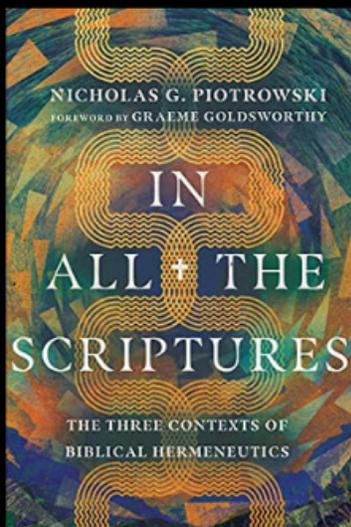
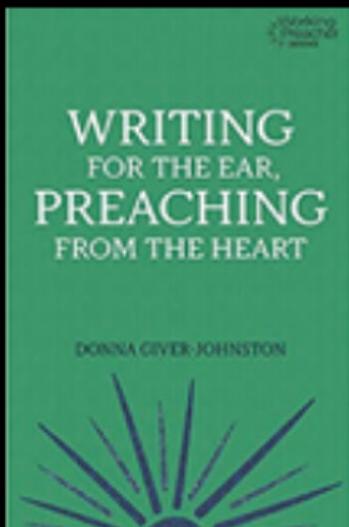
[*In All the Scriptures: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics* by Nicholas G. Piotrowski](#)

No one reads the Bible without some interpretive principles, or hermeneutics, in place. The question every student of Scripture needs to ask, then, is this: Are your interpretive principles and methods legitimate and ethical? In this accessible introduction to biblical hermeneutics, Nicholas G. Piotrowski presents an approach that explores three layers of context: literary, historical, and christological. Because no text exists in the abstract, interpreters must seek to understand a passage's ecology: the flow and argument of the entire biblical book, the world of the original author and audience, and the movement of redemptive history that culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Careful interpretation is both a science and an art, Piotrowski argues, and it has powerful implications for what we believe and how we apply God's Word. Featuring numerous examples, further reading lists, and

a glossary, *In All the Scriptures* equips students, pastors, and thoughtful readers to build a solid foundation for interpreting the Bible.

[*The Word within the Words \(My Theology, 3\)* by Malcolm Guite](#)

The Word within the Words is a Poet's Credo, in which Malcom Guite sets out to show how his Christian faith informs and underpins his poetry and, in turn, how poetry itself and, more widely, the poetic imagination help him understand and interpret his faith. After a brief introduction outlining a theology of Christ as the Word, the essential *logos* or meaning that underlies all things made flesh for us in Jesus, there are short chapters on Scripture, liturgy, and sacrament, each understood as a kind of poetry capable of transfiguring our vision and transforming our lives. In light of these, the final section of the book reflects on the all-transforming reality of Christ and the Kingdom not only within but well beyond the bounds of the church. The theology in this book is illustrated throughout with personal stories and with poetry, both classics from the canon and Guite's own poems.



Ephesians as a Missional Document

Exclusive extract from chapter 13 of Mark Simon's book in the ACT Monograph Series

If we discard those proposals which have fallen out of favour or only ever been entertained by a minority of scholars, we are left with a set of three broad purposes for Ephesians: (a) an appeal for unity; (b) a resource to strengthen believers in the face of pagan spiritual and cultural pressures; and (c) identity formation.

A missional hermeneutic invites us to see the *missio Dei* as a common thread and background rationale for why these purposes were significant. The greatest weakness with many current scholarly appraisals of Ephesians is their failure to provide a comprehensive account for why the document (as a whole) was written, rather than providing a hypothesis concerning one element of the document. To identify one of the dominant themes in the text is not the same as determining why the author felt that theme needed emphasis, or how that theme contributes to a unified final document. Conspicuous in their absence from most theories is an account of why Pauline biographical material is so prominent, and an explanation of the link between the doctrinal (indicative) material of Eph 1–3 and the ethical (imperative) material of Eph 4–6. The missional reading pursued in the present study provides a defensible account of these features while also explaining the stress on unity and identity formation.

We have argued that the *berakah* of 1:3–14 is not abstract praise but that it sensitises the recipients to their particular role as forerunner beneficiaries of God's salvation who are blessed in order to be agents of the cosmic reconciliation that is now underway. The prayer of 1:15–23 continues to emphasize the significance of the church. As members of the church grow in knowledge of God's purposes and access God's power, they are to contribute to the progressive filling of the world with Christ's dominion. The gracious reconciliation effected by God through Christ as "our peace" and the imagery of the church as temple has a number of distinct implications: the church is to be an inclusive, growing, ethically distinctive, unified conduit spreading God's presence in the world (2:11–22). The following passage (3:1–13) grounds the ongoing gentile mission (of which the letter recipients are a part) in Paul's authority and divine commissioning. The witness of the church

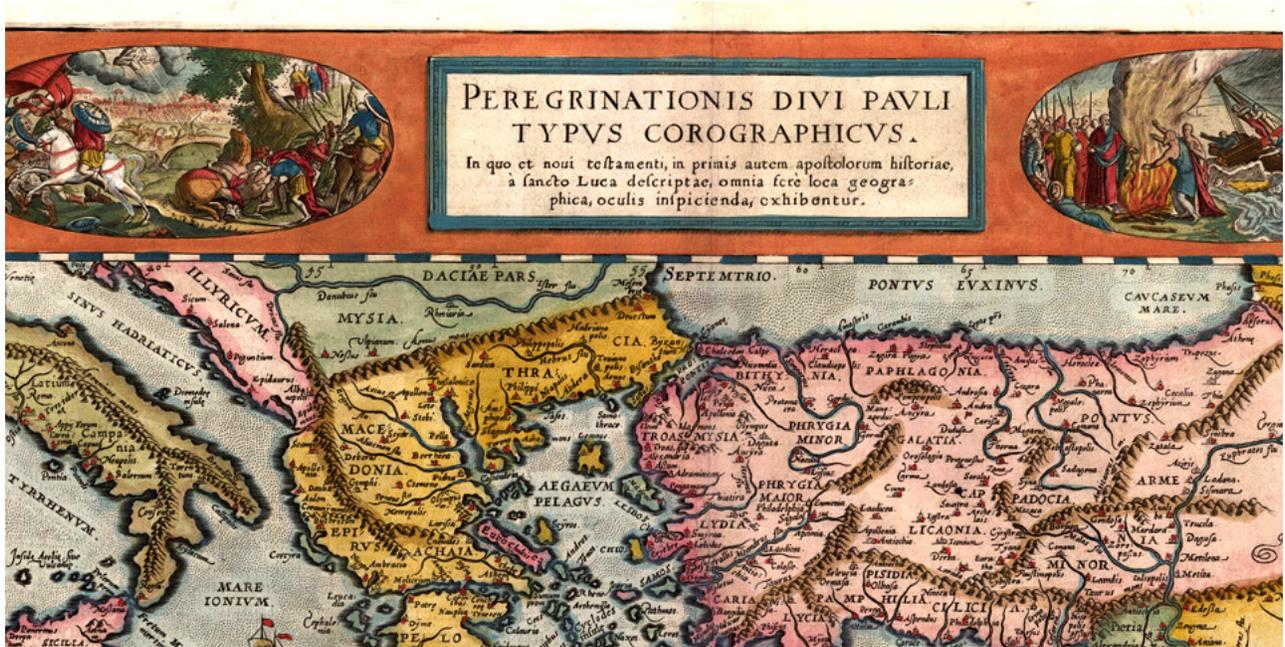
to the powers (3:10) is an intrinsic aspect of their existence, flowing from their status as recipients of God's reconciling action (Eph 1–2) and leading into their behaviors as a distinctive community in the world (Eph 4–6).

This summary of Eph 1–3 indicates that the *raison d'être* of the church is participation in the *missio Dei*. Ephesians 1–3 therefore provides the rationale, context, and goal for the paraenesis of Eph 4–6.¹ The communal behavior of the recipient congregations is to flow out of their changed status with respect to the gentile world from which they have been rescued (2:1–10). The key verses linking identity and behavior are 2:10 and 4:1; the letter's recipients have been created for good works, which are the worthy walk to which they have been called. Awareness of this link has not been entirely absent from the scholarly literature. Pokorný, for example, recognized that the concentration upon ethics in Ephesians did not necessarily mean the church had turned inwards and had no regard for witness to the pagan world. Indeed, the church exists in an eschatological tension between an exclusivity shaped BY the demands of holiness and a universal openness for the sake of mission. He states, "The Church as the 'fullness' of the Lord of all creation is neither identical with Christ nor with the world. It gives everyone access to God (3:10–12), but precisely for the sake of its mission it has to be Different from its environment."²

The relationship of theology to ethics (or indicative to imperative) in Ephesians arises from mission. Ephesians 4:1–3 functions as a thesis statement for the following ethical material, beginning with the logical conjunction *henceforth*. In the light of salvation history, that is God's mission, believers are to walk worthily of God's action in their lives. That the continuing goal is missional is seen then in 4:11–13. Christ equips believers with gifts of church founding, proclamation, and evangelism (apostles, prophets, evangelists) in order that all believers actively participate in the mission of God resulting in unity,

1 A point that has previously been argued by Ciampa, "*Missio Dei*."

2 Pokorný, *Brief*, 33, my translation.



maturity, and growth.³

We further observe that the function of the biographical comment about Paul’s ministry (3:1–13) and the prayers in 1:15–23 and 3:14–19 is to motivate the recipients to continue Paul’s apostolic mission to the gentiles, confident in God’s empowerment, God’s sovereignty over salvation history, and the legitimacy of the mission despite Paul’s imprisonment and sufferings.

This is an extract from Mark Simon, *Living to the Praise of God’s Glory: A Missional Reading of Ephesians*, ACT Monograph Series, Wipf & Stock, 2021. You can order it from the [Wandering Bookseller](#) in Australia, or wherever you get good books.



Mark Simon commences in 2022 at Ridley College as Lecturer in New Testament and Research Associate.

³ Darko, *No Longer Living*, 29.



A TRIBUTE TO GRAEME CHATFIELD

MEGAN POWELL DU TOIT

Graeme, our Associate Dean and Director of Research, retires at the end of this year, after a long and fruitful career. Graeme graduated from the ACT (through Morling) with BTh & Dip Min in 1985. After that Graeme worked as a Baptist pastor in Sydney before undertaking a PhD from Bristol University. He was awarded his PhD in 1993 for a thesis entitled “Balthasar Hubmaier and the Clarity of Scripture: A Study of the Development of Reformation Hermeneutics.” Over the years he has served as pastor at Macquarie, Windsor District, Frenchs Forest, Turramurra Baptist churches with interim roles at Broome and Bowral Baptist churches.

He joined Morling College as Church History Lecturer in 1997, working there for 11 years before becoming the Associate Dean full time at the ACT in 2009. Including initial part time work, he has worked for the ACT for over 14 years. At the ACT, Graeme has spearheaded a new emphasis on research and scholarship within the consortium. Much of the greater depth in these areas within the ACT has been brought about by Graeme’s persistent efforts. Graeme’s own research has centred on Baptist and Anabaptist identity, history, and practice as both author and editor. He also oversaw teaching and learning at the ACT for many years.

Graeme initiated the establishment of a monograph series within the ACT which began in partnership with Wipf and Stock in 2014 with one book. Within two years, I was brought on to support the growth of this publishing avenue, and now almost 30 books have been published in this series, enabling the dissemination of Australasian Evangelical research and scholarship.

During his long ministry, he has been involved in many different bodies in both the Baptist church and the theological academy. These have included the Baptist Historical Society, the board of Crucible Journal, and Various committees for the Baptist Churches of NSW and the ACT. He currently sits on the ANZATS Council (ANZATS is the peak body for theological education in Australia and New Zealand).

Graeme has been an integral part of both the Baptist Church and theological education in Australia over thirty years. We know that he will continue to serve both in the years to come, even though officially retired.

Some words from colleagues:

Prof James Dalziel, Dean of the ACT

I'm very grateful to Graeme not just for his long and faithful service to the ACT, but especially for his assistance to me as I came into the role of Dean, and his leadership during the very challenging early COVID-19 period when he was Acting Dean. This surely must count as the most demanding "Acting" leadership roles the ACT has ever needed, and Graeme brought his calm and consultative approach to this challenge just like he has done for all others during his extensive contribution to the life of the ACT. My thanks, Graeme, and I pray our God may richly bless your retirement.

Rev Prof Mark Lindsay, ANZATS President, Joan F W Munro Professor of Historical Theology, Deputy Dean, and Academic Dean at Trinity Theological School.

As Graeme begins what I trust will be a long and happy retirement, it is my great pleasure to offer a word of thanks on behalf of the ANZATS Council and membership. Graeme was first elected as an ANZATS Director in mid-2016, filling the vacancy left by Mark Harding when Mark became the Association's Executive Officer. Having joined the Council the year before, I was delighted to be able to work once again with Graeme. I had come to know him well when we were both members of the Australasian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies – and here we were, working together again, in another trans-Tasman educational body!

Throughout these past 5 or so years, ANZATS has indeed been well served by Graeme's contributions. Always bringing both a wealth of experience in theological education – particularly, but not only, with a view to higher degree students – and also a keenly developed pastoral sensitivity, Graeme has provided wisdom and prudence to Council meetings, and therefore to the work of the Association as a whole. His active participation will be missed, but I for one hope that he won't be a complete stranger to our conversations and conferences.

Rev Dr Greg Goswell, Chair of the Research and Research Studies Committee (R&RSC) and Academic Dean of Christ College

As Chair of the Research and Research Studies Committee (R&RSC) for a number of years I have worked closely with the Rev Dr Graeme Chatfield, the Associate Dean and Director of Research. Working with Graeme has been a great joy. I have appreciated his dry sense of humour, his compassion toward staff and students, his no nonsense approach, and his administrative flair. In his work for the ACT, Graeme has not only closed all correspondence with the words "Grace and peace", but he has also always shown grace and fostered peace in his work and leadership in ACT committees, especially his role as Executive Officer of the Research & Research Studies Committee and the Human Research Ethics Committee. Graeme has done everything in a gracious and collegial way. With energy, integrity and expertise he has played a strategic role in enhancing the research culture of the ACT and has always sought what is best for research candidates and their supervisors. I wish him a long and fruitful retirement.

Rev Dr Steve Bartlett, Director of Ministries, Baptists Churches of NSW and the ACT

Graeme finishes his role at the ACT having devoted many years to serving God in both pastoral ministry and theological education with ability, wisdom and grace. Theological education in Australia and beyond is the richer for his very significant contributions. His ministry has been marked by a keen mind and pastoral sensitivity, both of which I have personally experienced in generous quantities as an undergraduate student a generation ago, a postgrad student years later, and in more recent years as an occasional advisor.

Graeme, on behalf of the NSW & ACT Baptist Association thank you for how you have allowed God to use you to impact the lives of many. I am sure this will continue as you follow God's leading in the next season of service he has for you.

Rev Dr Mark Harding, former Dean of the ACT

Graeme took up the position of Associate Dean and Director of Research in the ACT office in 2008. The Board and I could see that the rapid increase in HDR candidates and the need to maintain the ACT at the forefront of best practice in all matters to do with HDR candidature, such as consideration of admission, progress and examination, required a dedicated staff member. And so Graeme was appointed. He also became the Executive Officer of the Research Board at a time when the ACT was reforming its academic governance. Graeme was the right appointment. His attention to detail, his dedication to implementing best practice in HDR management across the ACT, the thoroughness of his oversight, and his close working with partner HDR affiliated colleges made him the right person for the task. Moreover, he set about ensuring that the ACT as a consortium implemented the highest standards for auditing academic staff research output and in the proposing, enacting and oversight of research policies through the Research Board. Graeme established excellent working relationships with colleagues in the colleges, and in peer providers through his engagement with the Deans of Graduate Research and the Council of Deans of Theology. He initiated Nexus, a really important ACT-wide mechanism designed to raise the profile of research across the consortium, and successfully negotiated the impressively productive monograph series with Wipf and Stock. Graeme also remained committed to his own sphere of research and to teaching where possible. He was a most constructive member of the ACT office staff and a colleague of the highest integrity.

Dr Edwina Murphy, Senior Lecturer in Christian Thought and History, Morling College, and member of the R&RSC

Before joining the ACT, Graeme was on faculty at Morling for over a decade. He taught Church History (as we called it then) and was an early adopter of new learning and teaching strategies, encouraging creative class presentations by students. He was also part of the transition to an increased focus on research and scholarship at Morling, organising conferences and editing and publishing the proceedings, a focus that naturally fit with the role he was to take up at the ACT. Graeme is always patient and gracious—attributes I particularly appreciated when he supervised my MTh thesis—but he also initiates change. Since his research expertise centres on Hubmaier and the Radical Reformation, I think

we might call Graeme a gentle radical. I hope this new stage of life will allow him to continue his contribution to the wider church as well as giving him more time to enjoy his family.

Rev Dr Martin Sutherland, former Dean of the ACT

Research was the context in which I first met Graeme. Two decades ago, he drew Baptists together from across Australasia to discuss their work in a series of conferences. This was a great initiative, which advanced the publication of many projects. In his time at ACT this belief in the value of research has remained core to his motivation and governance. Always an advocate for research students, Graeme has ensured that advanced scholarship has been firmly in focus. In my time as Dean, I particularly appreciated both his support and his focus on this crucial area. The strong profile in postgraduate studies and student research which ACT enjoys is in large part due to his hard work and commitment.



Publications

Consortium

Recent book publications by faculty in our affiliated colleges.

Department of Bible and Languages

Michael Bird, [Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible](#), Zondervan, 2021. (Ridley)

Dan Cole, [Isaiah's Servant in Paul: The Hermeneutics and Ethics of Paul's Use of Isaiah 49-54](#), Mohr Siebeck, 2021. (Trinity WA)

Paul Jones, [Anonymous Prophets and Archetypal Kings: Reading 1 Kings 13](#), T&T Clark, 2021. (Trinity QLD)

Mark Keown, [Discovering the New Testament: An Introduction to Its Background, Theology, and Themes](#), Lexham, 2021. (Laidlaw)

Gary Millar, [Changed into His Likeness: A Biblical Theology of Personal Transformation](#), IVP Academic, 2021. (QTC)

D Morcom, [Living in God's True Story: 2 Peter](#), Lexham, 2021. (Malyon)

Mark Simon, [Living to the Praise of God's Glory: A Missional Reading of Ephesians](#), ACT Monograph Series, Wipf & Stock, 2021. (Ridley)

Department of Christian Thought and History

Rowland Ward, [The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Study Guide for the 21st Century](#), Tulip, 2021. (PTCV)

John Dickson, [Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look At the Good and Evil of Christian History](#), Zondervan, 2021. (Ridley)

Ian Maddock (ed), [10 Dead Guys You Should Know: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants](#), Christian Focus, 2021. (SMBC)

Anthony Brammall, *Never Going Home: Mabel Green and the Heart of Amazonia*, SMBC Press, 2021. (SMBC)

Department of Ministry and Practice

Michael Jensen. [Reformation Anglican Worship](#),

Crossway, 2021. (BCSA)

Ross Clifford, Jim Baucom, [RISE: Reimagining the Resurrection Life](#), Morling Press, 2021. (Morling)

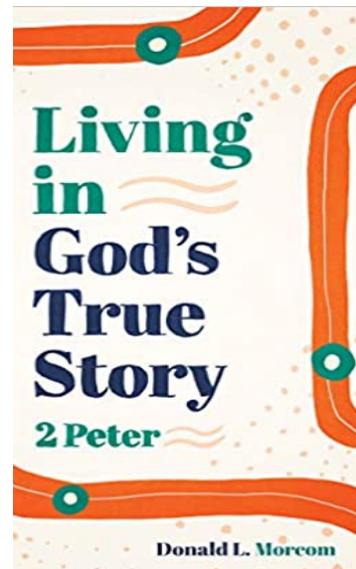
Beyond

Dianne Rayson, [Bonhoeffer and Climate Change: Theology and Ethics for the Anthropocene](#), Fortress Press, 2021. (UTC)

Sally Douglas, [The Church as Salt: Becoming the Community Jesus Speaks About](#), Coventry, 2021. (Pilgrim)

Kerrie Handasyde, [Studies in the Literary History of Australian Protestant Dissent](#), Bllomsbury, 2021, (Pilgrim/Stirling)

Ken Manley, [T.E. Ruth \(1875-1956\) Preacher and Controversialist](#), ACT Monograph Series, Wipf & Stock, 2021. (Whitley)



Our Team

Strategy and Operations

Dean & CEO

Professor James Dalziel

Director of Special Projects & Executive Officer

Nathain Secker

IT Officer

Witali Klein

Director of Finance

Vicki Chen

Financial Accountant

Mary Ann Navidad

Quality

Director of Risk & Compliance

Dr Paul Yeates

Quality & Inclusion Officer

Erin Sessions

Academic Quality Officer

Stephen Sarkoezy

Research

Associate Dean, Director of Research

Rev Dr Graeme Chatfield

Executive Officer (Research Quality)

Prof Neil Ormerod

Publishing Manager & Colloquium Editor

Rev Megan Powell du Toit

Learning & Teaching

Director of Learning & Teaching

Rev Dr Ian O'Harae

Academic Services

Registrar

Simon Davies

Deputy Registrar

Diana Tadjudin

Administrative Coordinator – Graduation & Support Services

Elisa Norris

Academic Administrative & Overseas Liaison Officer

Asanka Gunerathne

Academic Administrative Officer

Rebekah Wall

Academic Services Support Officer

Jayne Tan

Office News

2021 has continued to see a lot of staffing change in the ACT office.

Like many others, the pandemic has given ACT Office people space to think about major life changes. This means we will be saying farewell to two valued members of staff. Our Associate Dean, Graeme Chatfield, is retiring at the end of 2021. Please read the tribute to graeme elsewhere in this issue.

We are also saying goodbye to Elisa (EJ) Norris . This leaves us with the great sorrow of no more chatfields in the office (EJ is Graeme's daughter). Our prayers go with them as they move into new places and opportunities.

Conferrals

JUNE 2021 - NOVEMBER 2021

Master of Theology

Peter Grice for thesis entitled: A critical evaluation of Bauckham's letter testament theory for 2 Peter with specific perspectives from the Apostolic Fathers and Eusebius, 'The Church History



Words and Worldview

Tim McBride



Abi Skipp from London, England - Edinburgh festival fringe 2017

“I know words. I have the best words,” said Donald Trump during his 2016 presidential campaign. While his “covfefe” tweet may later have undermined that claim, Trump was remarkably effective in persuading others to accept his view of the political world and its inhabitants. His use of pejorative adjectives for opponents—juvenile, to be sure—succeeded in framing them thus in the collective perception of many: he saw off “Low Energy Jeb” Bush and “Lying Ted Cruz” in the primaries, before defeating “Crooked Hilary” in the general election, much to the disappointment of the “Failing New York Times.” Words, even in the undersized hands of delusional demagogues,¹ can have a powerful in-

fluence on how others perceive the world.

Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, the authors of the New Testament also employed words to influence their audience’s perception of reality—the first-century world and its inhabitants. Nowhere is this more evident than in John’s Apocalypse, which paints pictures with words that invite readers into an alternative way of seeing the world: from God’s point of view, rather than that of the majority culture. This counter-cultural rhetoric was vital for the survival of the churches in Asia Minor—a minority group facing the threat of persecution and the reality of social exclusion—if they were to resist the pressure to compromise with the majority culture. John needed to counter the power of Rome’s self-

1 Two can play at that game.

serving imperial rhetoric with his own.²

After the seven letters acknowledge the audience's minority status and the temptation for them to conform to the majority culture's worldview (e.g., 2:10, 13), John is invited up through a door in the heavens so that he (and his readers) can view the cosmos from a heavenly perspective (4:1). There, a series of complex verbal imagery performs essentially the same function as Trump's schoolyard epithets, albeit in a much more sophisticated manner. By the words John uses to describe persons and institutions, he encourages the audience to see through the imperial spin and recognise Rome for what it really is.

John's first vision is of the throne room of God, the interior design of which draws not only from Old Testament theophanies, but is also inspired by elements of Domitian's court. He was the emperor who increased the number of imperial bodyguards from twelve to twenty-four,³ and surrounded himself with priests—dressed in white, with golden crowns—whenever he presided at sporting events at the Coliseum.⁴ “Casting crowns before the throne” (4:10) was the expected behaviour of rulers who had been conquered by Rome, submitting their rule to his.⁵ And “our Lord and God” (4:11) was a title of which Domitian was particularly fond.⁶ This vision sends the message: the one who holds the *true* imperial power is God, not some jumped-up pretender in a toga with garden clippings on his head.

What's more, the vision challenges the audience's perception of who the true minority is.⁷ John's camera progressively zooms out to show the circle of praise ever-widening: the four living creatures around the throne, the twenty-four elders, followed by thousands of angels, and finally “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them,” (5:13) all praising God. *Except, look down there: there's a small aberration to this otherwise universal sea of praise. Those stubbornly rebellious humans who refuse to get with the programme, worshipping idols instead of the one true God*

2 One of the best systematic treatments of the subversive rhetoric of Revelation is David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*.

3 Paul, *Revelation*, 124.

4 Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 75.

5 Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 107–08.

6 Suetonius, *Dom. 13*. See Smith, “*The Book of Revelation*,” 339.

7 DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 99.

(9:20–21)! *They are the true minority*. By contrast, those who follow Jesus belong to a vast multitude that no one can count, joining in the cosmic chorus (7:9–10).

As well as reframing his readers' perception of their minority status, John challenges key elements of imperial rhetoric. He chooses not to describe the emperor as the godlike, saviour-figure Rome would have them believe. Instead, by using the word “beast” and all it connotes, John views the emperor as taking for himself the worship rightly due to God, with power that comes from Satan himself (13:1–8).⁸ Likewise, the cult of emperor worship is also depicted as beastly: it looks innocuous enough, like a lamb, but its dragon-like voice belies its true nature (13:11). Rome liked to portray such worship as a voluntary response to a benevolent son-of-the-gods, but John's subversion shows it to be the imposition it really is, using words like “deceived,” “ordered,” and “forced” (13:14–18).

The city of Rome saw itself as the embodiment of a goddess—*Roma Aeterna, the eternal city*—full of beauty and treasure. John, however, personifies it as a “great prostitute,” riding on the back of the empire's economic exploitation of its territories—a new “Babylon,” similarly drunk with the blood of God's people (17:1–6). Carefully choosing his words, John says that the only thing “eternal” about Rome will be the smoke of her destruction when God acts to avenge his people (19:3).⁹ This depiction asks John's audience: *why would you be tempted to compromise with Rome when she's the one exploiting and persecuting you—especially when you remember the fate of the previous “Babylon”?* Again, this is set in stark contrast to the true Eternal City—a bride dressed beautifully for her husband (21:2), not in the scarlet of prostitution but the white linen of purity (19:7–8).¹⁰ The opulence of this city will put even Rome to shame (21:18–21), as the kings and nations of the earth bring not extorted tax revenue but willing tribute (21:24, 26). John's frightened minority group should bear *this* image in mind when deciding to which city they want to belong.

Words can be used to project a worldview, whether in the first or the twenty-first century. Having been made more aware of our minority status in the West, those of us charged with using words to encourage the people of God need to paint a similarly subver-

8 Reddish, *Revelation*, 250.

9 Beale, *Revelation*, 930.

10 Reddish, *Revelation*, 364.

sive picture of our world—as God sees it, rather than how the powers of our world would like to be seen. We won’t, I trust, be as crass and belligerent as Trump. Nor should we merely copy the rhetoric of Revelation, which works within first-century culture in a way that may not resonate today. Instead, we should allow John’s creative imagery to help us unmask the beastly forces of today—things that might *appear* benevolent, but seek to seduce God’s people into compromise with the idolatry and exploitation of our own age. The words of John’s Apocalypse—in our pulpits, podcasts, and publications—can inspire us to once more construct the alternative worldview needed to sustain the Jesus-following minority today.¹¹

REFERENCES

- Aune, David E. *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- DeSilva, David A. *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Koester, Craig R. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- MacBride, Tim. *To Aliens and Exiles: Preaching the New Testament as Minority-Group Rhetoric in a Post-Christendom World*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020.
- Paul, Ian. *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018.
- Reddish, Mitchell. *Revelation*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001.
- Smith, Murray J. “The Book of Revelation: A Call to Worship, Witness, and Wait in the Midst of Violence,” in *Into All the World*, edited by Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017: 334–371.

Tim MacBride

Tim is Dean of Bible & Theology at Morling College, where he lectures in New Testament and Preaching. He is the author of *To Aliens and Exiles: Preaching the New Testament as Minority-Group Rhetoric in a Post-Christendom World* (Wipf & Stock, 2020) and *Catching the Wave: Preaching the New Testament as Rhetoric* (IVP, 2016).



¹¹ See further, Tim MacBride, *To Aliens and Exiles*.



ACT online

June-November 2021

Podcasts:

Allister Lum Mow, Cameron Clausing, Murray Smith (Christ College), [Down Under Theology podcast](#)

Jenny Salt (SMBC), [SALT: conversations with Jenny](#), Eternity Podcast Network

John Dickson Ridley [Undeceptions](#), Undeceptions Podcasts

Megan Powell du Toit (ACT) and Michael Jensen (BCSA), [With All Due Respect](#), Eternity Podcast Network

Articles and Interviews:

ABC

15/6 Megan Powell du Toit (ACT), panel, [Disagreeing Well](#), ABC God Forbid.

2/8 Brian Rosner (Ridley) [COVID-19 distress: Can we find comfort in being known by God?](#), ABC Religion & Ethics

Evangelicals Now UK

1/7 Peter Riddell (MST), [“Brunei: The Church Under Sharia”](#).

1/9 Peter Riddell (MST), [SOUTHEAST ASIA: FAITH GROUPS AND COVID](#)

The Gospel Coalition Australia

23/7 Allan Chapple (Trinity WA), [Who are the “Saints”?](#)

2/8 Andrew Judd (Ridley), [The Bible and Slavery](#),

15/9 Kristen Young (Youthworks) interview, [How I made it: Kristen Young’s Apprenticeship](#) (by Andrew Moody)

Events

Note: RSVPs are often required during these COVID times, and things may change without notice. Follow links to find out more.

November 2021

12 UDiv, VIC

[Gender Inequity in Theological Education day seminar](#)

15-19 AAH, online

[Culture, Nature, Climate: Humanities & the Environmental Crisis](#)

16-17 ICETE, online

[Global consultation on formal and non-formal theological education](#)

17 AC, zoom

[Does God belong in our universities? Ben Myers](#)

17-19 AC, zoom

[Preaching for a Change, Alun Davies](#)

27 Stirling, VIC

[Reframation: Seeing God and People through Fresh Eyes, Al Hirsch, Naomi Wolfe](#)

27 St James, NSW

[Advent Quiet Day – The Music of Eternity, Robyn Wrigley-Carr](#)

29-30 CTC, VIC

[Recontextualising Pedagogy 2021 National Conference](#)

December 2021

2-3 ACT, online

[ACT Professional Development Conference - ACT people only](#)

6-7 BST, QLD

[Bavinck Centenary Conference](#)

11 St James Institute

[Poetry is Essential to the Human Spirit, Terry Veling](#)

11, 12 Hamer Hall, VIC

[Handel's Messiah](#)

January 2022

31 MOORE, NSW

[P&A 2022 annual conference: The one another commands, Peter Orr](#)

February 2022

18 Ridley, VIC

[Wide Open Doors: Supporting the Next Generation of Students, Graham Cole \(annual dinner\)](#)

18-19 SCD, NSW

[Theologising in the Shadow of a Pandemic](#)

26 MST, VIC

[CTP WORKSHOP: Christ-Centred Mindfulness, Katherine Thompson](#)

Events, continued

March 2022

8 SMBC, NSW

[Preaching Enrichment Seminar: Topical Preaching -Sam Chan & Malcolm Gill](#)

9 Moore, NSW

[CCL: Commanding the heart: Anger, Chase Kuhn](#)

22-23 Moore, NSW

[Biblical Theology Re-Examined](#)

April 2022

6 Moore, NSW

[The Bible in the colonies, Donald Robinson Library](#)

4 Moore, NSW

[CCL: Commanding the heart: Lust, Marshall Ballantine-Jones](#)

June 2022

1 Moore, NSW

[P&A: Men and women and church discipline, Kara Hartley & Phil Colgan](#)

July 2022

20 Moore, NSW

[CGM: Oral Learners and the Gospel, Simon Gillham & Malcolm Richards](#)

August 2022

24 Moore, NSW

[CCL: Commanding the heart: Deception, Tony Payne](#)

September 2022

1 Morling, NSW

[Preaching Conference, Galen Jones and others](#)

14 Moore, NSW

[The mothers' union & the ministry of lay women: Donald Robinson Library](#)

October 2022

12 Moore, NSW

[P&A: Proverbs 31, Andrew Heard](#)

19 Moore, NSW

[CCL: Commanding the heart: Vengeance, Andrew Errington](#)