

# THE MORNING STAR

THE WYCLIFFE COLLEGE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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## *The optimism of Ecclesiastes*

BY CHRIS SEITZ

My wife and I live in a small village—a hamlet—in rural France, and as in all the villages around us, we have an ancient parish church, with its strong bells regulating life. The painting “The Angelus” shows peasants with heads lowered in a field. They are our neighbours. We live in the rectory of the village, amidst vast fields, and the bells lift themselves and sound forth just next door.

John Donne famously said, in reference to the tolling of bells at the death of a local friend or citizen, “Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.” Death is always with us, though it hides its face. One day it will of course appear.

Death has been a regular tolling presence for me recently. My father died a bit over two years ago, and my mother struggled in the hard years without him before falling asleep in the Lord last month. Her decline was long and painful, so death was a bit easier to accept. We lost our close friend, the local parish priest, Père Mercier, last year. The twenty-some parishes he cared for collectively grieved his loss. He was such a real, honest, humble, witty presence.

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And I almost lost my wife after a long struggle with lung and heart problems that hit her unexpectedly. She came fully within death's precincts. God allowed her to return.

We do not sleep in our coffins and we likely do not work with a skull on our desk to remind us of our mortality. Almost everything we do and create means to keep death's reality at bay.

### **Noting the change**

Ecclesiastes was an extraordinarily popular book throughout the ages. Thomas Wolfe said it was the greatest single bit of writing there was. But in recent years it has gathered the whiff of pessimism and cynical despair. What has happened to make that so has a hundred good answers, but more important is noting the change.

The hero of the book is in some sense King Solomon, seen from a particular angle of vision. His accomplishments lie behind him. He is still the man of proverbs, but they have become like the irregular verbs we learn last of all as schoolchildren, even though they are the verbs used most frequently in life.

In the 8th chapter of I Kings, Solomon is given to see things in their spatial and temporal vastness. And this includes messes, and failure, promises dashed to the ground, and indeed death itself. Things will begin unravelling even as his own days draw to a close, in some ways because of his overreach and in other ways because what God had called for was so majestic it would be hard to live up to it all. But God would be there to turn and forgive all the same. Just as He always is. For those who fear Him.

I take the book to be an extended meditation on life and death. Its bells toll for Solomon, for Israel, for the Old Adam, and also for thee. There is no trailer hitch on the back of the hearse. One must learn to enjoy toil without looking for profit. One must not try to be wise but ask for the fear that opens the door to receive it from God. One cannot make pleasure accomplish something, but must rather learn through patience how to allow God to give it. Exceptions to the rules are not things to be cursed but signs that God's ways do not conform to ours. Our faculties of seeing, hearing, speaking and remembering do not endure forever. They do not match perfectly performance and execution, as does God's good creation. That is a fact to be received and accepted.

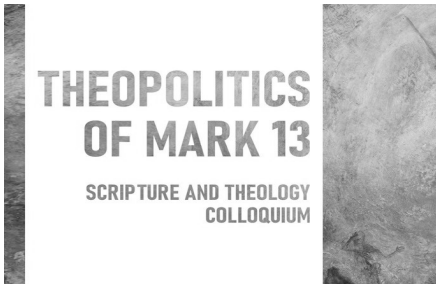
Jesus Christ, Gregory of Nyssa said, is the true Ecclesiast. He who came down and lived within the limits of habel habelim ("vanity of vanities"). He thought equality with God not a thing to be grasped and searched for us, determined to redeem us from death by walking the route before us. To the end that the tolling of bells might shake the portals of death and receive us all in a Kingdom that has no end.

### **ABOUT**

*Chris Seitz is an Old Testament scholar and theologian known for his work in biblical interpretation and theological hermeneutics. Senior Research Professor at Wycliffe College, during the Fall 2019 semester, he is teaching a course on [The Book of Ecclesiastes](#).*



# UPCOMING EVENTS



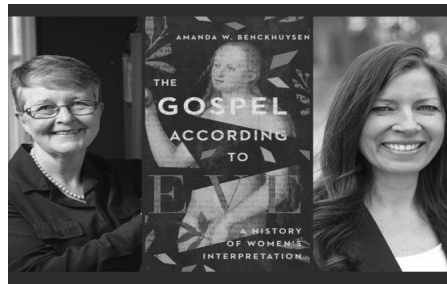
## ***Scripture and Theology Colloquium: Theopolitics of Mark 13***

***Friday, Oct 18, 9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m., Wycliffe College***

Presented to you by the Wycliffe Centre for Scripture and Theology, this event will explore the Theopolitics of Mark 13. Our speakers will be:

- Craig Hovey (Ashland): Apocalyptic Passion
- Rebekah Eklund (Loyolla) : On Being Woke: Mark 13 and the Signs of the Times
- Ephraim Radner (Wycliffe): Catastrophic Politics Revisited
- Matthew Burdette (Dallas): The Uprising of the Son of Man
- Respondent: Stephen Chester (Wycliffe)

For more information and registration, visit [wycliffecollege.ca/scriptureandtheology](http://wycliffecollege.ca/scriptureandtheology)



## ***Women's Breakfast with Marion Taylor & Amanda Benckhuysen***

***Saturday, Oct 26, 9:30 — 12:00 a.m. in Leonard Hall, Wycliffe College***

This year the event will feature Prof. Marion Taylor and Prof. Amanda Benckhuysen from Calvin Theological Seminary. This year's theme is "The Gospel According to Eve", which will include a launch of Prof. Benckhuysen's new book "The Gospel According to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation". In addition, you will meet women currently studying at Wycliffe and hear more about their personal stories of calling as well as their journey of spiritual formation. Tickets are \$10.00 and the deadline to purchase is October 14. Visit [wycliffecollege.ca/womensbreakfast2019](http://wycliffecollege.ca/womensbreakfast2019), call (416) 946-3549, or email [events@wycliffe.utoronto.ca](mailto:events@wycliffe.utoronto.ca) for more details and purchase information.



## ***Toronto Children's Ministry Conference 2019***

***Saturday, Nov 2, 8:00 a.m. — 3:30 p.m. at Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto***

This event is a gathering of people who are dedicated to the spiritual growth of children—parents, church volunteers, ministry leaders, and anyone who has a passion for ministering to children. Workshop tracks include:

- Theological and Biblical Foundations
- Building Children's Ministry
- Culture and Impact
- Special Needs
- Evangelism and Missions
- Curriculum and Developmental Theory
- Family Ministry
- Paid Staff

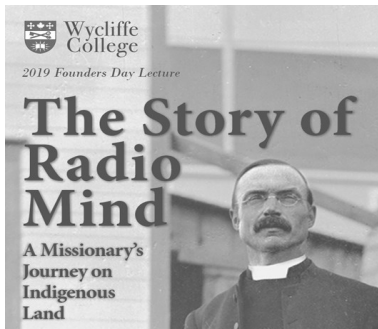
For tickets and information, see [wycliffecollege.ca/tcmc](http://wycliffecollege.ca/tcmc)

## **LUNCH & LEARN: THESIS FAQs WITH TOM POWER**

***Thursday, Oct 10, 1:00—2:00 p.m. in the West Lecture Room, Wycliffe College***

This session would be of benefit for anyone in their final year looking to complete a thesis/summative exercise in the MDiv or MTS programs. Tom Power (Graduate Studies Coordinator, Adjunct Professor of Church History, Theological Librarian) will go over the process and answer any questions that you might have. Bring your lunch and join us in the West Lecture Room!

# More Events & Announcements



## FOUNDERS DAY LECTURE: THE STORY OF RADIO MIND—A MISSIONARY'S JOURNEY ON INDIGENOUS LAND

*Wednesday, Oct 16, 3:00—4:30 p.m. in Reading Room, Wycliffe College*

The Founders' Day Memorial lecture honours the vision and commitment of the original founders of Wycliffe College through an annual lecture whose subject matter relates in some way to the history of the College and its role in the Church. This year the lecture will feature Professor Pamela Klassen (Religious Studies, UofT), who will speak about her new book, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), which tells the story of Frederick Herbert DuVernet, 1860-1924, a Wycliffe graduate (Class of 1880). It is a free, public event. Anyone is welcome to attend.



## 2019 LESTER RANDALL TORONTO FESTIVAL OF PREACHING

*Sunday-Tuesday, Oct 27- 29, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto*

This is an annual preaching event which consists of a mix of workshops, lectures, private and public preaching events, networking and fellowship, led by keynote speakers and other well-known clergy and professors of preaching from across North America. **Professor Annette Brownlee** from Wycliffe College will also be giving a workshop at the event: "Playing Around Scripture." To register, visit [lesterrandall.com](http://lesterrandall.com).

## *Bursaries*

### THE IVOR NORRIS BURSARY

You are eligible for this bursary if you are, or your immediate family member is, a serving or former member of the Canadian Forces. You must also be sponsored by a Bishop for Ordination within the Anglican Church of Canada and enrolled in studies leading toward ordination. Applications must be received before 16 December 2019. For more information and the application form, please visit <http://bit.ly/2Vb7TVu>.

### THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY OF CANADA

The PBSC is pleased to announce the availability of a limited number of bursaries of up to \$1000, for Anglican students engaged in religious studies who value the Book of Common Prayer, use it in their daily prayer life, and wish to support its continuing use in the Anglican Church in Canada. Students in the ordination stream are particularly encouraged to apply.

Students wishing to be considered for one of these bursaries should submit a copy of their curriculum vitae and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two references, together with a covering letter explaining their interest in this bursary and in the Book of Common Prayer, to: Dr. Diana Versegby, PBSC Bursaries Committee, 12 Sherbourne Dr., Maple, ON, L6A 1G8. E-mail: [diana.versegby@sympatico.ca](mailto:diana.versegby@sympatico.ca). The deadline for applications is Friday, November 8, 2019. Candidates will be interviewed by a selection committee in late November, and awards will be made in mid-December.

## *Wycliffe Merchandise*

Get your Wycliffe Ties for \$10. Purchase at Front Desk!