

**From Unread
to
Misread**

*Hebrews
to
Revelation*

Neglected New Testament Books

Doug Rowston

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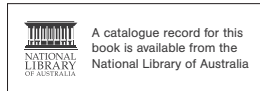
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This book is dedicated to Church Ministers, School Teachers, and Theological Lecturers in Melbourne, Louisville, and Adelaide who have helped me grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

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Introduction

I invite my readers to travel from the Unread (Hebrews) to the Misread (Revelation) in the following pages. This book has been written after I taught a couple of courses at St Barnabas College, Adelaide. One of the courses was entitled ‘Alternative New Testament Voices.’ It included the books from Hebrews to Jude. The other was called ‘The Johannine Literature.’ It encompassed the Gospel and Letters of John as well as the Revelation to John. The task of teaching adult students about these New Testament writings always proves to be most enjoyable.

In the process I have drawn upon the wisdom of a range of scholars. My favourites of yesteryear include George Beasley-Murray, Raymond Brown, and F.F. Bruce. Among recent admired authors are Alan Culpepper, James Dunn, and N.T. Wright. I have also directed students to contributions to *The New Interpreter’s Bible* and *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Of course, select bibliographies are attached to each chapter.

But above all, students are encouraged to read the New Testament books themselves. Such modern translations as *New Revised Standard Version*, *Revised English Bible*, *New International Version*, and *English Standard Version* are worth reading side by side. The advanced student can tackle *The UBS Greek New Testament*. The beginner can refer to *Good News Bible* which is ideal for English as Second Language readers.

The first chapter is about the world of the New Testament. To read these neglected books requires an understanding of the history of the times.

Then the succeeding chapters will make sense of the time and place of the writing of each document. A similar pattern is followed as documents are examined:

- (1) Message — What is the content of the document/s?
- (2) Milieu & Meaning — What are the time & place of writing, the purpose & reason for writing?
- (3) Mission — What is the significance then and now in the witness of the church?

The second chapter is about the Letter to the Hebrews written in the 60s or the 80s perhaps from Rome. The third chapter deals with the Letter of James composed in the 70s or 90s probably to Christians outside Palestine. The fourth chapter introduces the First Letter of Peter written by a secretary of Peter in the 60s during the time of Nero or a disciple of Peter between 70 and 90 to Christians in the north of Asia Minor. The fifth chapter is about the Letter of Jude and the Second Letter of Peter. The former may have been written in the 90s from Palestine and the latter may be dated in the decades after Jude perhaps from Rome. The sixth chapter covers the Three Letters of John to Christians in a community at Ephesus after the Gospel of John about 100. Finally, the seventh chapter tackles Revelation probably written from Patmos to Christians in the west of Asia Minor during the time of Domitian.

The real meaning of these books in the New Testament is for us to meet Jesus. He is spoken of as *the pioneer and perfecter of our faith* (Hebrews), *our glorious Lord Jesus Christ* (James), *the shepherd and guardian of your souls* (1 Peter), *our only Master and Lord* (Jude), *our Lord and Saviour* (2 Peter), *the true God* (1 John), and *the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last* (Revelation).

These New Testament books are a means to an end. There is a difference between looking at the window of the New Testament and looking through the window of the New Testament to the world beyond.

Doug Rowston