

RESOURCE REVIEWS



NEW WESTMINSTER SERMONS *Martyn Atkins*

Latvia: Indevelop, 2020
ISBN 978-0-85346-342-9 | pp. 231, £10.99
Available via the MCHW website:
methodist-central-hall.org.uk/new-westminster-sermons or Amazon.

Those of us that are ministers know what it is like to be a little bit worried when we discover who has been stationed to follow us! After fourteen years of struggling to fill the shoes of the great preachers who had gone before me as superintendents at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, it was such a tremendous relief when the stationing system (in my opinion not always renowned for its good sense!), produced Martyn Atkins as my successor. I knew that the pulpit at Westminster could not be in better hands.

Those of you who have heard Martyn preach at Easter People, Cliff College events, and ECG, as well as up and down the Connexion, or indeed across the world, will know why I felt as I did!

After Martyn had been at Westminster a year or so, I asked one of the stalwart members at the church what she thought of his preaching. 'It's fantastic' she enthused. 'There is so much in Martyn's sermons that I have to listen to them for a second time each week.' I was only mildly affronted that she only ever listened to mine once! Another member of the congregation, a deep thinking Oxford scholar with much experience of fine preaching at his previous church, spoke of profound theology laced with good solid Yorkshire common sense. Be warned though! The very first time I invited Martyn to come as a

guest preacher to Westminster, I had two reactions. An experienced and ordained colleague said that she felt that it was the best sermon she had ever heard, whilst two senior members of the congregation asked that I never invite him again!

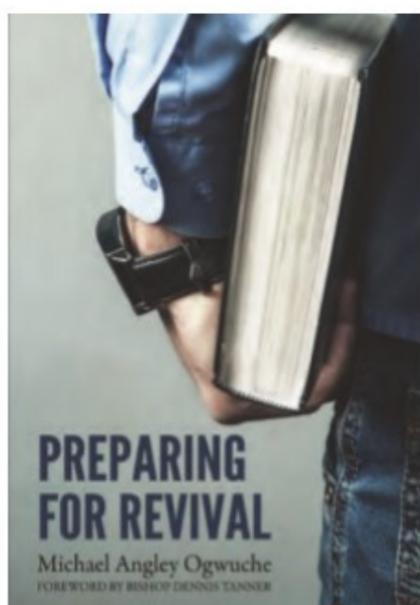
So, make of these sermons what you will. I promise that you will not be disappointed, but stimulated intellectually and fed spiritually. They really are quite superb, both as sermons and as tools for personal devotion; I read one a day as part of my quiet time. Behind each of them is Martyn's deep conviction that we are called to be a mission shaped church. These sermons are not just to be read, but to be taken into the market place and tested.

The sermons themselves: 38 in all, have a tremendous range. Doctrinal themes include church membership and baptism. Discipleship is picked up as Martyn thinks about pilgrimage, guidance and giving. Methodist emphases are there in three sermons covering Aldersgate Sunday, Remembrance Sunday and the Good Friday united procession. The second half of the book features 18 sermons that take us through the Christian year.

I cannot speak too highly of these sermons. They are easy to read and well-illustrated; not just by Martyn's words, but also by his wife Helen's photographs. You will be blessed upon reading them for the first time, but I am sure you will come back to them time and again. Thank you, Martyn, for both your ministry at Westminster and this collection, a gift to a far wider congregation.

Reviewed by the Revd Martin Turner, Supernumerary Minister in the Gloucestershire Circuit, formerly Superintendent of Methodist Central Hall Westminster (2001 - 2015).

PREPARING FOR REVIVAL *Michael Angley Ogwuche*



Exeter: Onwards and Upwards, 2020
ISBN 978-1-78815-529-8 | pp. 139, £9.99
Kindle edition £8.99

Michael Ogwuche has served the Methodist Church in Britain as a Recognised and Regarded presbyter. His book, *Preparing for Revival*, contains both deep despair and great hope. He shares his grave concern for the state of the church and our nation, and the potential for glorious revival. He writes about the gradual moving away from God and his ways, and how, like the church of Laodicea, we have become lukewarm. Instead of holding to God's standards, through Satan's influence of blinding the eyes of so many people, we have gradually shifted towards the ways of the world. He challenges us to realign ourselves to God, by calling us to a closer relationship with God which includes deep repentance of our own sin (detoxing our souls), the sin of the church and the sin of the nation.

This book is rooted in both the Old and New Testaments, in the work of God the Trinity and in our covenant relationship with Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. He indicates how the story of Nehemiah encourages us to rebuild through seeking God afresh in prayer and fasting, grieving over the state of the church and nation, and rebuilding together. The resurrection is a key distinctive feature of Christianity, and as resurrection people we can experience the presence of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within our

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churches. Even if our faith in God is only as small as a mustard seed, we can expect God to do great and glorious things.

This book is not just theoretical, it is also very practical, and includes biblical prayers of repentance and renewal. Michael inspires us to have faith so that through renewing our covenant relationship with God, we can experience God's merciful blessings afresh upon the church and the nations. Furthermore, we can even experience revival in our generation!

Reviewed by the Revd Derek Balsdon who is a Methodist Presbyter, and serves as the MET Development Worker.



THE FORERUNNER CRY: PREPARING OUR LIVES FOR JESUS' RETURN *William Porter*

Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2019
ISBN 978-1-78893-033-8 | pp. 268, £9.99

How do we prepare our lives for Jesus' return? William Porter helpfully looks at the end times through the lenses of: Jesus' Second Coming; The Big Picture; Last-Days Events: The Best and Worst of Times; Last-Days Events: The End-Times Drama; Wider End-Time Themes

in the Bible, *Understanding the Book of Revelation and The Forerunner Call*.

Each part gives biblical teaching, critiques different interpretations and offers personal experience contextualised into today's UK church setting. A 'pause for thought' section provides useful questions to reflect further and the final chapter of each part looks at what this says about our living here and now.

In the final part, 'The Forerunner Call', the author helpfully defines forerunners as those who 'precede, herald and indicate something that is to come' and explores in more depth how we might be more alert to the signs of the times and gain fresh expectancy of living now in the light of Jesus' return. Reading this in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic also gives new insights to consider.

William Porter sets out to reach both a youth and young adult audience while giving sufficient theological reflection for church leaders. I think he succeeds and while he does not expect everyone to agree with all he shares, this accessible guide will help many to engage with this crucial part of our Christian faith. He strongly believes that God is saying today: 'Get ready! Get ready, church. Get ready, world'. Ready for what? Get ready for glory, shaking and Jesus' imminent return'. May this book spur us on to know how to play our small part in God's grand plan.

Reviewed by Jane Holloway, National Prayer Director, World Prayer Centre, Birmingham, UK.

REVIVALS AND REVIVALISM IN BRITAIN 1735-1957 *Norman A Lloyd*

Milton Keynes: Acorn Ind Press Ltd, 2018
ISBN 978-1-912145-91-1 | pp. 310, £9.99

The author was ordained in 1954 as the Minister of a Welsh Baptist Church. He has written on a number of historical subjects and has a particular prayerful interest in the history of revivals, having been the minister of a church in Wales that had known revival, and whose members had experienced revival.

Many years have passed since Britain experienced such a spiritual awakening and the memory of them has been largely lost. This book reminds us of what God has done in the past and for Christian churches and all Christians to pray in the words of the psalmist, 'Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you?' (Psalm 85:6)

The book covers eleven periods of revival.

God has greatly blessed our land in the past, even in the darkest and most desperate times, in answer to the earnest prayers of his people. This book shares many examples of such a prayer. Thousands began gathering in hundreds of prayer meetings for the spread of revival. The following quote sums up the importance of prayer for revival: 'The land was covered by a canopy of prayer and people everywhere hungered for more of God's presence and power'. There was also a great desire for Bible study and biblical teaching as a preparation for revival.

During these times of revival in our nation millions were converted. In two years of revival, two million converts were added to the nation's churches and 200,000 members were added to the Methodist Church. A feature of the revival was the earnest desire of those who became Christians to win others for Christ. In fact it was they, perhaps, more than the preaching of the ministers, which spread the revival and won the great majority of converts through their prayers and zealous witness.

I have often said in my own teaching ministry 'we cannot organise an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival, but we can desire it and pray for it, both individually and corporately'. I believe this book will encourage this desire and prayer for revival; I commend it to you.

Reviewed by David Greenaway, a Supernumerary Minister in the Derby Circuit. Before his transfer into the Methodist Connexion he was a Minister in the Evangelical Free Churches and the International Director of One Step Forward Ministries and Publications, and Vice Chair of the British Church Growth Association.