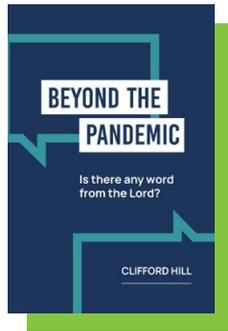


RESOURCE REVIEWS



BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: IS THERE ANY WORD FROM THE LORD? *Clifford Hill*

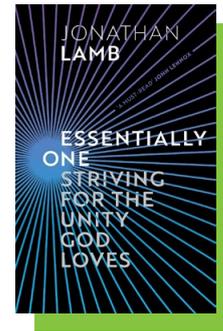
London: Wilberforce Publications Ltd, 2020
ISBN 978-1-916121-1-9 | pp170, £10.00, Kindle Edition £4.99

When the coronavirus pandemic struck, Clifford Hill saw a growing increase in spiritual hunger, with many Christians wanting a Bible based perspective on the crisis and asking: 'Is there any word from the Lord?' He noticed the silence among church leaders. Incredibly, 'no-one among prominent church leaders of any denomination was responding to the needs of the nation, but seemed only to be concerned with giving pastoral support to their own people'. Prompted by the Lord, he wrote this response which deals with the biblical background for understanding the current situation.

The book looks at biblical prophecy, the justice and ways of God, listening to God, all in the context of the secularisation of Britain. Abortion, LGBTQ+, the Black Lives Matter movement are all examined through the lens of his background as a sociologist, political researcher and theologian.

The last two chapters are 'The Word of the Lord to Britain' and 'The Word of the Lord to His Church.' He sees Britain as a nation under judgment for which there must be a call to repentance. He believes that God allowed the closure of churches, even if he did not cause it. The book looks at what God is calling the post crisis church to be. It's not an easy read, but well worth reading. You can watch the launch of the book on youtu.be/SCN1y1xGQ3w

Reviewed by Mike and Lesley Sergeant, MET partners in Melton Mowbray



ESSENTIALLY ONE – STRIVING FOR THE UNITY GOD LOVES *Jonathan Lamb*

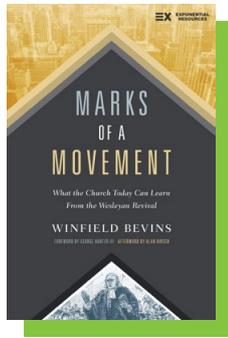
London: Inter-Variety Press, 2020
ISBN 978-1-78359-911-0 | pp. 220, £12,99

Essentially One is a very beneficial resource for Christians, particularly in the light of current conflicts in churches and within denominations. From a firm biblical foundation, Jonathan Lamb expounds God's desire for unity within the Body of Christ. Christians are encouraged to listen carefully to the words of other Christians, and to explore with them what they actually mean by their words, so as to gain greater understanding.

Jonathan Lamb writes about the 'theological triage', looking at the difference between first-order doctrines, second-order doctrines and third-order-doctrines. First-order doctrines are foundational, and any compromise on these truths would be to lose the gospel itself. He summarises these as 'the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith and the authority of Scripture'. Second-order doctrines are still important and might include baptism, the role of women and the use of charismatic gifts. Third-order doctrines are ones which are less important, and of which different beliefs may even exist within the same congregation. This 'theological triage' helps readers to discern between the fundamentals of Christian faith and the non-essentials.

Jonathan Lamb advocates that as individual Christians and as churches we should be willing to work with other Christians and churches with whom we do not see eye to eye on everything, yet disagreeing on first-order doctrines is likely to mean that we can't work together. There is a recognition that truth and error cannot be held together. Each chapter ends with several questions for reflection and discussion, and these help the reader to consider prayerfully how we can be essentially one. This book is both theological and practical, as it provides helpful examples of how we can strive for the unity that God loves.

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



MARKS OF A MOVEMENT

Winfield Bevins

Michigan: Zondervan, 2019
ISBN: 978-0-310-09835-5 | pp220, £8.74

'An epidemic of spiritual laxity and even immorality among some clergy with many ordained ministers not having a living faith which sometimes caused more harm than good'. Is this Bevins' description of the situation from which the Wesleyan revival grew in the 18th Century or our 21st Century context which so desperately needs a fresh wave of God's Holy Spirit?

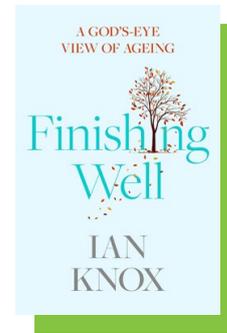
The book begins with an amazing and very perceptive quote: 'This book highlights the stashes of gold in Methodism's past that most Methodists (today) ignore'. From the outset, Bevins is very clear to point out that simply returning to the past is not the answer to the problems that we face in the established church today.

Within its 220 pages, we experience what it was - the marks - that made the Wesleyan revival such a contagious movement of its time. It has some excellent sections about the interrelated and interdependent relationship between discipleship and evangelism: that only those already totally convinced of the transformational work of God in their own lives can infect others with the same passion and desire for transformation. Bevins poses the question: 'Can there be real Christianity without active and defined discipleship within the church community?' My answer and that given by Bevins is an emphatic 'no'.

Each chapter begins with an illustrative quotation. The section concerning Discipleship Systems begins: 'The Wesleyan revolution is an illustration that long-lasting spiritual transformation is not the product of dynamic preaching...it comes only through discipleship building', D. Michael Henderson. This chapter in the book emphasises that for many churches, discipleship is not considered essential but has become an optional extra, a scheme or 'the icing on the cake' rather than being the cake itself.

This book illuminates very clearly the possibility of a different path to that of mediocrity and passivity which many churches are on. Instead, it portrays a path of committed discipleship that means far more than just putting on attractive events and adding attendees. Three appendices are included to help church leaders tackle these very relevant questions and form some action steps. The churches with which I am involved have already begun this process with some encouraging results.

Reviewed by The Revd Philip Dixon, minister in the Christchurch and Wimborne Circuit.



FINISHING WELL

Ian Knox

London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2020
ISBN 978-0-281-08349-7 | pp 283, £8.99, Kindle Edition £5.59

The mission statement of publisher SPCK expresses the desire to 'lead the way in creating books and resources that help everyone to make sense of faith'. Finishing Well is insightful and well written by the long lived and well-travelled evangelist Ian Knox. It is a great refresher as the reader is brought to consider for the first time, or perhaps yet again, the effect of the ageing process. It not only makes sense of our faith in God, but also offers a valuable source of understanding how it is that God has made us to grow old, revives our faith, and helps the reader to appreciate the very real spiritual value of a longer lived life.

Drawing on his life experience, Ian takes on board the value of generations who have set the example, adding quotations and scriptural references that help things that might not otherwise at first be clear, especially when 'aloneness' can leave us with negative thoughts. Its reading is like walking into a clearing where enlightenment brightens inner thoughts of the heart and mind.

The chapters as they unfold are full of anecdotes, quotes, and real-life references, together with many well-appointed scriptures. A book that can be read on grey days and Mondays, and for those who feel they are old, there is a very real opportunity to receive the realisation that there is yet more to come. Delivered in its reading is an expectancy that, as each day dawns, God gives yet another refreshing perspective for our daily life and faith.

The ageing frame of our earthly tents may well tell us that we, like everyone, will pass on from this life, but 'Finishing Well' puts back what sometimes, if not often, we can feel we have lost.

It is a book you can also pick up and put down chapter by chapter, and it also helps to engage with the Apostle Paul who encourages us in his writing: 'whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things'.

Reviewed by Brian Reece, a Local Preacher in the Peak District. Brian has had a career in engineering spanning more than fifty years, and is now working into retirement within the global orthopaedics supply sector.