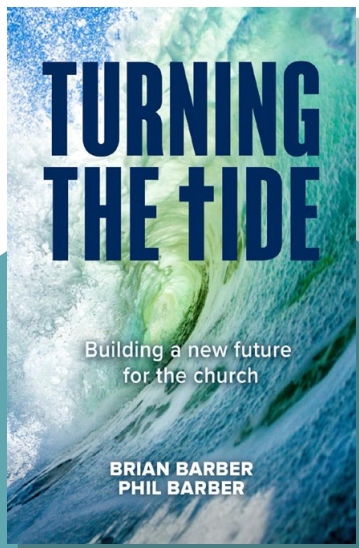


Resource Reviews



Turning the Tide: Building a new future for the Church

BRIAN BARBER AND PHIL BARBER

PublishU, 2023

ISBN: 979-8-86697-4337 | pp. 158 | £10.99

Available on Amazon and PublishU.com

How would you feel about inviting an unchurched friend to your church with the specific outcome being that they write an honest critique? That is the suggestion posed by the authors of this book. Using the story of a young family who have decided the appropriate thing to do is start attending church, Brian Barber and Phil Barber enable the reader, in an entertaining and non-threatening way, to explore through this family's fictional experiences, how their own church might appear to an unchurched visitor.

This book is an excellent way to view your own church through the eyes of a potential newcomer. Each chapter begins with a portion of the continuing story, looking at a different aspect of church life. This is followed by various points to ponder drawn from the family's experience, and then a series of discussion questions ideal for small group discussion, facing the issues pertinent to their setting.

Reviewed by Liz Miller, Vice-Chair of MET. Liz is a Local Preacher in the Launceston Area Circuit in Cornwall.

Revive Us Again

REJUVENATING A MOVEMENT OF TRANSFORMATION

LESLIE NEWTON

PublishU 2023

ISBN 979-8860496682 | pp. 145

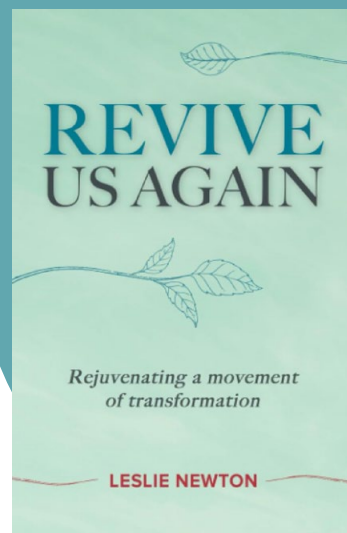
£10.99 paperback; £6.99 Kindle edition

Available on Amazon and PublishU.com

Leslie Newton is a Methodist Minister serving as Chair of the Yorkshire North and East District. His experience of new ventures and creative positive thinking comes across in this book, perhaps because of his experience as co-chair of the Methodist Church's 'New Places for New People' Guiding Team and as a Trustee of Fresh Expressions.

The writing style is accessible and, whether you enjoy reading or not, it is worth picking this up. Based on a premise that God is not finished with the Methodists yet and that they can be "galvanised and motivated by our 'divinely appointed mission' that has at its heart a call to spread scriptural holiness through the land" (pp. 17-18), there is a challenge to be open to revival and rejuvenation. A key chapter for this was 4, 'A Passion for Holiness'. The point is well made that there is both personal transformation and social transformation arising out of that (p. 49). With a helpful setting of the tension between Methodism as a movement or a church, there is a pertinent question about how these understandings might be blended for a modern age.

Key questions with writing about revival are how revival is defined and to what extent we are seeking and praying for it, acknowledging that it is Holy Spirit led. It would be a good exercise to read this book with those questions in mind.



Reviewed by Rev Chris Briggs, Chair-elect of Methodist Evangelicals Together and District Mission Enabler of The Methodist Church Nottingham and Derby District.



Smoke and Mirrors: A church deceived over sexuality

SARAH SEDGWICK

Independently Published, April 2024

ISBN: 979-8880382231|pp.258| Paperback £10; Kindle Version
£3.25 Available on Amazon

Ministry Leader, Sarah Sedgwick, gives an insight into her new book in which she considers how easily we have been distracted from our key focus as Christians and considers how we can better respond to the lies and deceit of Satan.

One of the biggest distractions of the modern era for Christians is the debate that rages within churches over homosexuality. As we focus on this, our eyes are pulled away from the main thing, the Great Commission.

I have been fascinated by how rapidly the church has fallen. How has Satan managed to confuse the church so easily?

'Smoke and Mirrors' is the name given to an illusion associated with magicians, yet as I thought more about it, I saw how this is Satan's modus operandi. He attacks the church with subtle deception and lies, and we are left with a church that fails to distinguish itself from the world, with members who fail to change their ways in obedience to God, and leaders who fail to teach biblical truth. We are part of a global church which, in many instances, no longer displays God's glory.

It starts with lies, those five small words found in Genesis: 'Did God really say that?'

In the book, 'Smoke and Mirrors, a church deceived over sexuality', I explore the concept of smoke and mirrors in much greater detail, contrasting the smokescreens of Satan (false doctrine, sexual temptation, bitterness, pride etc), with the holy smoke of God's glory. We, like David when he decided to bring

the Ark of the Covenant home, should earnestly desire the glory of God in our lives at all costs.

As Christians, our role is to reflect God's holiness, to exhibit a love that is like the love of God: a love that is not proud, self-seeking, not delighting in evil, but rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). In comparison, Satan seeks to create an illusion; he wants us to see 'an angel of light'. The words of the prophet Isaiah are being fulfilled in our times: 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' (Isaiah 5:20).

As many cast God's plans to one side and champion a 'new and better way,' failing to demonstrate humility, the church is drawn away from God's holiness, not just over sexuality, but in many other areas. Idolatry has become common place (Galatians 5:9).

Launched in April 2024, the book 'Smoke and Mirrors: A church deceived over sexuality' includes testimony of 11 individuals who have found freedom in Jesus from the smoke and mirrors of Satan. These testimonies are a powerful reminder of God's glory, and speak of overcoming not only the great sexuality deception, but idolatry and addiction. As you read the book, I hope you will be challenged to dive deeply into your own beliefs and understanding of God's word.

SARAH SEDGWICK

Sarah is ministry leader for Transformed Ministries, which works tirelessly to support individuals, families and churches impacted by questions of sexuality and faith. Her personal experience of salvation after 30 years in the LGBTQ+ community drives her passion to educate the church to become a spacious place for people to discover Jesus for themselves.



The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God

JUSTIN BRIERLEY

Tyndale House Publishers 2023

ISBN - 10: 149646672 &

ISBN - 13: 978-1496466778

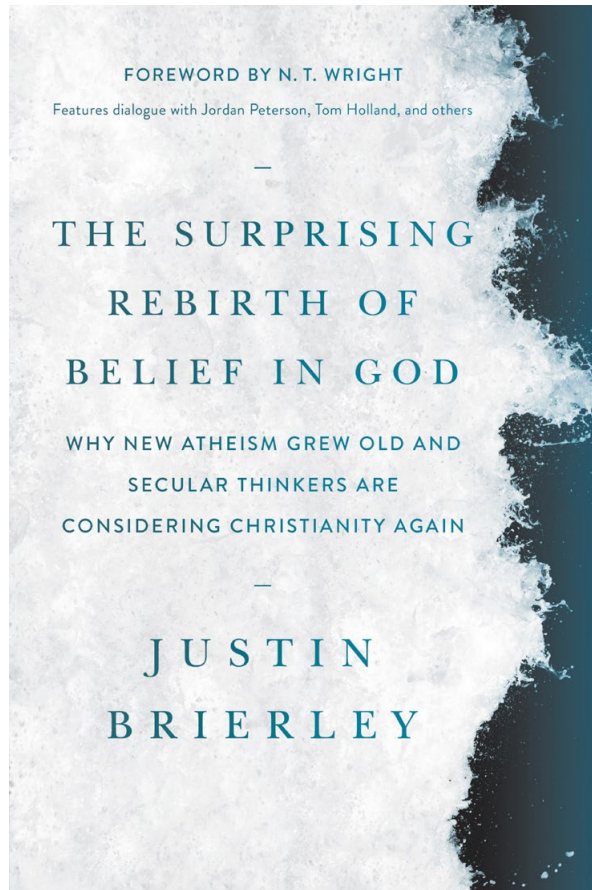
pp. 272 | £13.66

About 18 years ago, I began to host weekly radio conversations between Christians and non-Christians. This was a time when 'New Atheism' was becoming a cultural force to be reckoned with. The movement was led by the so-called 'four horsemen' - Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and Christopher Hitchens. Each of these public intellectuals had written a bestselling anti-God book. Not long after, the 'Atheist Bus Campaign' saw red London buses circulating the capital bearing the slogan 'There's Probably No God, Now Stop Worrying And Enjoy Your Life'. For several years it became very fashionable to be an atheist and to dismiss religion as both false and evil.

At the time I was hosting many debates with dogmatic representatives of New Atheism. But as the years wore on, more and more of the non-believers I was meeting were distancing themselves from this aggressive form of non-belief.

It seems that new atheism grew old pretty quickly. People tired of the fact it was fairly fundamentalist itself. The movement itself suffered all kinds of struggles and fractures leading to an internal implosion in due course.

In my book 'The Surprising Rebirth Of Belief In God' I chart the rise and fall of New Atheism and the growth of



a new conversation among secular intellectuals who are reconsidering the value of Christianity.

People like Jordan Peterson, a psychologist whose lectures on the deep wisdom and meaning in the Bible are reaching millions of people. The historian Tom Holland whose book 'Dominion' tells the story of how the Christian revolution shaped the West's moral imagination. Louise Perry, a secular female rights advocate who came to startlingly Christian conclusions about sex and relationships in the course of writing her book 'The Case Against The Sexual Revolution'.

There is a new conversation in God happening in our

culture and I am encountering a surprising number of people who, having been let down by the empty promises of secular modernity, are willing to give Christianity another try.

In 'The Surprising Rebirth Of Belief In God' I tell their stories, explain how the tide of faith may be turning and what the church must do to meet the new meaning seekers who are willing to explore Christianity again.

JUSTIN BRIERLEY

Justin is an author, speaker and broadcaster.

You can purchase a signed copy of The Surprising Rebirth Of Belief In God at www.justinbrierley.com.

The accompanying podcast documentary series of the same name is also available on all podcast platforms.