

**Tremper LONGMAN III**'s contribution to **The NIV Application Commentary** series, (1999, Zondervan) on *Daniel*, brings out the meaning and contemporary significance of the book but one will need to go to Young and Baldwin for a more detailed treatment of the text. As he considers wisdom in Daniel he does not hesitate to present his own interpretation of Ecclesiastes.

## **OT sermons**

*Just Grace* is a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments by **R.T. KENDALL** (SPCK, 2000), with a helpful forward by Terry Virgo. Kendall introduces the sermons by telling us of his experience at Oxford as he began studying the Puritans. One gets the feeling that the author is embarrassed to mention the Commandments in Christian circles, whereas the New Testament is not diffident in referring to them. We close this survey by referring to two books published by Bryntirion Press in 1999. The first brings together sermons preached by **D. Martyn LLOYD-JONES** which have been given the title, *Let everybody praise the Lord, An exposition of Psalm 107*. These evangelistic sermons show the profound difference between false and true religion and how true Christianity inevitably leads to praising God from a sincere and grateful heart. Another gripping and challenging series of evangelistic sermons this time by **Graham HARRISON**, entitled *Beginning at the Beginning, Sermons from the Book of Genesis*, is also warmly recommended.

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To his eternal glory, God does not deal with his covenant people strictly on the basis of what they deserve. He figures into his moral equation the merit of his crucified Son and he gives us good things we do not deserve. And that means one thing for us who bear his name. Discipline may be necessary but it is never final. We may ruin our lives; we may bungle the stewardship of God's cause in our generation. But God is the greatest junk dealer in the universe. He deals in secondhand merchandise. In his wisdom and mercy, he takes the damaged goods of our lives and he restores us. No one else can do this. No one else cares enough to try. All our hope lies in God. And this vision of God our Restorer fills the people of God with hope, even as they remain for new under discipline. God will restore our fortunes. But there is still more.

Raymond Orland in *Revival Sent From God*, commenting on Psalm 126

So what is the proof that the Spirit is being poured out on us? The voice of the church rings with prophetic clarity. The people of God are no longer passive, intimidated, unresponsive, uncertain. They are no longer preoccupied with self-convenience, comfort. They are no longer complaining, whining, griping. Instead, they become outspoken in God's praises and gospel truth, 'declaring the wonders of God' (Acts 2:11). The Spirit-drenched people of God 'speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. [They] sing and make music in [their] heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 5:19-20). And the unbeliever, observing a church eloquent with prophetic power, 'Will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare, So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is ready among you"' (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

Raymond Orland in *Revival Sent From God*, commenting on Joel 2:28-29

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## Book Reviews

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### John Stott – The Making of a Leader

*Timothy Dudley Smith, IVP, £14.99*

Some people will never forgive John Stott for four things: being an Anglican; supporting Billy Graham in 1966 (we must wait until Volume 2 for that story which probably will not be fully told or understood this side of eternity); his position on conditional immortality and most seriously that he has been a success while still being alive!

This volume is part one of a projected two-volume biography of Stott. It covers the first 40 years of his life. As the title suggests, this is an account of the background and influences that shaped this man who has made such an impact on global evangelicalism since the Second World War. Timothy Dudley Smith is a close friend of Stott and overall this is a friendly treatment.

There are six things which stand out in this biography.

**The shaping of a careful man.** It is clear that the home where Stott was nurtured had very high standards. Even the lifelong hobby of birdwatching has early beginnings in the young John Stott making meticulous drawing of birds that he had observed.

**The strength of principles.** A very moving section records the tension between Stott and his father over whether John should serve in the forces during the Second World War. Stott senior had a distinguished career in the army during both World Wars and obvious did not begin to understand how John could fail to serve his King and country. Maybe it is this principled tenacity that allows him to take unpopular stand on issues like nuclear pacifism and more recently on Conditional

Immortality. I think we would understand Stott better if we saw that his position on the later point is not the result of the disintegration or denial of his evangelicalism but a principled expression of an evangelical mind wrestling with profound questions.

**The power of mentoring.** The defining influence in Stott's early life was the rather eccentric bachelor EJH Nash (Bash) who is a legend among a certain generation of former Public School boys who went through his camps as boys and then later as officers. It is clear that many of the practical lessons of godliness, bible study, evangelism and leadership were learnt from Bash. Later at All Souls, Stott's Rectory was a veritable leader factory as curate after curate did their apprenticeship under his careful eye. He also developed a method of training church members to understand and pass on their faith.

**The importance of the local church.** Stott could have gone a long way in the Anglican Church, but he saw the strategic importance of building the church. All Souls has quite literally been his church all his life, it was the place he attended as a boy and in retirement he remains Rector Emeritus. Recently I heard Rico Tice who is now on the staff at All Souls speak warmly about the advice and support he as a young man received from Stott. There have been two Rectors since Stott moved into a wider ministry; the church that Stott built has stood the test of time and change.

**The necessity of strategic evangelism.** This is a thrilling story of a man who did not merely pay lip service to meeting the challenge of engaging contemporary society with the unchanging gospel. This is found in his support of Billy Graham, his writing of life changing books like Basic Christianity, his University missions and the week by week work of mobilising the

congregation at All Souls to reach their friends and neighbours for Christ.

**The impact of a biblical ministry globally.** This will clearly be worked out more fully in the much awaited second volume. However the seeds of his future influence are noted here. The basis for so much of John Stott's considerable influence is in his careful reflection on biblical principles and his careful application of them to life.

Anyone interested in the development of evangelicalism in the latter part of the 20th Century will benefit from this book. So too will all who like Stott seek to serve Christ in a changing world.

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## **Losing our Virtue**

*David Wells, IVP, 228 pp, £9.99*

This is the author's third book about the effect of modern culture on evangelical churches. The introductory *No Place for Truth* maintained that evangelicalism today is governed not by theology, but by management methods and psychological therapy. *God in the Wasteland* says that pushed by a culture where God is unimportant, the church has lost its sense of God's sovereignty and holiness and has taken the worldly mind-set of modernity. This third volume turns to our view of man, with telling analyses of modern secularism and evangelicalism.

Wells compares classic evangelical spirituality with that of post-modern evangelicalism. The first issues from an understanding of God's holiness, which puts morality centre stage. It highlights sin, salvation, and obedience. The other focuses on God's love in a way that sees sin less in a moral relationship with God, and more in a therapeutic relationship including inner anxiety and pain. This leads to a greater

emphasis on techniques than on proclaiming the need of salvation from sin.

Wells says that while today's evangelicals assume the central evangelical doctrines, in fact marketing and psychology control their thinking. He points out that as westerners today see morality as private opinion and personal choice, we talk about values, rather than virtues, and seek to deal with inwardly felt shame rather than objective guilt. Self-restraint has disappeared. Today's evangelicals utilise these aspects of modernity rather than challenge them.

Wells correctly insists that Christianity should speak to the culture of the day, rather than be formed by it. By returning to a strong moral vision, evangelicalism would find an effective apologetic to challenge modern people who cannot live consistently with their denial of objective morality. However, while Wells' main thesis is correct, the link between culture and theology may be more complicated than seems apparent from these books. It is arguable, for example, that the Reformation and the Evangelical Revival both owe something to the cultural trends of their times, and that similarly, modern views have helped to challenge an over-cerebral evangelicalism.

The main weakness of the whole series for British readers is that they analyse the American scene. Wells' understanding of Europe is rudimentary, and he makes at least one simple mistake. The British editions even retain American spelling, enhancing the impression we are reading about other people, not ourselves. This is a pity, because although there are important differences between America and Britain, there remains much in their secularism and their evangelicalism that is similar. What Wells is saying remains of paramount importance to both countries.

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*Ivan Stringer*

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