

Book Review

R. T. Kendall, *In Pursuit of His Glory: My 25 Years at Westminster Chapel* (Charisma House, 2004): 310 pp..

As a missionary back in the early 1990s I picked up a copy of R. T. Kendall's book *Jonah* in London and found it, at the time, to be spiritually helpful. I did not know then that the book came from Kendall's first expositional preaching series in 1977 as the successor of Martin Lloyd-Jones at central London's famed Westminster Chapel. It is the strange direction Kendall's ministry took in subsequent years at Westminster that is the subject of this book.

In Pursuit of His Glory is a pastor's memoir of Kendall's controversial and, by his own admission, disappointing tenure at Westminster from 1977 to 2002. In some ways, one might say that Kendall's ministry was doomed from the start. He began with at least two strikes against him. First, he was an American coming to serve a British congregation. Second, he was succeeding the famed pulpit ministry of the deeply influential David Martin Lloyd-Jones. Kendall began behind in the count and never measured up to Westminster standard set by his predecessor.

The strange aspect of the story is Kendall's account of his embrace of the charismatic movement in an effort to produce revival at Westminster. It began with his welcoming of the Jesus movement street evangelist Arthur Blessit, the introduction of contemporary choruses in worship, and the extending of altar calls. In retrospect these changes were mild compared to what would come. Stunning is Kendall's subsequent bold and rapid embrace from there of the most fringe elements of the charismatic movement. This included his welcoming of the "Kansas City Prophet" Paul Cain into membership and the pulpit at Westminster and then inviting laughing evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne of the notorious "Toronto Blessing" to minister at Westminster. In some ways, one might say that Kendall merely returned to his Nazarene roots, but was this what the Chapel members who called him in 1977 bargained for?

How did the Chapel go from such a staunch citadel of Reformed theology under "the Doctor's" leadership to a place promoting the Toronto Blessing? The transformation, again, is stunning. This is not to say that these changes were unopposed. Kendall cryptically describes opposition that developed to his ministry at Westminster, including a painful "church meeting" on January 16, 1985 which he barely survived. He also refers often to his "total forgiveness" of those who opposed his ministry. One of the strangest elements of the book is Kendall's insistence that he consulted with the aged Lloyd-Jones and gained his support for the introduction of these novel teachings. Kendall's recollections have been openly challenged by Iain Murray in a review of this book in *The Banner of Truth*.

Kendall speaks with disappointment of the never achieved revival he sought to bring about at Westminster. His attempt to marry his version of Reformed theology (the "Word") with charismania (the "Spirit") did not bring renewal and revival. One of the

saddest parts of this memoir is Kendall's often expressed despair at the dwindling congregations to which he preached over the years. By the end of his ministry, the cavernous chapel, capable of holding thousands, held only a few hundred at best. Sadly, one wonders in the end if his desire to see vast numbers in attendance was really an effort to pursue God's glory or an effort to gratify his own pride and fleshly desire for popularity. This book should be read by Pastors and laymen alike not as an exercise in seeking methods to employ but as a cautionary tale of what to avoid in pastoral ministry.

Jeffrey T. Riddle, Pastor, Charlottesville, Virginia