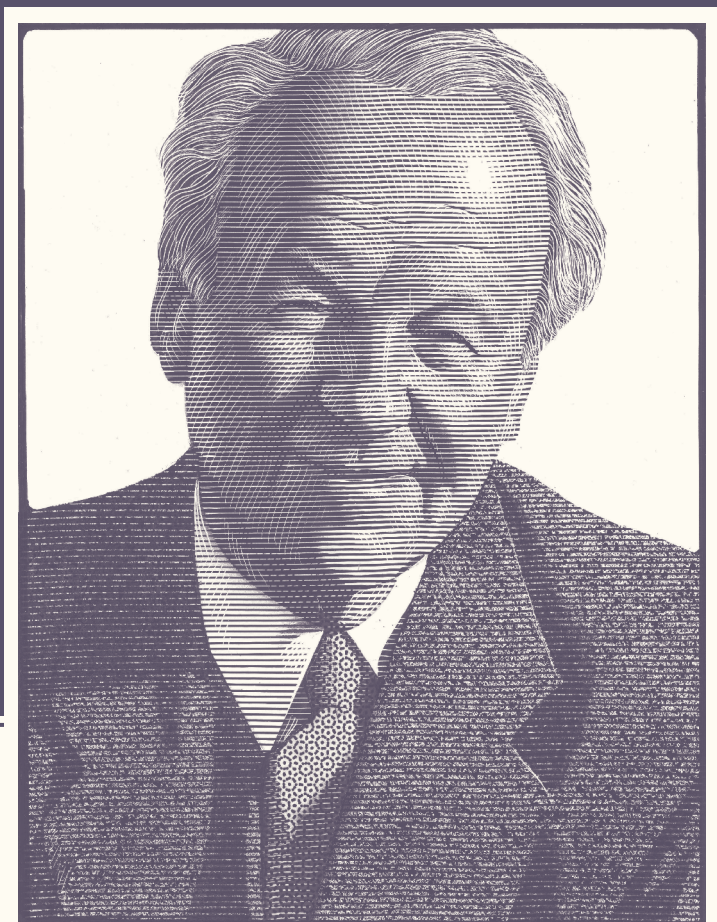


TIM CHESTER



STOTT

*on the Christian Life*

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

“Fifty years ago, I became a Christian through reading John Stott’s *Basic Christianity*. Since then, Stott’s books and sermons have been my closest companions. If we could be allowed but one mentor to grow us into Christlikeness, John Stott would be at the top of my list. I am so very grateful to Tim Chester for summarizing Stott’s theological contributions in a manner that is exceptionally well done. Reading this book was a profoundly moving experience.”

**Derek W. H. Thomas**, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina; author, *Let’s Study Revelation* and *Let’s Study Galatians*

“John Stott was, of course, an inspiring leader and Christian disciple. But what made his legacy so powerful was that he was also a master of the distilled theological summary, the result of his deep wrestling with the Scriptures. His crystal clarity was always hard-won. Tim Chester has achieved the almost impossible by distilling a lifetime’s ministry into a highly accessible and, above all, heartwarming book. We have so much to learn from Stott, and I am confident that this book will open up his legacy for a new generation. I am so grateful for Chester’s work and this book, and I thoroughly recommend it.”

**Mark Meynell**, Director (Europe and Caribbean), Langham Preaching; editor, *The Preacher’s Notebook: The Collected Quotes, Illustrations, and Prayers of John Stott*

“Why should anyone read John Stott these days? Tim Chester’s book provides abundant reason and motivation. While not a biography, it tracks the sources and maturing of Stott’s thinking along the historic contours of his immense lifetime’s ministry, and across the breadth of his spiritual passions and intellectual profundity. Thoroughly researched and meticulously documented, this is a superb introduction to one of the greatest yet most humble leaders God has ever gifted to his church—comprehensively worthy of the man himself while glorifying Christ, as he would have wanted. If you knew John Stott, relish the spiritual challenge and tonic of journeying with him through this book. If you didn’t, start here! You will be enriched, informed, and inspired.”

**Christopher J. H. Wright**, International Ministries Director, Langham Partnership

“John Stott towered over sixty years of global evangelicalism. This is the best examination of his theology of the Christian life, full of insight and practical helpfulness.”

**Julian Hardyman**, Senior Pastor, Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge, United Kingdom

“This highly readable book invites us into the life and teaching of John Stott. It interprets for us the social, ecclesial, and theological contexts Stott navigated through the course of his ministry. Drawing on a broad range of Stott’s writing, this book vibrantly conveys the central emphases and methods of his thinking, preaching, and institutional leadership—challenging readers to consider how the pursuit of Christlikeness takes visible shape in a life of service, obedience, and humility.”

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STOTT

*on the Christian Life*

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STOTT

*on the Christian Life*

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

TIM CHESTER

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WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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# SERIES PREFACE

Some might call us spoiled. We live in an era of significant and substantial resources for Christians on living the Christian life. We have ready access to books, DVD series, online material, seminars—all in the interest of encouraging us in our daily walk with Christ. The laity, the people in the pew, have access to more information than scholars dreamed of having in previous centuries.

Yet, for all our abundance of resources, we also lack something. We tend to lack the perspectives from the past, perspectives from a different time and place than our own. To put the matter differently, we have so many riches in our current horizon that we tend not to look to the horizons of the past.

That is unfortunate, especially when it comes to learning about and practicing discipleship. It's like owning a mansion and choosing to live in only one room. This series invites you to explore the other rooms.

As we go exploring, we will visit places and times different from our own. We will see different models, approaches, and emphases. This series does not intend for these models to be copied uncritically, and it certainly does not intend to put these figures from the past high upon a pedestal like some race of super-Christians. This series intends, however, to help us in the present listen to the past. We believe there is wisdom in the past twenty centuries of the church, wisdom for living the Christian life.

Stephen J. Nichols and Justin Taylor



# INTRODUCTION

When I was nineteen, I attended a day conference where John Stott was the speaker. When we arrived, the friend with whom I had come went off to the restroom, and I was left alone and feeling a bit out of place. An older man noticed me, came over, and began talking to me, asking about me. When my friend returned, the man introduced himself, “Hello, I’m John Stott.” My jaw nearly hit the floor. I had been chatting with the great John Stott without realizing it.

That brief encounter made a big impression on me. Stott—the only speaker that day—had seen an awkward-looking teenager standing alone and had taken it upon himself to make the young man feel welcome. I met him a few times thereafter, and he always remembered my name. The private John Stott was just as impressive as the public persona: gracious, humble, and without affectation.

To be asked to write a book on Stott’s theology of the Christian life was an offer I could not refuse, and it has been a tremendous pleasure to spend an extended period of time with him through his writings in a concentrated way. At the same time, it has been a daunting prospect for a number of reasons. For one thing, I know many people who knew Stott well, far better than I did. I have comforted myself with the thought that I am not writing another biography.<sup>1</sup> I have not sought to unearth new material on Stott’s life or to provide some kind of psychoanalytic study of his motives. I have written about his *theology*, primarily as presented in his published writings, though also as exemplified in his life.

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<sup>1</sup> See Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, vol. 1, *The Making of a Leader* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999); Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, vol. 2, *A Global Ministry* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001); Roger Steer, *Inside Story: The Life of John Stott* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009); and Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Writing about a historical figure often involves presenting that person's thought in a more accessible way, simplifying the complexity of his or her ideas. But Stott is famous for the clarity of his thinking and the precision of his prose. There has been little scope for me to make him clearer than he already is! Instead I have presented a synthesis of his approach to the Christian life. In addition, I have attempted to identify something of the inner logic of his theology, locate his ideas in their historical content, and explore their abiding significance. I hope this book will encourage a new generation of evangelical Christians to benefit from Stott's thought.

One of my first thoughts on approaching the task was to wonder whether Stott had a distinctive perspective on the Christian life. Was he perhaps simply an articulate advocate of mainstream evangelical orthodoxy? But the more I have explored his theology in its historical context, the more I have realized that it has been Stott, perhaps more than anyone else, who has influenced the evangelical world I inhabit. So it is not just that Stott reflects evangelicalism; evangelicalism reflects Stott. A contemporary evangelical understanding of the Christian life was not simply something Stott regurgitated; it was also something he significantly shaped. This is one of the reasons why he is such an important figure to consider. We are looking at ourselves in the mirror when we look at Stott; we are exploring our own story.

Moreover, Stott was far from simply an echo of the consensus. On a number of issues, he fought for the positions he held, sometimes countering opposite extremes simultaneously. On the doctrine of Scripture, for example, he battled both liberalism and fundamentalism. On missions, he fought an ecumenical missiology that neglected evangelism and a narrow evangelical missiology that neglected social action. Instinctively irenic by temperament, he brought together divided evangelicals on many issues. But he was also ready and willing to stand his ground. Scripture was always his ultimate authority, and he was willing to follow wherever it led. One of his books was originally entitled *Christ the Controversialist*. In it he draws lessons from Christ's confrontations with the people of his day, making Christ's approach a model for a contemporary willingness to stand firm on the truth. "Certainly every right-thinking person will avoid unnecessary controversy, and we should steer clear of argument for argument's sake. . . . But we cannot avoid controversy itself. 'Defending and confirming the gospel' is part of what God calls us to do."<sup>2</sup> So, for example, Stott defended

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<sup>2</sup> John Stott, *But I Say to You: Christ the Controversialist* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 19–20.

substitutionary atonement at a moment when it might easily have been eclipsed, and he redirected evangelicalism away from a prevailing quietistic approach to sanctification.

Stott was a pastor-theologian, as am I. He was offered posts in academia on several occasions, but he chose to remain embedded in the local church. He took theology seriously and read widely. But he did not write like an academic theologian, nor did he engage in self-referential theological discussions. His theological work had to be squeezed around a full schedule of parish responsibilities, organizational commitments, and speaking engagements. But his theology is stronger rather than weaker as a result. He wrote *from the church for the church*—which is as it should be.<sup>3</sup>

Stott was also an expositor. This not only provided the foundation for his thought; it also ensured a balance in his ministry. He was not, and could not be, a man of limited theological interests. Inevitably, therefore, I have not covered everything Stott said about the Christian life. I have not included, for example, a sustained treatment of his teaching on prayer or the eschatological framework of the Christian life.<sup>4</sup> Instead I have focused on what I consider to be his key emphases and distinctive contributions.

The Sunday after Stott's death, I announced his passing to my congregation. I was aware that among them were people who had never heard of John Stott. So I tried in a few words to convey what he had contributed both to the wider church and to my own life. It was one of the few times I have broken down in tears on a Sunday morning.

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I am grateful to Chris Wright and Ted Schroder, who both agreed to talk with me about this project; to Julian Hardyman and Mark Meynell, who both made constructive comments on the manuscript; and to the staff of the Church of England Record Centre for assisting me with access to the archive of Stott's papers. I have also made use of an interview I conducted with John Stott for my book *Awakening to a World of Need*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For Stott's own comments on this, see John Stott, *The Epistles of John* (London: Tyndale Press, 1964), 11. For an example of the difference this creates, see the contrasting analyses of 1 Thessalonians Stott provides in *The Message of Thessalonians* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 19–20.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, the conclusion to John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 375–92.

<sup>5</sup>Tim Chester, *Awakening to a World of Need: The Recovery of Evangelical Social Concern* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 22–24.



## CHAPTER I

# AN EVANGELICAL LIFE

John Stott was born on April 27, 1921, into a privileged home. His father, Arnold Stott, was a rising doctor who would go on to become physician to the royal household. Stott senior had served in the First World War and would serve again in the Second, rising to the rank of major general. John was the longed-for son with three older sisters. It was a home with servants, including a succession of nannies. The one who stuck was Nanny Golden, a devout Christian, who taught the children Christian choruses. The Stotts lived in Harley Street, the area of London traditionally associated with doctors. And, as a child, Stott was taken to the nearby church, All Souls, Langham Place.

Early in his childhood John acquired a love of the natural world, encouraged by his father. Together they would catch butterflies using traps baited with treacle and laced with beer to make their prey drowsy. But when a sibling squabble led to a cushion landing on John's butterfly box, John shifted his attentions to what became a lifelong fascination: bird-watching. Letters and diaries ever after switched easily between accounts of his work and birds he had seen.

### **School Days**

Arnold Stott had been educated at Rugby, the elite private school that gave its name to the sport, and Rugby School is where John was destined. But first he spent a spell at Oakley Hall prep school. John was not always happy at Oakley Hall. Perhaps the ice that formed in the wash basins during cold



winter days and the occasional canings from which Stott was not immune did not help. But it was not all hardship. John was not above a prank, a habit that continued throughout his life. His school friends referred to him as “the boy with disappearing eyes” because his eyes would narrow to a squint when he laughed.<sup>1</sup>

Boarding school was a well-worn track for the children of the English upper classes. It was a route designed to instill not only a top-class education but also a stiff upper lip, a suppression of the emotions that Stott would come to lament. The first time his mother came to see him at Oakley Hall, he met her in the headmaster’s office, where he found her standing next to the headmaster and his wife. Without thinking, Stott advanced toward his mother, his hand outstretched, and said, “How do you do, Mrs. Stott?” The headmaster’s wife burst out laughing, but Emily Stott had the presence of mind to cover her son’s embarrassment by shaking his hand and replying, “How do you do, Johnny?”<sup>2</sup> It was an incident that encapsulated the confusion of a boy taken from a happy home to the stark surroundings of boarding school dorms. Nevertheless, Stott became head boy, the UK equivalent of class president, and won a scholarship to Rugby.

### Conversion

Religion of a rather formal kind was part of the life at Rugby School. There was a brief service in the chapel each day as well as “house prayers” in dormitories at night. Stott later described feeling that “if there is a God, I was estranged from him. I tried to find him, but he seemed to be enveloped in a fog I could not penetrate.” This estrangement was coupled with a sense of defeat. He could not be the person he knew he should be.<sup>3</sup> He would creep into the school chapel to read religious books and seek God, but to no avail.

What brought change was the testimony of another schoolboy. John Bridger, a year ahead of Stott, invited him to what today we would call the school “Christian Union,” but which was simply known as “the meeting.” It met each Sunday afternoon in one of the classrooms with Bridger leading and sometimes giving a talk (which astonished Stott, because his experi-

<sup>1</sup> David Jones, in *John Stott: A Portrait by His Friends*, ed. Chris Wright (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 138.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, vol. 1, *The Making of a Leader* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 57–58.

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, *Why I Am a Christian* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 27.

ence of religion to date had always been clerical). Then on Sunday, February 13, 1938, a few weeks before Stott's seventeenth birthday, they had a visiting speaker, E. J. H. Nash, or "Bash," as he was known. A few years previously Nash had joined the staff of Scripture Union to work with schoolboys, somewhat controversially focusing on elite schools with the aim of evangelizing the future leaders of the nation. He had developed a ministry built around vacation camps supplemented by support of Christian Unions during term times. The camps became known colloquially as Iwerne Camps (after the Dorset village of Iwerne Minster, in which they were held), or simply "Bash" camps. Bridger had been converted at just such a camp two years before.

Stott later wrote of Nash's visit: "He was nothing to look at, and certainly no ambassador for muscular Christianity. Yet as he spoke I was riveted." Nash confronted the boys with a question posed by Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:22), making clear that neutrality was not an option. "In a way I can't express," recalled Stott, "I was bowled over by this because it was an entirely new concept to me that one had to do anything with Jesus."<sup>4</sup> Stott would later write:

I used to think that because Jesus has died on the cross, by some kind of rather mechanical transaction the whole world had been put right with God. I remember how puzzled, even indignant, I was when it was first suggested to me that I needed to appropriate Christ and his salvation for myself. I thank God that later he opened my eyes to see that I must do more than acknowledge I needed a Saviour, more even than acknowledge that Jesus Christ as *the* Saviour I needed; it was necessary to accept him as *my* Saviour.<sup>5</sup>

After the meeting Stott approached Nash, who took him for a drive in his car to answer his questions. "To my astonishment," says Stott, "his presentation of Christ crucified and risen exactly corresponded with the need of which I was aware."<sup>6</sup>

As was his custom, Nash did not push for an immediate decision. But that night Stott "made the experiment of faith, and 'opened the door' to Christ."

<sup>4</sup> John Stott, interview by Timothy Dudley-Smith, in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:93.

<sup>5</sup> John Stott, *Basic Christianity*, rev. ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 121–22.

<sup>6</sup> John Stott, in John Eddison, ed., *Bash—A Study in Spiritual Power* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1983), 58, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:94.

I saw no flash of lightening, heard no peals of thunder, felt no electric shock pass through my body, in fact I had no emotional experience at all. I just crept into bed and went to sleep. For weeks afterwards, even months, I was unsure what had happened to me. But gradually I grew . . . into a clearer understanding and a firmer assurance of the salvation and lordship of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Stott's diary entry a couple of days later reads: "I really have felt an immense and new joy throughout today. It is the joy of being at peace with the world—and of being in touch with God. How well do I know now that He rules me—and that I never really knew Him before."<sup>8</sup>

Nash began to correspond with Stott, writing a letter once a week for at least the following seven or so years.<sup>9</sup> Some covered theological topics, others contained ethical exhortations, while others offered practical guidance on issues like prayer. Soon Stott was inviting other boys to the Scripture Union camps. A friend called Peter Melly accepted his invitation (much to Stott's surprise) and was converted at an Easter camp. By the summer of 1939 a dozen boys accompanied Stott from his school "house" to the camp. John became their de facto leader and pastor.

Meanwhile Stott had become head boy and also played the lead role in the school production of Shakespeare's *Richard II* to some acclaim. The following summer Stott accompanied Nash on a mission with a small rural church in Staffordshire before attending the Scripture Union camp for two weeks at the end of August along with sixteen others from Rugby School. Three days after the end of the camp, Britain was at war, and the Stotts moved from central London to a house in the countryside.

### University Days

Stott went to Cambridge University in October 1940 to study modern languages. Numbers were lower than normal with so many young men entering the army. John joined the first aid squad.

He was extremely disciplined, working nine or ten hours a day. He set his alarm for 6:00 each morning (later in life it would become 5:00 a.m.) to allow time for an hour and a half of prayer and Bible study before breakfast

<sup>7</sup> John Stott, "The Four Questions," November 1979, JRWS manuscript, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:94.

<sup>8</sup> John Stott, diary entry, February 15, 1938, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:96.

<sup>9</sup> John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy: Guard the Gospel* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 29.

at 8:00. He routinely left events at 9:30 p.m. to get to bed in time to keep up this routine.

Stott threw himself into the life of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU). CICCU itself was founded in 1877 to nurture students in the evangelical faith and to evangelize their fellow students. Technically, Stott never joined CICCU, having promised his father (who described CICCU as “a lot of anaemic wets”) that he would not do so.<sup>10</sup> But Stott was a member in all but name, making a regular donation in lieu of a subscription. He routinely invited people to CICCU’s evangelistic “lectures,” and in his first term two of his contacts were converted. He took a lead in discipling young Christians and organized Bible studies. “This is what we find in the passage, isn’t it?” he would say.<sup>11</sup> Not all his attempts at evangelism were successful. Stott describes sharing the gospel with a fellow undergraduate. As he explained the free gift of salvation through Christ’s finished work, the student suddenly shouted, “Horrible! Horrible! Horrible!”<sup>12</sup> These were hard times to be an evangelical. Each college had a chaplain, who without exception was a High Church Anglican steeped in liberal theology.

Stott continued to be involved in “Bash camps,” quickly becoming Nash’s right-hand man and, in the process, turning the camps “from a slightly amateur organisation into a well-oiled machine”<sup>13</sup>—a far-from-straightforward task during wartime rationing. The camp ministry not only filled his holidays; planning and preparation also involved daily tasks throughout each term. Nash demanded a high level of commitment from camp helpers, but it was also a great training ground, and many future evangelical leaders were shaped first as campers and then as leaders. Nash was not slow to give young men the opportunity to speak. Stott himself wrote, “Though I blush when I remember some of the naïve and even downright erroneous notions I taught, I can never be thankful enough that Bash pushed me into the deep end to sink or swim.”<sup>14</sup> David Watson, who would later become a significant British evangelist and church leader, reckoned he attended more than thirty-five camps in total (two at Christmas, two at Easter, and three each summer), learning how to lead people to Christ,

<sup>10</sup> John Stott, interview by Timothy Dudley-Smith, in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:131.

<sup>11</sup> John Sheldon, letter to Timothy Dudley-Smith, June 12, 1989, in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:125.

<sup>12</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 309–10.

<sup>13</sup> Oliver Barclay, in Wright, *John Stott*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> John Stott, in Eddison, *Bash*, 61, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:145.

answer common questions, disciple young converts, lead Bible studies, give talks, and so on.<sup>15</sup> Nash's high standards were more than matched by Stott's meticulous organization. He was still only nineteen and in his first year of university study. Yet, in 1941, Nash wrote a memo expressing his desire that, "if anything should happen to me," the work of the camps should be handed on to Stott.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of his second year, Stott got a first in French and a 2.1 in German.<sup>17</sup> Being used to doing well academically, he was disappointed with the 2.1. But by this point he had decided to switch tracks and study theology.

### Ordination

A month into his final year at Rugby School, Stott and a group of other boys were taken to a recruiting office to "attest." Stott did not realize at the time that this was the equivalent of enlisting. Only later did he realize that he would be expected to report for duty on his twentieth birthday. Stott, though, was becoming a pacifist on the basis of his reading of the Sermon on the Mount. Nash, too, was a pacifist, and though it seems he did not shape Stott's initial instinctive pacifism, he was happy to affirm it. Later Stott would adopt the theory of "just war," a mainstay of Christian ethical reflection. But at the time, no one explained just war theory to him, and instead he was subjected to somewhat jingoistic propaganda that did little to convince him. Just as significantly, he was by now intent on ordination. Two obstacles stood in his way: his attestation and his father.

Arnold Stott was by now back in uniform. Despite being in his fifties, he had been recalled to the army and posted to France. Stott senior had been suspicious of his son's conversion but had assumed it would prove a passing phase. Ordination was another matter. Arnold had always nurtured the hope that John would enter the diplomatic service. Moreover, he believed it was John's duty to serve in the forces during this time of war. John, though, felt constrained by a higher duty toward God. What followed was a painful breach between father and son, conducted through letters and visits, sometimes mediated through Stott's mother. Arnold declared he could no longer fund John's university education, though he never quite

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<sup>15</sup> David Watson, *You Are My God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983), 39, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:146–47.

<sup>16</sup> E. J. H. Nash, letter, March 30, 1941, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:143.

<sup>17</sup> Equivalent in the United States to an A in French and an A- or B+ in German.

carried through this threat. When John proved resolute, Arnold accepted his son's decision. "Am consenting but with great reluctance and unhappiness," Arnold wrote in a telegram. Nevertheless, as John wrote later, "for two years he found it virtually impossible to speak to me."<sup>18</sup>

In principle those training for Christian ministry could be exempted from the military service, but they had to prove ordination had been their intent before the outbreak of war. Stott had in fact told his headmaster he wanted to be ordained six months before hostilities commenced. But it was still a protracted process to secure exemption, especially given the opposition of his family. Eventually he received the backing of the bishop of Manchester to become an ordinand of the Church of England and switched to studying theology at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, in October 1942.

Stott spent most of his time at Ridley studying on his own. He did not attend a single lecture in his final year. With the assistance of the vice-principal, Cyril Bowles, he ranged beyond the normal set reading. Stott's intellectual development did not involve an unquestioning or simplistic acceptance of the orthodoxies in which his faith had initially been nurtured. "During my three years of reading theology at Cambridge," he would later write, "I wrestled painfully with the challenges of liberalism."<sup>19</sup> Oliver Barclay comments:

I do not think others realized how acutely difficult John found this at times, just because he was so honest-minded. I well remember him sitting in my college room virtually in tears, saying that if he could not work his way through the liberal teaching, his ministry would be destroyed and he would be left with no ability to preach a word from God.<sup>20</sup>

These days Christian students have access to a plethora of academic works by evangelical scholars defending the authority of Scripture, but little of that existed in Stott's day. The New Testament scholar John Wenham, then a curate in Cambridge, introduced Stott to the writings of B. B. Warfield (1851–1921). Stott was also helped by attending meetings of the newly established Tyndale House, Cambridge, founded by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) to bolster evangelical biblical scholarship.

<sup>18</sup> John Stott, in Eddison, *Bash*, 59, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:162.

<sup>19</sup> John Stott, in David L. Edwards with a response from John Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver Barclay, in Wright, *John Stott*, 31–32.

Nash hoped Stott would continue his ministry with the Scripture Union camps. But Stott wanted to be involved in parish ministry. Harold Earnshaw-Smith, rector of All Souls, the church the Stotts had attended in London, was a regular visitor to CICCU. In 1945, he preached at its anniversary service, and Stott read the Bible passage. Afterward Earnshaw-Smith invited Stott to become his curate (assistant pastor), and Stott accepted. Stott's father declared it would be "a good place in which to begin." It would prove a "beginning" that lasted a lifetime.<sup>21</sup> Stott was ordained by the bishop of London on December 21, 1945, a few months after the end of the Second World War.

Geoffrey Fisher, the archbishop of Canterbury when Stott was ordained, described evangelicals at the time as a "cowed, beaten, depressed group."<sup>22</sup> Timothy Dudley-Smith says, "At the time of his ordination in 1945 it was difficult to see a future for evangelicalism, in the Church of England at least, as anything more than a faithful remnant, marginalized and all but excluded from the main stream of church life."<sup>23</sup> Here is Stott's own assessment:

When I was ordained in 1945, soon after the end of World War II, there were few evangelicals in the Church of England. For over a century Anglo-Catholic thought had predominated, though weakened by liberal theology. . . . There were no evangelical bishops and no evangelical theological teachers in any university. The few evangelical clergy there were fought bravely, but had their backs to the wall. The evangelical movement was despised and rejected.<sup>24</sup>

Evangelicals were not just marginalized; they were also often backward looking. Michael Baughen writes, "There were all sorts of rules and shibboleths about liturgy (not a jot or tittle of the Prayer Book could be changed), clergy dress (even the size of collars!), negative commandments about the cinema, or dancing, or women wearing trousers, and the like." Any departure from these cultural norms might be enough to damn a young man as a "liberal" and lead to his marginalization. Evangelical church practice, says Baughen, was "stifling."<sup>25</sup> Stott was about to change this.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:205.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher: His Life and Times* (Norwich: Canterbury, 1991), 300, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:217.

<sup>23</sup> Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:9.

<sup>24</sup> John Stott, "Evangelicals in the Church of England," unpublished memorandum, August 1983, JRWS papers, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:217.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Baughen, in Wright, *John Stott*, 69.

### All Souls Church

When Stott first became curate, the All Souls building was closed, having been damaged during the bombing of London. The congregation was meeting down the road at St Peter's, Vere Street. Earnshaw-Smith had reestablished All Souls as a clearly evangelical church. On his first Sunday he had found the communion table set for the celebrant to stand facing east with his back to the congregation (as if offering a sacrifice to God), as is customary in Anglo-Catholic churches. He pointedly moved to take his place on the north side of the table (so pastor and people were gathered *around* the communion table).

Along with regular preaching, Stott was involved in door-to-door parish visiting and took responsibility for the "Children's Church" (which later became the "Family Service") and the young people's work. While the parish of All Souls contained some of London's most expensive properties, it also encompassed poorer areas of what is now social housing. Stott took the youngsters away on camp, modeled in part on his experience of "Bash camps," albeit with children from very different backgrounds. He would wake the campers by parading round their tents playing an accordion.

During his curacy Stott spent two days living as a tramp on the streets of London. He let his stubble grow, dressed in old clothes, and spent a sleepless night under the arches of Charing Cross Bridge surrounded by the regular down-and-outers. His attempts to beg a cup of tea the next morning proved unsuccessful. The following night he queued for a bed in a Salvation Army hostel, for a moment forgetting his role and chiding the Salvation Army officer for his lack of compassion. The following morning he was outed when he attempted to get breakfast and was relieved to return to his normal life.

In Stott's first year at All Souls, Earnshaw-Smith, then aged fifty-five, suffered a heart attack. While the rector recovered, *de facto* leadership of the church fell to Stott. Invitations to other roles came. London Bible College invited him to be their New Testament tutor. He considered becoming the chaplain at Eton College and, at the other end of the social spectrum, chaplain of the Docklands Settlement. But Stott felt unable to leave the parish.

In 1950, Earnshaw-Smith died. The rector of All Souls is a Crown appointment, which in practice means the post is filled by the prime minister on the advice of a patronage secretary. A delegation from the



Parochial Parish Council, the body that represents the congregation, led by the senior church warden, Geoffrey Bles (the publisher of C. S. Lewis), made it clear they were interested in only one name. It seems the bishop of London, William Wand, agreed. So it was that in September 1950, Stott became the new rector. Though not entirely without precedent, it was unusual for a curate to move straight to the senior role in the same parish.

It made little sense to have a single man living in the thirteen-room rectory. So the curates and some students joined Stott along with a “house-mother.” Far from vowing celibacy, Stott expected to marry. He had had schoolboy crushes on girls and remained somewhat dazzled by beautiful women throughout his life. He once wrote that there were two women who attracted him.

It’s difficult to explain what happened. All I can really say is that when I had to make up my mind whether to go forward to commitment, I lacked assurance that this was God’s will for me. So I drew back. Having done it twice, I realise it was probably God calling me to be single. Looking back over my life, I think I know why God has called me to be single—because I could never have travelled or written as I have done if I had had the responsibilities of family. It has been lonely in some ways, but I’m grateful for a very large circle of friends.<sup>26</sup>

The centerpiece of parish evangelism was a new innovation, a regular “Guest Service.” Throughout the 1950s the church grew steadily, much of that growth coming through new converts. Before the Second World War, around three hundred people were on the electoral roll (members of the church), but this grew to over seven hundred. Within the parish was Harley Street, the traditional home of leading doctors, and Oxford Street, the retail center of London. So Stott introduced an annual “Doctors’ Service” and appointed a “Chaplain to the Stores.” He also opened “the Clubhouse,” modeled on a Victorian mission hall, to reach the poorer areas of the parish. Remarkably, 392 children and young people came on the opening day. Very few had ever attended the church, though Stott knew many by name. These early efforts at reaching the working-class areas of the parish were undoubtedly somewhat paternalistic, but such attitudes were universal

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<sup>26</sup> Steve Turner, “Backing the Basics,” *Church Times*, October 13, 1995, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:330.

among the upper classes in 1950s Britain, and Stott was unusual in his passion to reach beyond his own social class.

In the 1960s, All Souls started organizing church members into mid-week fellowship groups—a common enough practice today, but an innovation at the time. It also established “Care and Counsel,” a Christian counseling center. “In those days,” comments Myra Chave-Jones, the psychotherapist who led the work, “Care and Counsel was ahead of its time, breaking entirely new ground in the conventional evangelical world, where the usual attitude was that ‘more prayer and Bible study would solve such problems.’”<sup>27</sup>

Stott was also heavily involved in hosting Billy Graham’s mission in the Harringay Arena in 1954. Stott attended most evenings, and All Souls organized buses for people to travel from the parish to the arena. The campaign culminated in a closing meeting at Wembley Arena attended by 120,000 people. Not only were many people saved, but evangelicalism in Britain was given a much-needed confidence boost.

### University Missions

In November 1952, Stott returned to Cambridge to be the main speaker at the triennial CICCUC evangelistic campaign, known as a “mission.” The speaker at the previous two missions had been the American Donald Grey Barnhouse. Barnhouse was a strong personality who connected well with many of the ex-servicemen returning to the university after the war, but he riled the senior fellows. Stott was a different prospect. He was polished, urbane, and one of their own, having graduated with a first in theology. Attendance was so great that at the final meeting, people had to be turned away. At the close of the mission the student committee presented him with a leather-bound Bible that became his pulpit Bible for many years to come.

It was a key moment in postwar student work. Stott himself recognized its value, and student missions became an important part of his work for the next twenty-five years. Mirroring Bash’s commitment to reaching future leaders, Stott attached special importance to student evangelism because students would go on to make up the majority of the world’s future leaders.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Myra Chave-Jones, in Wright, *John Stott*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> John Stott, “Evangelism in the Student World,” *Christian Graduate*, March 1959, 1, cited in Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34.

He led missions to Oxford University in 1954 and Durham University in 1955, as well as being assistant missionary when Billy Graham spoke at the 1955 CICCUM mission. Stott spoke for a second time at missions in Oxford in 1957, Cambridge in 1958, and Durham in 1959. In 1956 and 1957, he led missions at several universities in Canada and the United States in the course of a four-month tour (during which he spent Christmas with the Graham family). The All Souls Church council agreed to release Stott for this extended period but added a stipulation: they required him to take a few days off for bird-watching before returning—a feature that became a regular part of Stott's travels. The trip to the United States was followed by similar tours of Australia (1958) and South Africa (1959).

Stott returned to Cambridge for his final university mission in 1977, twenty-five years after his first. The impact of this twenty-five-year ministry was enormous. Many people were converted through his talks, which combined clear Bible exposition, warm apologetical awareness, and an unambiguous call for response. His talks set a pattern many have followed, and the missions gave a generation of evangelicals confidence in the gospel. The substance of his addresses, honed in many different contexts, became his book *Basic Christianity*, first published in 1958. It has sold over 2.5 million copies and been translated into over fifty languages, becoming the standard evangelistic book for a generation of Christians.

While Stott was on a visit to Australia, his father died. The family had agreed beforehand that, should this happen, Stott should continue to fulfill his responsibilities. The funeral took place in his absence, but a memorial service was delayed until his return. It was a difficult time. Stott's voice was failing, and his thoughts were back in Britain. Before the final meeting in Sydney, he asked the mission committee to pray that God's power would be made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). In the years that followed he often had people tell him they were converted on the night he lost his voice.<sup>29</sup> Before the Melbourne mission he locked himself in his room and prayed for strength. "Hour followed hour," he wrote later, until he sought to lay hold of the promise of Psalm 145:18:

The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

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<sup>29</sup>Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 333–34.

“All I can say is that as I sought to fulfil the conditions, he fulfilled the promise. I experienced nearness. I rejoiced in his presence. I was assured of his blessing, and was able to go forward into the mission.”<sup>30</sup>

### Hookses, Frances, and the Queen

In 1952, Stott was on holiday with friends in Pembrokeshire in South Wales, when they came across a deserted cottage. Stott took a fancy to it and asked if it might be bought. The following year a letter arrived saying The Hookses was on the market, but Stott was outbid. A few months later, however, the new owner found himself unexpectedly moving on. Stott had just received £750 for his first book, *Men with a Message*. So £750 is what he offered, and his offer was accepted. The Hookses became his much-loved holiday home and writer's retreat, a retreat he shared with friends and Christian groups. In 1960 a member of the congregation arranged for two outbuildings to be converted into what became known as The Hermitage, Stott's personal writing room. One of the rituals of Hookses was that Stott would insist on washing the dishes after the evening meal. This, though, could also be an occasion for mischief. For Stott would invite a new acquaintance to dry while he washed. There were two sinks, the second used to rinse off the soap suds. Stott would drop plates into the second sink in such a way as to splash water over his assistants, seeing how wet he could get them before they complained.

In late 1956, Frances Whitehead became first the church secretary and then Stott's personal secretary. She became affectionately known as “Frances the Omnicompetent” or “SOAK” (Source of All Knowledge). When he published *The Cross of Christ*, Stott included a dedication “to Frances Whitehead in gratitude for 30 years of outstanding loyal and efficient service.” She would continue serving him for another twenty-five years, right up until his retirement.

On more than one occasion Stott was asked to consider becoming a bishop. But each time he chose to remain at All Souls. One appointment he did accept in 1959 (since it did not involve leaving the parish) was to be one of the chaplains to the queen, a largely honorary title that involved preaching occasionally at St James's Palace. In 1983, he preached at Sandringham House and joined the royal family for a barbeque on the beach. A few days

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<sup>30</sup>John Stott, memorandum to Timothy Dudley-Smith, February 1996, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 1:407.

later a police motorcycle arrived at his London flat with a brace of pheasants, a present from the queen.

### The Wider Church

In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, his travel, and his writing, Stott was actively involved in networks and organizations, both within the Anglican Church and beyond:

- He was the first chair of Frontier Youth Trust.
- He was the first chair and later president of Latimer House, the Anglican evangelical think tank.
- He reestablished the Eclectic Society for younger evangelical Anglican clergy.
- He served four terms as a chair of the UK Inter-Varsity Fellowship.
- He was a leading figure in the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC).
- He was one of the founders of the Church of England Evangelical Council (the English member group of the EFAC) and chair of the National Evangelical Anglican Congress (NEAC).
- He established the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion Literature Committee and Bursary Fund, forerunners of Langham Literature and Langham Scholars.
- He was president of Tearfund, the evangelical development agency (akin to World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals).
- He was a founding trustee of the Shaftesbury Project, an evangelical think tank on social issues.
- He was the chair of the Evangelical Conference on Social Ethics.
- He was, at different points, involved in debates over the reform of the Anglican liturgy and canon law, and led criticism of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

“In those days,” comments Richard Bewes, “Stott seemed to be everywhere.”<sup>31</sup>

When the then bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, reinterpreted the resurrection as a series of experiences involving the enduring personality of Jesus and poured doubt on the historicity of the virgin birth, Stott both met with him privately and refuted him publicly. Stott wrote an article in

<sup>31</sup> Richard Bewes, in Wright, *John Stott*, 76.

*The Times*, the UK newspaper of record, before developing his critique into a book entitled *The Authentic Jesus*.<sup>32</sup>

In 1970 Stott and All Souls perhaps bowed to the inevitable: Stott's wider role was growing, and the congregation needed a pastor who could focus on its needs. Stott continued as rector, but Michael Baughen came as vicar, and to all intents and purposes Baughen functioned as the church's leader. The Baughen family moved into the rectory, and a new flat was built for Stott over the garage. The transition was tough for Stott, but he remained resolutely loyal to Baughen and careful to submit to his leadership within the church. Five years later, Baughen became rector and Stott became rector emeritus.

In his book *Godly Ambition*, Alister Chapman presents Stott's career as a series of disappointments which propelled him in frustration from parish ministry to student work, to involvement in evangelical Anglicanism, to the global stage. No doubt there is some truth in this. Certainly not all Stott's hopes were realized (especially his hopes of reaching the working-class population of the parish). But by any comparative standards Stott saw considerable success in each of these spheres. Chapman's thesis appears stronger than it is, because he treats Stott's life thematically, masking the way these "stages" in Stott's career in fact overlapped. Stott was not seeking out new ministries to compensate for disappointments. A more natural reading is that success in one arena opened new opportunities in other areas.

In the 1970s, Stott made multiple visits to North America, three visits to Australia, almost annual visits to Asia, at least four visits to Africa, two visits to Latin America, and numerous visits across Europe. The core of what he did wherever he went was university missions and expository sermons. At the end of one trip to Latin America he told the All Souls congregation that he learned three valuable lessons: enjoying a siesta (Stott was already well known for his HHH—his "horizontal half hour"—after lunch), renouncing the English vice of punctuality, and kissing all the women when you enter a room. Then he added: "But alas! I shall have now to unlearn at least two of those lessons."<sup>33</sup>

In 1973, Stott realized a lifelong ambition of bird-watching within the Arctic Circle, staying at Bathurst Inlet Lodge in Canada. Canada's Dominion Day fell on a Sunday, and Stott offered to lead a service as a result of which

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<sup>32</sup> John Stott, *The Authentic Jesus: A Response to Current Scepticism in the Church* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Kirk, in Wright, *John Stott*, 177.

he found himself appointed as the “Honorary Chaplain” with an invitation to return the following year.

Stott was a key figure at the Lausanne Congress in 1974, which *Time* magazine described as “possibly the widest ranging meeting of Christians ever held.”<sup>34</sup> The aim was to galvanize evangelicals toward the task of world evangelization, but Lausanne also did much to provide theological coherence to the evangelical movement, as well as placing social action on its agenda. Stott had gone to Lausanne “without any lively expectation of it being important.” But “God met with us,” he said, and the outcome surpassed anything he could have imagined.<sup>35</sup> David Wells describes it as “the high-water mark” in the “resurgence of biblical Christianity,” adding, “The importance of the Lausanne Covenant remains undiminished for its evangelical cohesion, vision, and conviction, and no small part of this remarkable moment belonged to Stott.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1968, Stott published a series of expositions under the title *The Message of Galatians*. The phrase “The Bible Speaks Today” was on the cover, but there was no further indication that this was the first in a series. Only in 1973 did a second volume appear, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*. From this emerged the Bible Speaks Today commentary series, with Stott as the New Testament series editor. Originally it was conceived as a ten-year project, though in the end it took thirty years to complete. Stott himself contributed the volumes on the Sermon on the Mount, Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, 1 Timothy and Titus, and 2 Timothy. The series was called The Bible Speaks Today because “it is today’s message we want our readers to hear and heed. . . . The application will sometimes be to the burning theological and moral issues of the day, and sometimes to our personal and social responsibilities as Christians.”<sup>37</sup>

By the 1970s, Stott’s books were selling in increasing numbers. At the same time, his travels made him acutely aware of the dearth of Christian literature available to most pastors of the Global South. “I remember a Christian youth worker in Soweto,” he wrote, “whose eyes, when I presented him with a book, filled with tears. He said it was the first Christian

<sup>34</sup> “Religion: A Challenge from Evangelicals,” *Time*, August 5, 1974, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,879423,00.html>.

<sup>35</sup> John Stott, interview by Timothy Dudley-Smith, in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, vol. 2, *A Global Ministry* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 217.

<sup>36</sup> David F. Wells, “Guardians of God’s Word,” *Christianity Today* 40, no. 10 (1996), cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:228.

<sup>37</sup> John Stott, “The Bible Speaks Today (Memorandum to Authors),” August 1972, JRWS Papers, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:244.

book he ever possessed apart from the Bible.”<sup>38</sup> So it was that the Evangelical Literature Trust was born in 1971 to channel Stott’s royalties into providing free or subsidized books to pastors around the world. Later ELT was incorporated into the Langham Partnership, which also added a fund to support scholarships for Global South students.

Roy McCloughry became the first in a succession of study assistants in 1976. The role involved everything from summarizing books, compiling indices, and tracking down references, to chauffeuring, doing dishes after meetings, and running errands. Most found it impossible to keep pace with Stott’s own regime. Frances Whitehead told one of the study assistants that being Stott’s secretary was like driving in a small car with a fire engine behind you, sirens blaring and lights flashing. The assistant replied that being a study assistant was like riding a bicycle with the car and fire engine at full tilt on your back.

It was also in 1976 that Stott acquired the moniker “Uncle John.” At a meeting of Christian Union leaders a student addressed him as “John.” Stott graciously let it be known that he felt this showed a lack of respect for an older Christian. So John Wyatt, a member of All Souls and the chair of the meeting, asked how he would like to be addressed. This, it seems, threw Stott somewhat. Eventually Wyatt suggested “Uncle John.” “Oh, yes!” replied Stott. “If you want to call me Uncle John, I won’t protest at that.” It was not long before Frances Whitehead became “Auntie Frances.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1979, while Stott was in the United States, his sister Joy was rushed to the hospital, having taken an overdose. She had faithfully cared for her parents in their old age. But following her mother’s death in 1966, she had gone downhill and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. She settled in Derbyshire, near her sisters. But the “voices” got worse, and medication had little effect. She lingered long enough for Stott to see her when he returned to England, but she died a few days later. The coroner returned an open verdict, refusing to decide whether it was a genuine suicide or a miscalculated cry for help. Her local vicar wrote to Stott after her death expressing his confidence that she died trusting “in the love of God.” Stott used the small legacy he received from her estate to build an extension to Hookses, which he named “Joy’s Room” in her honor.

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<sup>38</sup> John Stott, “John Stott Speaks Out,” interview by Michael G. Maudlin, *Christianity Today* 37, no. 2 (1993), cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:232.

<sup>39</sup> Roy McCloughry, memorandum to Timothy Dudley-Smith, September 8, 1994, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:234.



### *Essentials*

In 1986, Stott was invited to lunch by David Edwards, then the provost of Southwark Cathedral and a liberal church historian. Edwards pitched the idea of a book in which Edwards assessed Stott's theology and Stott wrote a response. Despite the prospect of intense scrutiny of his work, Stott agreed. What developed was subtitled *A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*. At the heart, *Essentials*, the book's main title, was a critique of Stott's evangelical theology of Scripture and the cross by Edwards, with a robust response by Stott.

But what garnered attention, especially in the United States, were Stott's comments on the future of the unregenerate. In the book Stott said he was open to "the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilation, and that 'eternal conscious torment' is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture."<sup>40</sup> Some thought Stott had "changed his mind" on hell, but in a private briefing document he said a tentative annihilationism had been his position "for over 50 years,"<sup>41</sup> and certainly in notes from 1962, Stott says we "cannot be dogmatic" on whether hell will be "conscious."<sup>42</sup> Though Stott was not the only evangelical taking this position (John Wenham and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes had come to the same conclusions), for some people this immediately placed Stott outside the camp. Stott refused to "dogmatise" about his position and asked people not to speak of his "endorsement of annihilationism." "'Endorsement' is too strong a word for what I hold only 'tentatively.'"<sup>43</sup> He called for a dialogue among evangelicals on the basis of Scripture.

The issue was not simply whether this view was correct but also whether it could be held by an evangelical. There are plenty of other issues on which evangelicals routinely agree to disagree without casting aspersions on one another's orthodoxy. But many assumed annihilationism involved a denial of the authority of Scripture. Stott, though, explicitly warned against asking what one's heart says rather than asking what God's word says. Responding to one scholar's description of him as "that erstwhile evangelical," Stott wrote, "The hallmark of authentic evangelicalism

<sup>40</sup> John Stott, in Edwards, *Essentials*, 315. See also Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians: Preparing for the Coming King* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 149.

<sup>41</sup> John Stott, "A Statement about Eternal Punishment (For Private Circulation Only)," Church of England Record Centre, STOTT/5/3(1).

<sup>42</sup> John Stott, "Annual School 1962: Eschatology," Church of England Record Centre, STOTT/2/4.

<sup>43</sup> John Stott, letter to Donald Macleod, January 18, 1992; see also Stott, letter to Roger Nicole, June 13, 1991, Church of England Record Centre, STOTT/5/3(3).

is not that we repeat traditional beliefs, however ancient, but rather that we are always willing to submit them to fresh biblical scrutiny.”<sup>44</sup>

Stott's position, he claimed, arose from his reading of Scripture. He argued that (1) the language of destruction suggests an end of existence; (2) the purpose of fire, the dominant image of hell, is to destroy rather than inflict pain; (3) justice demands a punishment commensurate with the crime, which suggests a punishment in time to match crimes committed in time; and (4) the eternal existence of the impenitent in hell is hard to reconcile with God's ultimate triumph over evil. “The debate,” he was keen to emphasize, “concerns not the eternity but the *nature* of this punishment, whether the wicked will endure conscious torment for ever or will be annihilated for ever.”<sup>45</sup> The respected evangelical New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce wrote to Stott to say that, while he himself remained agnostic on the issue, “annihilation is certainly an acceptable interpretation of the relevant New Testament passages.”<sup>46</sup> Stott himself concluded: “I believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.”<sup>47</sup>

#### “Retirement” and Retirement

In his sixties, a time when most people are beginning their retirement, Stott visited over a hundred countries, including three extended trips to Latin America and at least twenty visits to the United States. The demands these visits made were huge. On his sixty-fifth birthday he set up AGE, his “Accountability (or Advisory) Group of Elders,” which met three or four times a year under the benign chairmanship of Richard Bewes, by then the rector of All Souls, to help Stott manage his priorities. Often its purpose was to give Stott a guilt-free way of turning down requests. His study assistant wrote a briefing for hosts, often ignored, asking them to limit his schedule to two talks a day.

For his seventieth birthday some friends paid for him to go on a bird-watching trip to Antarctica (thus ensuring Stott had visited every continent). In 1998, while bird-watching in Lebanon, Stott handed his binoculars to a companion because they appeared to be faulty. But the fault lay with

<sup>44</sup> John Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment.”

<sup>45</sup> John Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment.”

<sup>46</sup> F. F. Bruce, cited in John Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment (For Private Circulation Only),” Church of England Record Centre, STOTT/5/3(1).

<sup>47</sup> John Stott, in Edwards, *Essentials*, 320.

his vision. This was followed by abdominal pains, and his return had to be delayed. In London he was examined by his friend and doctor John Wyatt. Stott had suffered two embolisms, leaving permanent damage to his left eye and an irregular heartbeat. This meant he could no longer drive and required revised guidelines for hosts when he was traveling.

Stott began to reduce his wider organizational commitments to focus his attention on what would become his two legacy institutions: Langham Partnership, with its ministry to majority-world church leaders, and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. The LICC was founded by Stott in 1982 to give people from all walks of life a Christian worldview and a vision for integral mission. Stott was asked, as he had been previously, to put his name forward as archbishop of Sydney, and he declined, citing his commitment to the LICC as one of the reasons.

In his seventies he visited more than forty countries, many on multiple occasions, including China. Stott once told a group of English clergy, “One of the main burdens God has given me is for the rising Christian leadership of the Third World . . . the students and pastors of the Third World are my priority concern.”<sup>48</sup> His success in this venture was in good measure due to his personal humility, along with his recognition of the past injustices of colonial history and the present injustice of global inequity. He was a celebrity, a natural leader, and the product of his elite background, but he used his influence to back emerging Global South leaders. Vinay Samuel said, “I do not know any context in Asia, Africa and Latin America where key evangelical leaders do not regard Dr Stott as a pastor, friend, and theological mentor.”<sup>49</sup> Corey Widmer, one of his study assistants, wrote of a visit with Stott to Africa: “I have never seen him as I have seen him here—so vibrant, alive, strong, compassionate, and brimming with kindness and wisdom.”<sup>50</sup> There is perhaps a sense in which being overseas allowed Stott to escape the emotional constraints of English upper-class culture.

In 1983, Robert Runcie, the then archbishop of Canterbury, bestowed on Stott an honorary doctorate. In 2006, Stott was awarded the honorary title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) by the queen “for services to Christian scholarship and the Christian world.” The following year, age finally caught up with him, and he stepped back from active

<sup>48</sup> John Stott, recording of interview by Gavin Reid, Church Society Recording C108, November 1978, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:326.

<sup>49</sup> Vinay Samuel to London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, July 19, 1996, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:432.

<sup>50</sup> Corey Widmer, personal journal, cited in Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 2:436

ministry, aged eighty-six, to live in the College of St Barnabas, a retirement home for Anglican clergy in Surrey.

The Reverend Dr. John Stott, CBE, died at 3:15 p.m. on July 27, 2011, aged ninety. Family and close friends were gathered around his bedside, where together they read from the Scriptures and listened to Handel's *Messiah*. After his death, many, many tributes were made to him. Billy Graham said, "The evangelical world has lost one of its greatest spokesmen, and I have lost one of my close personal friends and advisors."<sup>51</sup> Stott's funeral took place on August 8, 2011, with people queuing around All Souls to attend. Memorial services also took place around the globe. His ashes were interred at Dale Cemetery in South Wales, near his beloved Hookses.

Perhaps the last word on his life should go to Frances Whitehead, his secretary for over fifty years, and the person who saw both the public and private Stott more than anyone else:

As I look back over the years, I can say without hesitation that my earliest impressions of John as a man of the utmost integrity have proved abundantly true. He was not only a brilliant Bible expositor, but also one who sought constantly to live out what he believed and taught. He was a man of deep convictions and total commitment, and there was no dichotomy between faith and practice. He lived to serve and please God, to bring glory to his name, and to boast in nothing but the cross of Jesus Christ. He rarely, if ever, talked about himself.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in Wolfgang Saxon, "Rev. John Stott, Major Evangelical Figure, Dies at 90," *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/world/europe/28stott.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Frances Whitehead, in Wright, *John Stott*, 58–59.

*John Stott* was a twentieth-century pastor-theologian widely hailed for his heart for missions and expository preaching. Even today, Stott's legacy continues to influence churches around the world. As both a faithful preacher and a thoughtful writer, Stott profoundly shaped evangelicalism's contemporary understanding of Christianity through an approach to the Christian life founded on the word, shaped by the cross, and characterized by the pursuit of Christlikeness in every area of life. Tim Chester invites a new generation of readers to experience the Christian life as John Stott envisioned it—not simply a theological puzzle to be solved, but the daily practice of humble service and compassion found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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**JULIAN HARDYMAN**, Senior Pastor, Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge, United Kingdom

**TIM CHESTER** (PhD, University of Wales) is a faculty member of Crosslands and a pastor with Grace Church, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. He is the author or coauthor of over forty books, including *A Meal with Jesus*; *Reforming Joy*; and, with Michael Reeves, *Why the Reformation Still Matters*.

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