Global Anglican, Global Evangelical: The Paths That Led to Stott's Lasting Influence

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Abstract

John Stott (1921–2011) had a unique influence in the global church despite being associated with only one church (All Souls, Langham Place) and never moving far from central London throughout his life. This article explores the contributory factors behind his reach and influence.

Keywords

Evangelicalism, Anglicanism, Lausanne Movement, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), integral mission, preaching

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In the months following John Stott's death in 2011, an extraordinary range of memorial events took place. Quickest out of the starting blocks was the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) member movement in Kerala, India, with a service just two days after the announcement. This was quickly followed by several services across Canada, the USA, India, and Australia, as well as individual events in Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Ghana, Hong Kong, Jamaica and the Caribbean, Kenya, South Korea, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, and

Uganda.[1] Stott's international reach was then reflected in the "official" memorial service held at London's Saint Paul's Cathedral in January 2012, with tributes from John Chew, (Anglican) Archbishop of South East Asia; Robert Aboagye-Mensah, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Ghana; and Ruth Padilla de Borst, General Secretary of the Latin American Theological Fellowship. Stott's old friend and biographer, Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith, preached, while the three most senior Anglican clergy of the day, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of London, participated. It was evident to any with even a cursory awareness of global Christianity that Stott had been a man of international stature.

Yet, for someone whose impact was felt far beyond the bounds of the Anglophone sphere, it is hard to conceive of an ecclesiastical tribute more reflective of British "establishment" respectability. Here was a church statesman widely hailed as both a significant shaper of global Evangelicalism and perhaps the most consequential leader of his generation within the Church of England. Of the many anomalies of Stott's life and ministry, then, the strangest is perhaps that the former came about though he lived in the same London borough for eighty-five of his ninety years and the latter though he never attained high office. How did this come about?

I. *Intellectual Paths: Humble Rigor*

When Stott retired in late 2000, the progressive bishop in the Episcopal Church of the United States, John Shelby Spong, greeted the news in characteristically vituperative terms.[2] Despite Stott having been at great pains for decades to distinguish Evangelicalism from fundamentalism and liberalism,[3] building on thinkers such as Carl Henry,[4] Spong trampled over such niceties.

> John Stott is quoted as saying that "the great tragedy of the Church today is that evangelicals are biblical, but not contemporary, while liberals are contemporary,

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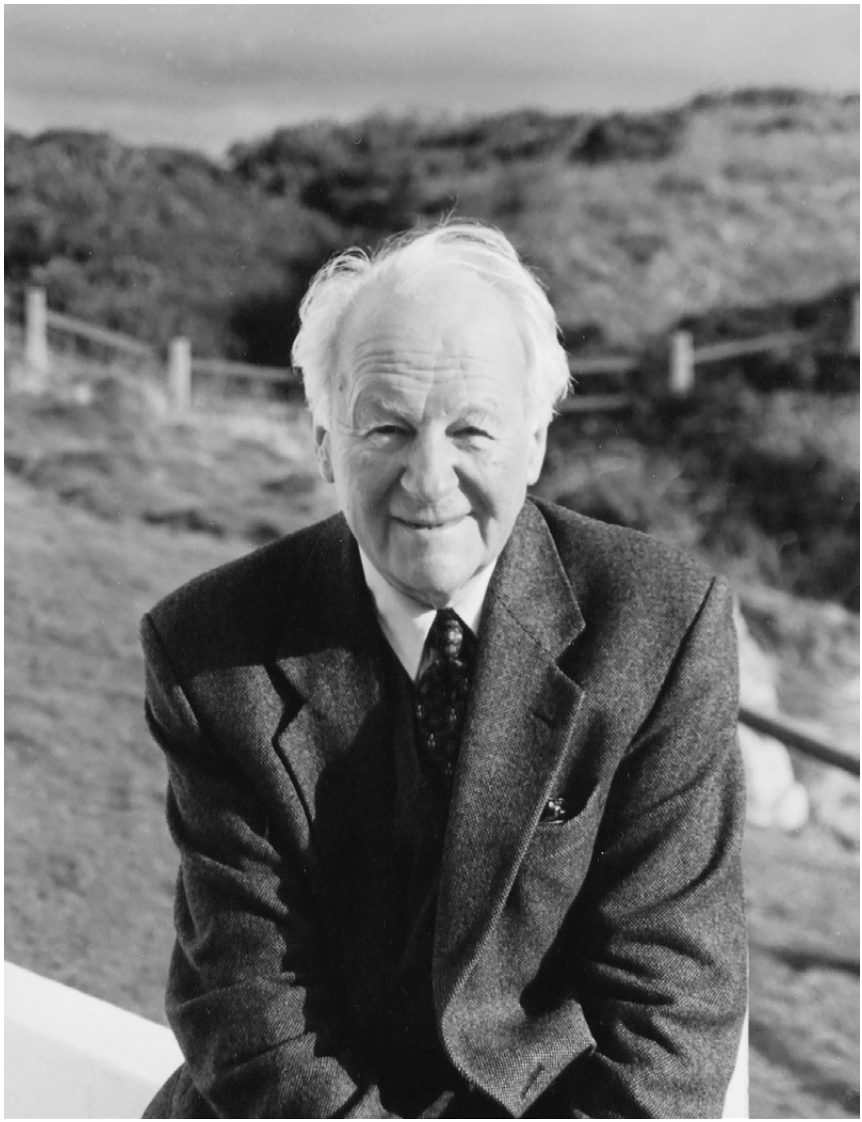
[1] Fuller details on the archived memorial site, "John Stott Memorial: Events," Langham Partnership International, updated February 14, 2013, https://web.archive.org/web/20130214073520/http://www.johnstottmemorial.org/events-updates/.

[2] John Shelby Spong, "John Stott: A Fundamentalist in Sheep's Clothing?," BeliefNet, October 2000, https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/christianity/2000/10/john-stott-a-fundamentalist-in-sheeps-clothing.aspx.

[3] See, for example, Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 218–19.

[4] See, in particular, Henry's groundbreaking 1947 essay, Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).



JOHN R. W. STOTT

1921–2011

John Stott at The Hookses, his writing retreat on the coast of Wales
Courtesy of johnstott.org

> but not biblical." It is a nice try, a clever, even-handed approach, but it does not work. It is not biblical to read the Bible in a superstitious, ill-informed manner. It is not biblical for John Stott to justify every prejudice, to whitewash chauvinism, racism, homophobia, and a not-so-subtle hatred for everyone who does not affirm the evangelical value system ….
>
> John Stott's Christianity and the fundamentalist, evangelical tradition he espouses will finally do nothing except justify the human divisions between the saved and the unsaved. That religious stance will ultimately victimize every person who does not reside inside the definition of the Bible as "revealed truth," as Stott interprets it.
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> So John Stott has decided to retire. What he needs to recognize is that all of his major ideas have also retired long before him. Perhaps they will now be happy together.[5]

The ironies are plentiful. Far from retiring, many of Stott's "major ideas" had become globally mainstream, which could hardly be said for Spong's (beyond the dwindling pockets of adherents in the Western church). Furthermore, Stott had done more than many to confront *in detail* many of the charges leveled by theological liberals, in particular in the project with David Edwards, published as *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*.[6] Close friends expressed misgivings when Edwards first proposed it because it entailed almost microscopic scrutiny of Stott's published output for the purposes of critique. Stott was, of course, given space for a response, but there cannot be many who would be prepared to endure such a grueling process with such grace and humility. After working through Edwards's first draft, Stott wrote to a former study assistant, describing it as "a pretty devastating critique (once he's through with the flattery!) …. I've taken 35,000 words to respond chapter by chapter, seeking to defend our precious evangelical faith against this liberal attack!"[7] *Essentials* caused some controversy, much to Stott's deep and lasting regret, because of his tentatively suggested alternative scriptural readings on annihilation, although he had by no means been categorical.[8] Stott was frustrated by how often he was attacked by those who had demonstrably failed to read what he had carefully written,[9] so he made a statement available to inquirers (written with evident discomfort):

> One scholar has referred to me as "that erstwhile evangelical." But the hallmark of authentic evangelicalism is not that we repeat traditional beliefs however ancient, but rather that we are always willing to submit them to fresh biblical scrutiny. This is not adjusting to liberalism, but being open to Scripture.[10]

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[5] Spong, "John Stott."

[6] David Edwards and John Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Religious, 1988).

[7] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: A Global Ministry*, 348.

[8] Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 315–20.

[9] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: A Global Ministry*, 354.

[10] John R. W. Stott, "A Statement about Eternal Punishment," news release, April 1993; quoted in Dudley-Smith, *Stott: A Global Ministry*, 354.

Of concern here is not the controversy itself but how it illustrates Stott's mindset. A hallmark of his intellectual approach, from his days as a wartime theology student at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, was determined rigor, even if that left him isolated from those around him. Converted through the youth camps at Iwerne Minster (renowned for their pietistic zeal and strains of anti-intellectualism), Stott might easily have devoted his time to ministry among undergraduates, as many contemporaries did. Not only that, but the war had also severely depleted student and faculty numbers (resulting in inevitably slackened academic standards), and Stott found that the prevailing winds in Cambridge theology were highly critical, while Ridley itself had a new principal who (in the eyes of some contemporaries) seemed ill matched for the needs of ministry.[11] Stott had every excuse to avoid academic engagement.

Nevertheless, he plowed his own furrow, cultivating a deep concern "for the precision of exact exegesis"[12] despite the lack of contemporary Evangelical scholarship in the library. He was determined to engage with current scholarship and to preempt challenges for his own integrity's sake as much as anything. He thus began a lifelong habit of grappling with the best of opposing arguments to buttress his own theological convictions. He could never be satisfied with a theological position derived purely from churchmanship or expediency. This could at times leave him vulnerable or isolated, but it was surely one factor in his magnetism. People soon recognized in Stott someone who could be trusted to be both fearless in the face of difficult, even intractable, questions and resolute in his theological convictions as an Evangelical. A statement written toward the end of his life might stand as a summary, one which, in fact, tackles the likes of Spong and his comrade in theological arms, James Barr:

> Evangelical Christians are understandably dismayed by such books as *Fundamentalism* by Professor James Barr and *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* by Bishop Jack Spong, which, whether from ignorance, misunderstanding or malice, perpetuate the old identification. They write as if the only choice before the church is between an enlightened liberalism and an obscurantist fundamentalism.[13]

If there was one failing that Stott was determined to avoid more than any other, it was the charge of obscurantism. The barb that would no doubt

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[11] Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 194–97.

[12] Ibid., 196.

[13] John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity*, ed. David Smith and Joe M. Kapolyo, Global Christian Library (Carlisle: Langham Publishing, 2013). 5.

have been flung throughout his student days and beyond, but he would not give it credence. Thus, when commenting on Jesus revealing kingdom realities to children rather than the wise and learned, Stott writes,

> "Babies" in the vocabulary of Jesus are sincere and humble seekers; from everybody else, Jesus said, God actively hides himself.
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> Please do not misunderstand this. This is not obscurantism. It is not to copy the ostrich and bury our head in the sand. It is not to murder our intellect or deny the importance of thought, for we have been told to "stop thinking like children" and instead in our thinking to be adults (1 Corinthians 14:20).[14]

He would wrestle with texts and ideas for as long as was required.

Two publications illustrate this well. Challenged by All Souls colleagues such as his New Zealander curate, Ted Schroder,[15] Stott started preaching on questions of pressing concern to people in 1970s Britain but which were rarely mentioned in pulpits apart from in passing: industrial relations and strikes, nuclear disarmament, matters of sexuality, and so on. In time, these would be developed and expanded into *Issues Facing Christians Today*,[16] a book subsequently given three full revisions (in 1999, 2006, and 2011). Of course, Stott was hardly the first Evangelical to enter the marshes of contemporary ethics, but it was unusual for a man whose primary calling was to the pulpit to do so with such intellectual alacrity and depth. It was no doubt this priority that preserved him from an ivory-towered scholasticism, driven as he was by the desire "to stir up evangelicals to godly ambition in society."[17]

> And when society does go bad, we Christians tend to throw up our hands in pious horror and reproach the non-Christian world; but should we not rather reproach ourselves? One can hardly blame unsalted meat for going bad. It cannot do anything else. The real question to ask is: where is the salt?[18]

Many around the world testify to the life-changing importance of *Issues* in uniquely providing both permission and a model to tackle difficult questions.[19] This development in his thinking, in turn, had a part in Stott's

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[14] John R. W. Stott, *Why I Am a Christian* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 128.

[15] Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 74.

[16] John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshalls, 1984).

[17] Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 130.

[18] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian Counter-Culture*, 2nd ed., with study guide (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 65.

[19] Several on the podcast created to commemorate the Stott Centenary (2021–22) cited this book in particular, including guests from Indonesia, Ghana, Costa Rica, Sri Lanka, and the UK. The Stott Legacy, 2022, https://thestottlegacy.podbean.com.

establishment in 1982 of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC). This provided him and others with a new platform for developing these ideas of holistic, or "integral," mission in an institutional context to dissolve the post-Enlightenment sacred–secular divide.[20] He would gather promising leaders from across the world for weeks at a time to help them deepen their understanding of the Scriptures and develop a Christian mind sufficiently equipped to engage with contemporary concerns.[21]

The second example is his Bible Speaks Today commentary on Romans.[22] He found the work deeply challenging because long after he had graduated from the academy, Pauline scholarship had become dominated by the scholarship of Krister Stendhal, E. P. Sanders, Geza Vermes, and others, which had created the legitimate concern to understand Paul within the context of first-century Judaism. The problem was that this appeared to undermine traditional Evangelical understandings of justification and salvation. In correspondence with friends, he would say, "I've been struggling with [Sanders's] thesis about Palestinian Judaism. But I've now begun to write. A huge task still lies before me."[23] On returning from a trip to South Korea, he wrote,

> I spent all the time I could on Romans. Since it is a storm centre of contemporary controversy, in which old traditions are facing new challenges, I have found my studies at times a painful struggle.[24]

Stott was modeling precisely what he advocated in his brief, but significant, *Your Mind Matters*.[25] The intellect was to play an integral part in human worship and therefore never to be dedicated to self-aggrandizement or preferment.

To Stott's thinking, it was the necessary givenness of divine revelation that kept human pride in check.

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[20] This is one reason for using his name in the ministry of INFEMIT (International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation) known as the Stott-Bediako Forum.

[21] LICC in turn has inspired many like-minded organizations around the globe, such as these (all founded by Langham Scholars): Balkans Institute for Faith and Culture, in Skopje, North Macedonia; Institute for Christian Impact in Accra, Ghana; Centro de Capacitación Misionera in La Paz, Bolivia.

[22] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

[23] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: A Global Ministry*, 410.

[24] Ibid., 411.

[25] John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006). Mark Noll would later write a book on this topic: Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

> That God needs to take the initiative to reveal himself shows that our minds are finite and fallen; that he chooses to reveal himself to babies shows that we must humble ourselves to receive his Word.[26]

He constantly returned to this principle, and the humility that it fostered served to subvert caricatures of Evangelical dogmatism and arrogance. Despite the inevitable cultural shifts between its original 1972 publication and the second edition in 2006, Mark Noll suggests in his preface that in the light of prevailing trends away from "responsible intellectual effort, the biblical message that 'your mind matters' is more relevant today than when it was first presented."[27] Because of the dearth of good models in his generation, Stott stood out. As Alister Chapman put it, "Just as Billy Graham showed millions of Americans that one could be a conservative evangelical and civil, John Stott was living proof that one could be an evangelical and intelligent."[28]

II. *Ecclesiastical Paths: Anglican but Always Evangelical*

It was perhaps inevitable that Stott would serve the Church of England. Even without his teenage conversion, his British establishment upbringing would have immersed him in Anglicanism, not least because his secondary school, Rugby, was still steeped in the traditions laid down by its celebrated early Victorian headmaster, Thomas Arnold. Historian David Newsome famously encapsulated this legacy as "muscular Christianity" because it sought to instill a combined culture of manliness, self-discipline, gentlemanly conduct, and Anglican religious morals.[29] A century after Arnold, this was still very much the dominant culture across British private schools. So, having been taken along from infancy to All Souls, Langham Place, it is clear that Stott was "an Anglican before he was an evangelical."[30]

However, long after his conversion, it was also clear how ill-suited the label of "muscular Christian" was for Stott, despite his upbringing. His was a lively and intentional discipleship rather than a passive osmosis of an elitist folk religion. Furthermore, he never allowed his statesmanship of genuine authority and even genius to diminish his personal gentleness and kindness

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[26] Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, 31.
[27] Mark Noll, preface to Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, 10.
[28] Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 159.
[29] David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: Cassell, 1961), x.
[30] Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 79.

or develop stubborn imperviousness to being challenged. Such virtues could hardly be said to be characteristic of the "muscular Christian."

It was to reach precisely that rarefied and privileged world that Eric "Bash" Nash had set up his Varsity and Public Schools Christian camps in 1932 under the auspices of Scripture Union. His strategy was to win the boys who were being trained and thus likely to be England's future leaders anyway so that they might also lead the church (by which he particularly meant the Church of England). So, once the sixteen-year-old Stott first heard Bash explain the gospel in February 1938 at Rugby's small Christian Union and then professed faith soon afterwards, he was drawn into a carefully conceived process. However, even then, he was conspicuously gifted as a leader and administrator, so as soon as he had left secondary school, Bash laid several responsibilities for the camps on his shoulders. In fact, before Stott was even twenty, Bash prepared a remarkable document for his papers, declaring, "If anything should happen to me, I wish that John Stott shall assume full and absolute control. … He knows my mind and will guide and appoint officers [i.e., camp leaders] as he sees fit."[31] Stott remained ever grateful for Bash's investment in him and the foundations laid at camp and wrote a warm tribute to him in his commentary on 2 Timothy.

> I thank God for the man who led me to Christ and for the extraordinary devotion with which he nurtured me in the early years of my Christian life. He wrote to me every week for, I think, seven years. He also prayed for me every day. I believe he still does. I can only begin to guess what I owe, under God, to such a faithful friend and pastor.[32]

Nevertheless, his intellectual curiosity and missional imagination were too dynamic for such an insular subculture, and he was soon looking further afield for ministry opportunities.

Stott was a *convinced* Anglican. He could never have remained in the denomination of his childhood simply by default. His justifications extended beyond the typical "Bash" camper argument that the Church of England represented "the best boat to fish from" for reaching the country. He was convinced that the denomination's Reformed roots not only gave space for Evangelicals to remain within it but also mandated their presence, despite the meager numbers of clergy in postwar England. For there to be any hope of change, he knew that number would somehow need to grow.

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[31] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 143.

[32] John R.W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 29.

Nevertheless, he would have taken solace from the 1945 Church of England report *Toward the Conversion of England*, commissioned by Archbishop William Temple and dedicated to him after his death. The report was explicit that *all* Anglicans shared a responsibility for evangelism, thus ensuring that there were no longer grounds for dismissing such efforts as *un*-Anglican.[33] So, when this author started work on an evangelistic tourist guide and history of All Souls, Langham Place, it was striking that the only document Stott insisted be incorporated into the story was his lecture given to the London Diocese in 1952. In *Parochial Evangelism by the Laity*, he articulated his practice of training All Souls members to carry out door-to-door outreach in the parish.[34] In Stott's mind, this subversion of Anglican clericalism was central to understanding All Souls' distinctives.

To American friends who struggled to comprehend his perseverance in such a mixed denomination, he would often respond that his allegiance was grounded in "a commitment to history and a commitment to geography."[35] By this he meant consciously standing within the tradition of Reformed, confessional Christianity and ministering within the parish system that bears responsibility for every parishioner in England regardless of church attendance. He was a convinced Protestant, in theology if not in temperament, and so his explanation of ecclesial "catholicity" in his dialogue with Edwards barely diverts from the church's Reformed foundation in the Elizabethan Settlement, nor from the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888.[36] For example, in his early years as rector of All Souls, he preached through the Thirty-Nine Articles. Such Evangelical convictions inevitably provoked conflict with those of other theological persuasions, not least because he was determined to avoid extreme responses to such diversity, namely, "that of separation in pursuit of doctrinal purity or compromise through a passive resignation to differences."[37] He described the task as pursuing "truth and unity simultaneously, that is to pursue the kind of unity commended by Jesus Christ and his apostles, namely unity in truth." [38] This did not imply the equal weight of all

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[33] Mark Meynell, "John Stott (1921–2011)," in *Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians: From Evelyn Underhill to Esther Mombo*, ed. Stephen Burns, Bryan Cones, and James Tengatenga (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 122–23.

[34] John R. W. Stott, *Parochial Evangelism by the Laity* (London: Church Information Board, 1952).

[35] Heard more than once from Stott himself by the author.

[36] Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 38.

[37] Meynell, "John Stott," 125.

[38] Caroline Chartres, *Why I Am Still an Anglican: Essays and Conversations* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 13.

disagreements. Distinctions could be made under the principle of "comprehension," for which he appealed to Alec Vidler's summary:

> The principle of comprehension is that a church ought to hold the fundamentals of the faith, and at the same time allow for differences of opinion and interpretation in secondary matters, especially rites and ceremonies.[39]

While being Anglican was clearly significant for Stott, it is crucial to recognize that it never took precedence over his Evangelical convictions. Drawing from the botanical world he so loved, he wrote,

> How, for example, would you label me? Perhaps "*genus*: Christian, *species*: Evangelical, *subspecies*: Anglican." But one would soon get stuck. For to classify organisms according to their structure demands a high degree of precision, whereas to classify human beings according to their beliefs would be a much more flexible and fluid task.[40]

Perhaps the best way to understand his position is in the light of the individual who best represented Stott's ideal and inspiration: Charles Simeon of Cambridge (1759–1836). He would describe himself as a "Sim," as Simeon's acolytes styled themselves. Stott was attracted by "Simeon's uncompromising commitment to Scripture [that] captured [his] imagination and has held it ever since."[41] However, the parallels between the two went far deeper. Both came from privileged homes and schools: Simeon was educated at Eton College and then King's College, Cambridge, Stott at Rugby and then Trinity College, Cambridge. Both exercised lifelong ministries attached to a single church: Simeon at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, Stott at All Souls. Both were gifted intellectually but also popular preachers. They were committed to an expository approach to biblical texts during periods when English Evangelicalism was depleted and in decline. Both published extensively: Simeon adapted his sermons into a commentary of the whole Bible, his *Horae Homileticae*; Stott would, of course, initiate, contribute to, and function as New Testament editor of IVP's Bible Speaks Today series. Both remained lifelong bachelors but still generously shared their lives with countless generations of students and future leaders. Most significantly for our purposes here, both men were committed Anglicans. As Archbishop Donald Coggan would say of Simeon,

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[39] Cited in ibid., 15.

[40] Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, xiii.

[41] John R.W. Stott, "Charles Simeon: A Personal Appreciation," in *Evangelical Preaching: An Anthology of Sermons by Charles Simeon*, ed. James M. Houston (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986), xxvii.

> He loved the Church of England. He loved its liturgy and he was content to live and die a son of the Church of England, even though within that Church he suffered so much and saw so much that was weak and unworthy in its priests and people.[42]

Simeon endured considerable opposition in his early years at Holy Trinity, Cambridge, which included being pelted with eggs in the street and being locked out of the church building by irate church wardens. Stott never faced anything that difficult, but Coggan's words about Simeon could well serve to describe Stott as well. Paul Carr comments,

> It is widely accepted that Simeon, by his loyalty to the Church of England, was instrumental in keeping evangelical Anglicans within the fold rather than following the Dissenters into Non-conformity.[43]

This is precisely true of Stott as well, especially after the notorious 1966 contretemps with the influential Welsh minister of Westminster Chapel, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In October of that year, Stott was chairing a gathering of the Evangelical Alliance's National Assembly of Evangelicals in London, and Lloyd-Jones was presenting the main address. The two held each other in high regard, so much so that earlier that year, the nonconformist Lloyd-Jones invited the younger Anglican to take over from him at Westminster Chapel. Stott's response was, "While I am greatly honoured, I have no sense of calling to leave All Souls, or indeed the Church of England."[44] What Lloyd-Jones said in his address was not a total surprise, since he had indicated his intentions to the conference committee. In it, he criticized leaders who were "content to be an evangelical wing of a territorial church, hoping to infiltrate and show others they are wrong." Without providing details, Lloyd-Jones then made a vague appeal calling for "something new," "a fellowship or association of evangelical churches." This provoked Stott to take the highly unusual step of disagreeing from the chair about what had just been said.

> I believe history is against what Dr Lloyd-Jones has said. … Scripture is against him, the remnant was within the church not outside it. I hope no one will act precipitately. …We are all concerned with the same ultimate issues and with the glory of God.[45]

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[42] Cited in Paul A. Carr, "Are the Priorities and Concerns of Charles Simeon Relevant for Today?," *Churchman* 114.2 (2000): 160.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Roger Steer, *Inside Story: The Life of John Stott* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 131.

[45] Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 2:525.

This marked a turning point. It steeled the resolve of many Anglican Evangelicals unsettled by the furor caused by the publication of Bishop John Robinson's *Honest to God* three years earlier, and Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey's "Common Declaration" with Pope Paul VI in Rome six months earlier. If it had not been obvious before 1966, it was now clear that Stott had become the Evangelicals' standard-bearer within the Church of England.

What is remarkable, however, is how this influence had grown without the ascent of ecclesiastical ladders. Ordained in 1945 to serve his curacy at All Souls, he unexpectedly found himself managing the parish's day-to-day business when Rector Harold Earnshaw-Smith's health began to deteriorate early in 1947. By March 1948, Earnshaw-Smith had died, prompting Stott to write, "We are an orphaned church."[46] While the church did not have the renown it would gain subsequently, All Souls was situated in a sought-after central London location and so would have been an attractive prospect for ambitious clergy. For Stott to succeed Earnshaw-Smith was by no means guaranteed, and even after he was appointed at only twenty-nine years old, there was some unease. For example, Earnshaw-Smith's daughter Elisabeth initially struggled that "this young upstart should take over from [her] father."[47] Any initial qualms were soon allayed, of course, and Stott would be associated with the church for the rest of his life, becoming Rector Emeritus after passing on its leadership to Michael Baughen in 1975. However, he never took on any formal roles within diocesan or provincial hierarchies, despite the expectations of friends. Chapman suggests that invitations to become a bishop would have been blocked by Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961–1974; this is plausible since Ramsey's opposition to Evangelicalism had surfaced with his stirring of the so-called Fundamentalism Controversy.[48] By the time Ramsey had retired and been replaced by more sympathetic leadership, Stott's ministry and writing were already giving him opportunities around the world, such that being tied down to one English (or perhaps even Australian) diocese entailed "chang[ing] the whole direction" of his ministry.[49]

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[46] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 242.

[47] Ibid., 249.

[48] Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 111, cf. 40–48. The Fundamentalism Controversy arose when Billy Graham was invited by the Cambridge Inter Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) to be the main speaker at its triennial mission week, prompting letters to *The Times* newspaper and much public debate. Stott led the mission weeks before and after Graham (in 1952 and 1958) and was the week's chairman in 1955.

[49] Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 111.

III. *Strategic Paths: Structures to Serve Rather Than Serving the Structures*

To understand his influence, it is important to factor in another area of gifting, one that would have made him highly effective in the field his military surgeon father was so keen for him to enter, namely, the diplomatic corps. He had an unusual ability to conceive of structural improvements that might help steer an institution toward greater effectiveness or faithfulness. Not only that, but he was also able to bring what he imagined into being, having sufficient stature (even at a young age) to lead or shape them. For example, he realized that if Evangelicals were to persevere in Anglican ministry, they needed the sustenance and encouragement of fellow travelers with whom to discuss common questions or pray for divine support. So, taking his cue from an eighteenth-century fraternity frequented by the likes of former slave trader John Newton, the Clapham Sect leader John Venn, and not least Charles Simeon, he revived the Eclectic Society in 1955. In his first invitation letter, he described its primary goal as

> fellowship, but we mean to take the opportunity to pray together, and spend a bit of time discussing some matter of common interest or concern. But the time will be free and informal, and not too organised.[50]

It would be a mark of Stott's wider influence that it invariably evolved from this spirit of generous friendship. Countless individuals around the world have testified to his keenness to override formalities in order to build genuine and mutual trust, although it perhaps took time for this habit to develop. After all, his lifelong secretary Frances Whitehead worked alongside him for almost two decades before being invited to address him as "John" rather than "Rector."[51] Stories abound in which "Uncle John," years after an initial meeting, would remember not only an individual's name (despite living on the other side of the world in very different church or social circumstances) but also their family members and ministry concerns. Without a doubt, he was gifted with a prodigious memory. Yet this was also evidence of a disciplined and persevering prayer life, for which he made good use of copious notes and prayer lists.

Intriguingly, just as the Eclectic Society of Venn and Simeon would be a catalyst for the 1799 founding of the Church Mission Society, an Anglican

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[50] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 305.

[51] Julia E. M. Cameron, *John Stott's Right Hand: The Untold Story of Frances Whitehead*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Dictum, 2020), 94.

agency, so would Stott's group lead to other initiatives. For example, in the aftermath of Lloyd-Jones's appeal to leave, Stott and others organized a gathering of like-minded leaders on the campus of the University of Keele in 1967 for the National Evangelical Anglican Congress (NEAC). It was clear that the friendships forged or deepened through the Eclectic Society would, in Stott's view, prove to be "the driving force behind the National Evangelical Anglican Congress."[52] Of course, in no sense could an event on the scale of NEAC be "free and informal, and not too organised." Where required, Stott's ability to craft complex, multidimensional conferences and organizations was evident to all, just as Bash had sensed in him while he was still a teenager. This is not to imply that Eclectics were the only source of NEAC's initial cohesion. For example, in 1960, Stott had also founded the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC), which continues to this day, as a more structural means of fostering unity and partnership. He chaired it for well over its first decade, and through him it became a means for disseminating a shared voice and sponsoring engagement with important issues of the day.

Stott was an inveterate establisher of organizations that grew out of his identification of gaps and needs in the church as he perceived them, with more examples than can be explored here. He was a strategic thinker but also a delegator willing to hand on his creations to others' safekeeping.[53] However, it is important to emphasize that in his mind, it was never a question of structures for the sake of themselves. The goal of serving the kingdom of God was always explicit, and while he openly acknowledged how much he struggled with pride and selfishness, his personal discipline was such that he was ruthless in testing his motives and private agendas. It is no accident that he articulated his admiration for Simeon by focusing on the latter's "unalloyed personal authenticity … [and his faith as] the religion of the sinner at the foot of the cross."[54]

IV. *Post-Colonial Paths: Serving Global Leaders, Not Empire Building*

It would be surprising if Stott's abilities thus far recounted were not put to use beyond the boundaries of both the United Kingdom and Anglicanism.

[52] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 308.

[53] Chris Wright discusses precisely this point in the twenty-fifth and concluding episode of The Stott Legacy, July 1, 2022, https://thestottlegacy.podbean.com/e/chris-wright-and-tayo-arikawe/, as does Elaine Storkey in episode 19, "Langham Partnership," March 25, 2022, https://thestottlegacy.podbean.com/e/dr-elaine-storkey/.

[54] Dudley-Smith, *Stott: A Global Ministry*, 429.

Indeed, Simeon himself had been a willing partner of Evangelicals outside the Church of England, as evidenced by his four preaching tours to Scotland at the invitation of senior Presbyterians,[55] and was a passionate advocate for global mission. This created in him a willingness to sponsor for the mission field those who were some of the most able of their time and his closest friends. This included such pioneers as the brilliant Henry Martyn (whose portrait Simeon treasured after Martyn's tragically early death) in Persia and Thomas Thomason in India.[56]

So, in 1961, a year after CEEC was formed, Stott created the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC), another body that is active to this day. This exists to unite the various regional chapters that have grown up around the world, "each working to promote biblical faithfulness in their own context."[57] This statement reflects a key missiological concern that preoccupied Stott for much of his ministry from the 1960s onwards. The period was one of seismic global shifts, with the Cold War appearing to get hot during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the rapid decolonization of Africa and Asia. After India's partition at the creation of an independent India and Pakistan in 1947, the speed accelerated after Ghana gained its autonomy in 1957. United Kingdom Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's famous "Wind of Change" speech was given in the South African Parliament in 1960 and made it clear that the British government would not stand in the way of countries seeking to follow Ghana's suit. Stott was beginning to understand, long before many others, that the church could not cling to old patterns of behavior or institutional structures when political change was happening at such velocity. No longer could mission be a question of "from the west to the rest," with leadership and purse strings being controlled from either side of the North Atlantic.

This is one of the most surprising aspects of Stott's legacy because in so many ways he was a child of empire, educated to become a servant of empire, and one who might reasonably have been expected to share the attitudes of empire. And yet he grew ever more conscious, from this period onwards, that he had to change. His early international speaking invitations came initially from the former British Dominions (like Australia and Canada), where he would lead university campus mission weeks (much like those in Cambridge mentioned above). However, the destinations and goals of his trips gradually fanned out, resulting in a growing awareness of the lived

[55] Arthur Bennett, "Charles Simeon: Prince of Evangelicals," *Churchman* 102.2 (1988): 124.
[56] Ibid., 126.
[57] "History and Vision," EFAC, https://efacglobal.com/history-and-vision/.

realities of the global church beyond Britain and Anglicanism. He was convinced of the need to raise up good future leaders for the church around the world, just as were needed at home. This meant supplying them with books and other resources (a need met by his founding of the Evangelical Literature Trust, now Langham Literature) and also finding ways to fund the brightest to do doctoral studies in theology (met by what became known as Langham Scholars). Despite the inevitably small start to these projects, he was driven by the necessity of weening postcolonial churches off dependence on their colonial masters. This has since evolved into Langham Partnership, a global organization committed to serving the indigenization, contextualization, and leadership autonomy of the global church.

If there are two organizations that best represent Stott's commitment to global Evangelical ecumenism, they would be the Lausanne Movement, which was founded after the 1974 Lausanne Congress organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), with Stott as its primary theological influence, and the IFES. Both transcend denominational and national boundaries, and both greatly benefited from Stott's incisive direction. Striking, though, were the ways in which Stott forced the churches of the Northern Atlantic to sit up and listen to voices from the Global South at Lausanne. It seems that the BGEA would instinctively have been more comfortable with a range of speakers from North America and, to some extent, from Britain. Stott insisted that the intellectual and missional firebrands of the rest of the world have a place on the platform. This was directly responsible for René Padilla of Ecuador, Samuel Escobar of Peru, Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda, and Gottfried Osei-Mensah of Ghana and Kenya gaining global influence. This, in turn, forced often complacent Western churches to face up to the challenges of lives afflicted by dictatorship, acute poverty, and persecution, all of which rendered a ministry of "just preaching the simple gospel" all but irrelevant, and even impossible.[58]

IFES was not founded by Stott, nor was he ever a member of its staff. However, he was committed from his earliest days to its vision of university campus ministry and mission, initially in Britain and subsequently around the world. It was under its auspices that he led those mission weeks in Australia and Canada, for example, and it was through IFES that he first went to Latin America to work alongside Padilla and Escobar. But he would serve formally as its vice president and informally as its constant ally and

[58] Julia Cameron, "The Legacy of John Stott through the Lausanne Movement," Lausanne Movement, https://lausanne.org/about/blog/the-legacy-of-john-stott-through-the-lausanne-movement.

advocate. It is easy to see why this was the case: it was committed to reaching future leaders for Christ, it was committed to providing clear biblical roots and training for evangelism and discipleship, and it was committed to contextual, indigenous leadership (so IFES is known for its distinctive commitment to student leadership for campus Christian Unions). All these are hallmarks of the majority, if not all, of the organizations and initiatives in which Stott was involved. They are certainly true of his most visible global legacy, Langham Partnership, and they explain its ongoing interconnectedness with both IFES and the Lausanne Movement.

These factors are core to why his legacy will long outlast him, perhaps long after even his name has become a distant memory. Those who gathered in Saint Paul's Cathedral were there because, to varying degrees no doubt, they understood that John Stott had been a man of unique gifts. Few others have displayed the combination of intellectual curiosity and rigor, with such personal discipline in life and study, on top of an ability to think strategically and creatively, not to mention the sparkling clarity of his preaching and writing, all while living a very simple lifestyle in a tiny London flat with the grace and humility derived from acute sin-consciousness. He was by no means perfect and would never have claimed to be. But as Professor John Wyatt has frequently said, "John Stott was quite simply the most 'converted' man I have ever met."[59] It is now, perhaps, no wonder that he had the impact he had.

[59] The Stott Legacy, April 29, 2022, https://thestottlegacy.podbean.com/e/prof-john-wyatt-1651231137/.