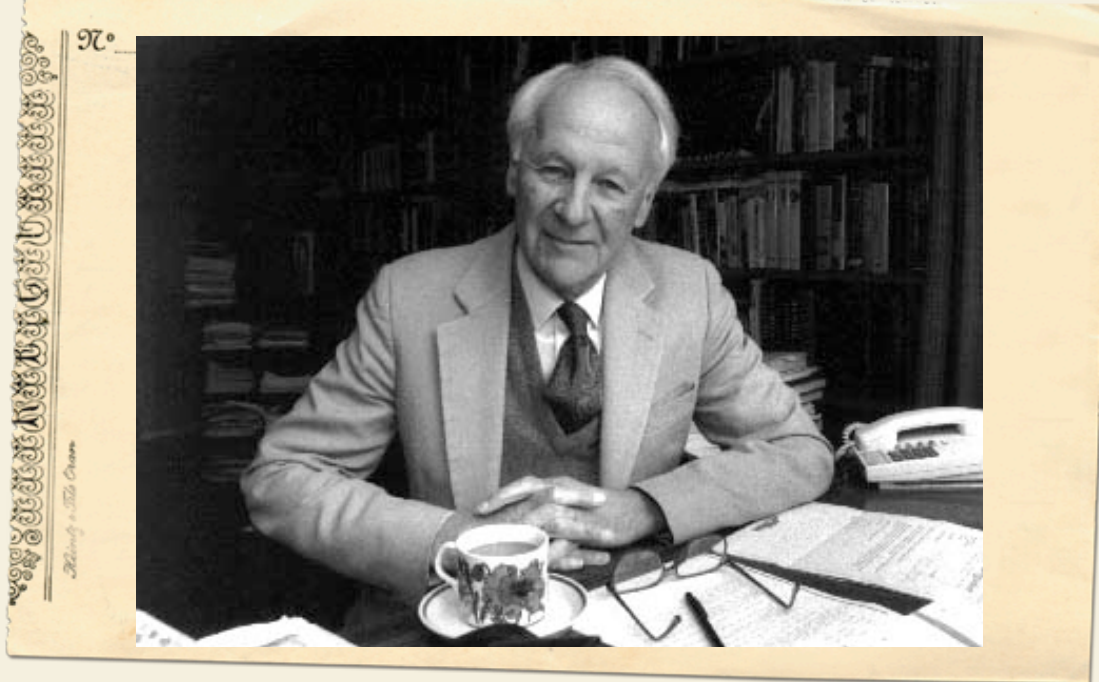


JOHN STOTT (1921-2011) - an appreciation



On Wednesday at 3.15pm, John Stott (at the age of 90) slipped into the presence of the Lord, surrounded by family and close friends, as they read together from the Bible and listened to Handel's Messiah.

Who was John Stott? He is often referred to as THE most significant leader of the evangelical church in the UK and globally during these last 50-60 years. He was ordained as an Anglican minister just after the Second World War and exercised a ministry at the heart of London, as Curate, Rector and eventually Rector Emeritus of All Souls Church, Langham Place (next to the BBC).

John Stott was the man for the hour. At least, he was the man God raised up to help the church in the UK to face the challenges of a post-war situation. He was a humble and faithful servant of the church, and yet had a first rate mind and applied it to the Bible, producing many helpful books and commentaries on the Bible which robustly defended the

Christian faith against attack, and articulating evangelical truth against a tide of liberal theology which had engulfed the church.

He became a brilliant missionary in the 1950s and spoke at many University Missions run by the CUs up and down the country. He wrote books that were aimed at the young Christian, the person 'in the pew', but he also encouraged a generation of young ministers to take seriously the need to explain a passage of the Bible in regular, weekly preaching. It was in listening to him at All Souls in the 1980s that I caught the 'bug' of 'expository preaching' (working your way through a book of the Bible, chapter by chapter and allowing God's word to set the agenda and speak to the church). He wrote good and very helpful commentaries for ministers and those who have to teach the Bible, and we use many of them at St Andrew's!

In the early 1980s I remember reading his 'Christ the

Controversialist' and being knocked for 6 by it!! It is still, in my opinion, unparalleled in showing that the evangelical view of Jesus is the true, biblical view of him. Yet, it was no easy read, challenging me not simply to believe it, but to act on it!!

John Stott set us an example too. For he not only engaged in defending the Bible, but he did so in a gracious and generous way. He showed us both what to say, and how to say it, and live it! I once had reason to visit him, and only realised afterwards that the corridor which I had walked through on the way to his small study, and the recess where I had seen a camp-bed set up with lots of books around it, had been his bedroom! Often referred to as 'the elder statesman of evangelicalism', he lived simply and humbly.

He was passionately committed to the worldwide church, and after he stepped down as Rector of All Soul's, he increasingly gave his time to travelling, encouraging Bible teaching

John Stott (continued)

in the countries of the developing world. He set up the Langham Partnership as a charitable trust to help raise up a generation of preachers and Bible teachers and thinkers who could help train church leaders around the world. Indeed, the profits from all his books were ploughed into establishing scholarships to enable those with potential but little means to get good training and education so that they could then go back to their own situation and train others.

I thank God for John Stott. There is no doubt the church in the UK and around the world is so much better off for having received the ministry of this, God's servant. Praise God for the many, many more churches that there are now (compared to 1945) up and down the country where the Bible is joyfully preached and lived out (though, please God, raise up more!).

Many honours were heaped upon John Stott. In 2005 he was featured in TIME magazine as one of the world's "100 Most Influential People". The following year, the Queen made him a CBE. But, in reality, he wore them very lightly preferring to be known around the world and at All Souls' Church simply as 'Uncle John'.

A humble spiritual giant, who was faithful and used of God, we rejoice that he is now 'with Christ, which is better by far', and we cry to God to raise up more and more in His church who might equally in their day and generation serve the Lord with similar zeal, confidence in the Bible and compassion for people.

A Prayer

Thank you Lord for giving us John Stott at a time when the church in this country was intimidated by liberal theology, lacking in faith, and lagging in confidence in your Word. Thank you that through the likes of John Stott the UK church has been strengthened in its biblical confidence, inspired to be zealous for the gospel, and challenged to engage with and not retreat from the world. May we continue to fight the good fight, keep the faith and to finish the course, as he did. Amen.

David Gibb, *Vicar of St Andrews*

p.s. Why not visit the church bookstall this Sunday and buy one of John Stott's books to read over the Summer?

BOOKS...BOOKS..

A few of the titles John Stott wrote and available from the church bookstall

