



Evangelism Plus

John Stott reflects on where we've been and where we're going.

Interview by Tim Stafford

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In 2004, New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote that if chose a pope, they select John Stott. Stott, the heart of evangelical

renewal in the U.K. His books and biblical sermons have transfixed millions throughout the world. He has been involved in many important world councils and dialogues, not least as chair of the committees that drafted the Lausanne Covenant (1974) and the Manila Manifesto (1989)—two defining statements for evangelicals. For more than 35 years, he has devoted three months of every year to travelling the globe, with a particular emphasis on churches in the majority world. He is ideally suited to comment on evangelicals' past, present, and future. Christianity Today's senior writer Tim Stafford interviewed him at his home in London. This is the edited version of the interview used with permission

As you see it, what is evangelicalism, and why does it matter?

An evangelical is a plain, ordinary Christian. We stand in the mainstream of historic, orthodox, biblical Christianity. So we can recite the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed without crossing our fingers. We believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

Having said that, there are two particular things we like to emphasise: the concern for authority on the one hand and salvation on the other.

For evangelical people, our authority is the God who has spoken supremely in Jesus Christ. And that is equally true of redemption or salvation. God has acted in and through Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners.

I think it's necessary for evangelicals to add that what God has said in Christ and in the biblical witness to Christ, and what God has done in and through Christ, are both, to use the Greek word, hapax—meaning once and for all. There is a finality about God's word in Christ, and there is a finality about God's work in Christ. To imagine that we could add a word to

his word, or add a work to his work, is extremely derogatory to the unique glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How has the position of evangelicals changed during your years of ministry?

I look back—it's been 61 years since I was ordained—and when I was ordained in the Church of England, evangelicals in the Church of England were a despised and rejected minority. The bishops lost no opportunity to ridicule us. Over the intervening 60 years, I've seen the evangelical movement in England grow in size, in maturity, certainly in scholarship, and therefore I think in influence and impact. We went from a ghetto to being on the ascendancy, which is a very dangerous place to be.

Can you comment on the dangers?

Pride is the ever-present danger that faces all of us. In many ways, it is good for us to be despised and rejected. I think of Jesus' words, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

Going back to the hapax, it's a very humbling concept. The essence of evangelicalism is very humbling. You have William Temple saying, "The only thing of my very own which I contribute to redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed."

You know this growing church probably as well as any Westerner does. I wonder how you evaluate it.

The answer is "growth without depth." None of us wants to dispute the extraordinary growth of the church. But it has been largely numerical and statistical growth. And there has not been sufficient growth in discipleship that is comparable to the growth in numbers.

How can the Western church, which surely has problems of its own, fruitfully interact with the non-Western? Right now many churches are sending mission teams all over the world.

I certainly want to be positive about short-term mission trips,

and I think on the whole they are a good thing. They do give Westerners an awfully good opportunity to taste Southern Christianity and to be challenged by it, especially by its exuberant vitality. But I think the leaders of such mission trips would be wise to warn their members that this is only a very limited experience of cross-cultural mission.

True mission that is based on the example of Jesus involves entering another world, the world of another culture. Incarnational cross-cultural mission is and can be very costly. I want to say, please realise that if God calls you to be a cross-cultural missionary, it will take you 10 years to learn the language and to learn the culture in such a way that you are accepted more or less as a national.

What about what some call the greatest mission field, which is our own secularising or secularised culture? What do we need to do to reach this increasingly pagan society?

I think we need to say to one another that it's not so secular as it looks. I believe that these so-called secular people are engaged in a quest for at least three things. The first is transcendence. It's interesting in a so-called secular culture how many people are looking for something beyond. I find that a great challenge to the quality of our Christian worship. Does it offer people what they are instinctively looking for, which is transcendence, the reality of God?

The second is significance. Almost everybody is looking for his or her own personal identity. Who am I, where do I come from, where am I going to, what is it all about? That is a challenge to the quality of our Christian teaching. We need to teach people who they are. They don't know who they are. We do. They are human beings made in the image of God, although that image has been defaced.

And third is their quest for community. Everywhere, people are looking for community, for relationships of love. This is a challenge to our fellowship. I'm very fond of 1 John 4:12: "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us." The invisibility of God is a great problem to people. The question is how has God solved the problem of his own invisibility? First, Christ has made the invisible God visible. That's John's Gospel 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

People say that's wonderful, but it was 2,000 years ago. So in 1 John 4:12, he begins with exactly the same formula, nobody has ever seen God. But here John goes on, "If we love one another, God abides in us." The same invisible God who once made himself visible in Jesus now makes himself visible in the Christian community, if we love one another. And all the verbal proclamation of the gospel is of little value unless it is made by a community of love.

These three things about our humanity are on our side in our evangelism, because people are looking for the very things we have to offer them.

Do you want to talk about preaching?

I never tire of doing that. I'm an impenitent believer in the importance of preaching. Of course, that's biblical preaching.

Biblical preaching has fallen on hard times in many places. What do you say to a pastor who is desperately trying to hold his congregation's attention and really doesn't have the confidence that enables one to just preach from a biblical text?

It's the same issue across the globe. Churches live, grow, and flourish by the Word of God. And they languish and even perish without it.

So the Langham Partnership International has three basic convictions. Conviction one is that God wants his church to grow. One of the verses that expresses this best is Colossians 1:28-29, in which Paul says we proclaim Christ, warning everybody and teaching everybody in all wisdom, in order that we may present everybody mature in Christ. There's a plain call to maturity, to grow up out of babyhood.

Second, they grow by the Word of God. I suppose you could concede that there are other ways by which the church grows, but if you take the New Testament as a whole, it's the Word of God that matures the people of God.

Which brings me to the third conviction, that the Word of God comes to the people of God mainly, though not exclusively, through preaching. I often envisage on a Sunday morning the amazing spectacle of the people of God converging on their places of worship all over the world. They're going to medieval cathedrals, to house churches, to the open air. They know that in the course of the worship service there will be a sermon, and it should be a biblical sermon, so that through the Word of God they may grow.

When I enter the pulpit with the Bible in my hands and in my heart, my blood begins to flow and my eyes to sparkle for the sheer glory of having God's Word to expound. We need to emphasise the glory, the privilege, of sharing God's truth with people.

Where do we evangelicals need to go? We've been through quite a trip in the last 50 years.

My immediate answer is that we need to go beyond evangelism. Evangelism is supposed to be evangelicals' speciality. Now, I am totally committed to world evangelisation. But we must look beyond evangelism to the transforming power of the gospel, both in individuals and in society.

With regard to individuals, I'm noting in different expressions of the evangelical faith an absence of that quest for holiness that marked our forebears, who founded the Keswick movement, for example, and the quest for what they sometimes called

scriptural holiness or practical holiness. Somehow holiness has a rather sanctimonious feel to it. People don't like to be described as holy. But the holiness of the New Testament is Christlikeness. I wish that the whole evangelical movement could consciously set before us the desire to grow in Christlikeness such as is described in Galatians 5:22-23.

Regarding social transformation, I've reflected a great deal on the salt and light metaphors, the models that Jesus himself chose in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. "You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world." It seems to me that those models must be said to contain at least three things.

First, that Christians are radically different from non-Christians, or if they are not, they ought to be. Jesus sets over against each other two communities. On the one hand there is the world, and on the other hand there is you, who are the dark world's light. Jesus implied that we are as different as light from darkness and salt from decay.

Second, Christians must permeate non-Christian society. Salt

does no good if it stays in the saltshaker. Light does no good if you hide it under a bed or bucket. It has to permeate the darkness. So both metaphors call us not just to be different, but to permeate society.

The third, the more controversial implication, is that the salt and light metaphors indicate that Christians can change non-Christian society. The models must mean that, because both salt and light are effective commodities. They change the environments in which they are placed. Salt hinders bacterial decay. Light dispels darkness. This is not to resurrect the social gospel. We cannot perfect society. But we can improve it.

My hope is that in the future, evangelical leaders will ensure that their social agenda includes such vital but controversial topics as halting climate change, eradicating poverty, abolishing armories of mass destruction, responding adequately to the AIDS pandemic, and asserting the human rights of women and children in all cultures. I hope our agenda does not remain too narrow.

Interview with Chris Wright - Part 2:

Sexual ethics



In this second part of Joy Lo Cheung's interview, Dr. Wright shared about God's purpose for human sexuality and that God's people should strive to live holy lives while possessing discernment and compassion towards individuals of alternative sexual orientation. These principles directly counter

our western secular idols of tolerance, hedonism, and assertion of individual human rights.

1. What is God's purpose and design for human sexuality?

We really need to start in Genesis with the question, what is sexuality for? Why did God create it? Then, one begins to see that human sexuality is part of God's purpose for human relationship in human society, and that the gender complementarity of male and female is something built into God's purpose for human beings to enjoy both family and healthy social relationships.

The biblical pattern is for monogamous, heterosexual lifelong marriage, which is not incestuous. The text in Genesis 2:24, 'Therefore a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and the two should become one flesh,' has a lot of implications. It means that marriage is meant to be heterosexual (it's a man and a woman), it's meant to be monogamous (one man and one woman), it's outside your own

family (you leave your father's house and join with your wife), it's also a man with a woman (not a man with an animal), so there are clear positive aspects there.

Within that context, the Bible tries to handle the fact that we are fallen and sinful. We abuse our sexual identities in various ways, so that for example: breaking the integrity of marriage through adultery, or premarital sex through fornication, or sexual intercourse with animals or with close relatives (incest), or with people of the same sex... All of these ways in which human beings use their sexual capacity outside the way God intended, within marriage, lead to problems and the Bible condemns [these] as sinful. My point is to try to see them all within the framework of what is best for human relationship.

2. How would Jesus view homosexual intercourse and relationships?

Some people say that Jesus never talked about this issue of homosexual intercourse. Strictly speaking he didn't, because probably it was not a significant issue in Jewish society. But Jesus did affirm the Genesis teaching on what marriage is: between one man and one woman, monogamous, heterosexual. (Matthew 19:3-9)

While homosexual practice (actual intercourse) is a form of what the Bible describes as sin (not what God wants), Jesus shows love and compassion and a welcome towards all human sinners. We know, for example, that he mixed with and expressed love and friendship for prostitutes who were sexually

excluded from society, with tax collectors who were socially excluded, lepers who were physically excluded, so the example of Jesus was to show an extraordinary love and grace towards people in whom society despised, especially those whom religious people despised, and he got into trouble with it.

Similarly, if you look at what the apostle Paul has to say, some [say] that he was only talking about pederasty (homosexual intercourse with children or young boys), but in fact, he uses words which seem to apply to any form of male lying with male, and there were all kinds of ways in which homosexual practice were known in Greek and Roman culture (Romans 1:24-27). Paul condemns it all.

3. How can Christians respond to colleagues, neighbours, family or friends who adopt alternative lifestyles?

Many of us know people who are homosexual and Christian, some of whom are seeking to live lives that are chaste and celibate; others who struggle and end up living with a partner. It didn't stop me from loving him or being his friend, but this is a hard position for me to express. [I] cannot condone the behaviour, but I still love the person and you still want to welcome him. If he claims to know the Lord Jesus Christ, it makes it very difficult, because he is living in a state of unrepentant sin.

4. How do believers reconcile what the Bible says about monogamous, heterosexual relationships against the popular notion that sexual orientation is really a matter of individual preference or even 'gay rights'?

One problem is, certainly in the west, the whole issue of gay rights is located within the frame of human individual rights: me and my rights. Western individualism says, 'I am an autonomous, free individual, everything I am belongs to me, I can make my own choices, my sexuality is mine, and don't you tell me what I can do with it.' Once you distort the issue, you have immediately lost touch with where the Bible locates sexuality – within society and relational responsibility.

Another problem is that we tend to look at only certain Bible texts, Leviticus 18 or Romans 1 and 2, and they argue solely on the grounds of God's law or prohibitions. You need to look at a number of Bible passages: Genesis, the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Lot, of Noah and his sons, passages in Leviticus, then references in the New Testament.

5. The church has rightly and often been accused of being bigoted towards the very people that Christ would have dined with. Should the church welcome such people?

The church, I think, has to find this very difficult balance between condemning sin as what the Bible calls sin, and offering love, welcome, and understanding to those who are caught up in sin. The trouble is, the message of churches proclaimed to those outside the church is, 'Don't you dare come in, we hate you, we are against you.' I don't think that's the way Jesus would want it to be. All of us are sinners, so I'm heterosexual, but I'm also a

sinner, I need God's grace and forgiveness for my heterosexual temptations as much as any homosexual person does.

6. History affirms that the church has blatantly discriminated and committed horrific crimes against the people it considers as untouchables. Now, the moral pendulum has swung to the other end: a Christian who takes a firm moral stance is labelled discriminatory. Any comments?

I have to say, in history, people have been victims of discrimination and hatred. If there is discrimination or violence against homosexual people, we as Christians should be the first to condemn that, not collude in it.

The difficulty is, if you take the position such as I have, 'I believe the practice of homosexuality is wrong,' you're immediately accused of being homophobic, which is the worst crime these days. You may disagree with someone's lifestyle and you may think it's wrong, but it doesn't mean that you hate people.

We also need to distinguish between what the Bible calls sin and the distorted scale of moral values that we can sometimes have, even as Christians. There are many Christians who get very heated, very condemnatory, hostile toward homosexual people, in a way which I think is very un-Christ like.

The Bible has an awful lot more to say about issues of poverty, justice, alienation, exploitation, oppression, than it has to say about sexual ethics. [I]f we take the balance of the Bible's own scale of values, it seems strange that there are many Christians who are very vocal about sexual issues but say and do nothing about social justice and poverty in the world. It's moral shortsightedness.

7. What about single Christians who are not yet married or end up staying single?

There are some single Christians who no one has asked to be married or who choose not to get married. They face the same temptations as the rest of us, and there are many godly single men and women who choose to live celibate lives according to biblical standards because they believe that marriage is the only proper place for sexual behaviour.

If one says it's okay for a homosexual person to be in such a relationship, it somehow seems to undercut the integrity of thousands of heterosexuals who struggle with the same issue of having to remain pure while not having sexual fulfilment. That is part of the western obsession with sex, which means you're hardly human unless you've had it. Clearly, this was not so for Jesus and Paul. It's obviously part of the normal intention for human life, but single Christians who have chosen to live that way are no less human, no less fulfilled.

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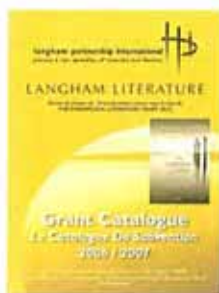
Joy Lo Cheung

W e l c o m e t o t h e

Langham Literature

Catalogue for 2006/2007

"Exequiel Gaunzon is waiting – so is Stepehn Nzomo, Martina Bastien, Emad Asmy and Henry Sian Kung. Each year, Langham Literature offers to seminaries a precious library grant to purchase new theological books and this month marks the launch of a new offer — and these leaders at Majority World colleges are eager to end their year's wait."



This offer comes through the Langham Literature Catalogue that is mailed out each year. This new 90-page catalogue has not only been mailed to over 1600 seminaries, but is also available online.

Langham Literature continues to implement the vision of John Stott for making evangelical Christian literature widely available to College and University libraries, Bible students and teachers throughout the Majority World.

The Langham Literature Grant Catalogue recently published contains the best and the most comprehensive list of evangelical theological study titles available anywhere in

the world with the inclusion of 350 French titles, previously distributed in a separate catalogue. Together with the new Spanish catalogue, Langham is able to meet the unique needs of individual colleges in many countries, and provide donors the opportunity to invest in local pastor training efforts.

'Wishlists' are created by colleges and seminaries in the Majority World to present the books they most need for training local pastors. They can then subscribe under the Library Grant Programme and the Additional Book Programme. Since Langham is able to negotiate a generous discount with more than 70 evangelical publishers and uses a consolidated ordering service, these reference books are provided at a heavily subsidised price, sometimes double the value of investments, so that colleges can receive twice as many books.

If you would like to know more about the Langham Catalogue or to support us in the efforts of making evangelical books available at affordable prices, please visit www.langhampartnership.org or send an email to Victor Sun, General Secretary, Langham Foundation East Asia at LFEA@langhampartnership.org.

Langham Literature's Publishing Grant for IVP Bible Dictionaries in Chinese

Langham Partnership International has given a £2,500 grant to the Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press to assist in the translation of two exceptionally helpful volumes to be published in the traditional Chinese script. They are the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters and the Dictionary of the Later New Testament published by the the IVP Press in the United States. The two dictionaries under translation are part of the four-volume IVP Bible Dictionaries Series which is an indispensable tool for scholars, students, pastors, teachers and lay preachers with articles covering traditional and contemporary topics, such as cross-sectional themes, methods of interpretation, significant historical or cultural background in the Old and New Testament times. When completed, each volume will have approximately 1.5 million to 2 million characters.

Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press is the Literature Department of the Campus Evangelical Fellowship (CEF) based in Taiwan. CEF is a member of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and is equivalent to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) in the United Kingdom. CEF through its publishing department is committed to make available Chinese Christian books in the area of theology, Bible study materials, Christian Living, leadership training to support God's work among the Chinese speaking people. On average, total publication per year is around 60 books of which 65% are translated from the English language. There is a possibility that the two dictionaries would be translated into the simplified script and made available to the churches and readers in mainland China. CEF work with publishers across the Taiwan Strait. They have cooperated with the publication department of the China Christian Council in producing the simplified script version of John Stott's Commentaries on the Acts, Romans and Ephesians under the Bible Speaks Today series which are now widely available among the Chinese churches.

Visitors to Hong Kong.....

In early November, Chris Wright, Langham Partnership's International Director, paid Hong Kong a whirlwind visit literally – as his trip coincided with a rare late Autumn typhoon! During his brief stay here, Chris managed to squeeze in a full-length public lecture at the North Point Alliance Church on the challenging subject of Biblical Economic Values and Capitalism. He spoke without a break for more than 90 minutes, exploring some of the assumptions and teachings of the Old Testament to see what God expects of his chosen and redeemed people. He then turned around and examined how these objectives, principles and priorities that God has built into Scriptures can still speak to our contemporary capitalistic society and business world. The lecture was well-received with many questions asked at the end of the talk.

A video of Chris Wright's lecture that evening, produced in DVD format, is our gift to supporters who have joined the Langham Partners' scheme.



The other visitor who came to Hong Kong was Jonathan Lamb, Langham Partnership's International Director of Preaching. In January, Jonathan was in town to meet church friends, Langham supporters and representatives of the major seminaries for a discussion on the possibility of launching Langham Preaching in the East Asian region. This is a fast-growing ministry design to encourage the development of local movements committed to biblical exposition and to provide training, resources and support for a new generation of preachers. Langham Preaching is currently collaborating with national initiatives in Uganda, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Central Europe, Argentina, the Caribbean and many other parts of the world. At the moment, Langham Preaching programmes are run in more than 30 countries with invitations from a further 50 countries.

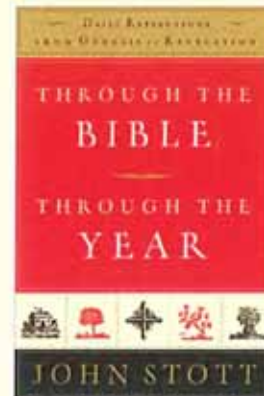


The high point of Jonathan's visit was speaking to 35 bankers and lawyers at Level 41 of the HSBC headquarters building. These were busy office workers in the Central Business District and the only time they could get together was at 7am in the morning. Jonathan shared with them over breakfast his thoughts about the importance of biblical preaching which will enable a Christian to grow in depth and maturity.

John Stott's First Devotional Published

Through the Bible, Through the Year

Daily Reflections from Genesis to Revelation



John Stott's first-ever daily devotional is now available! Purchase *Through the Bible, Through the Year* online at www.johnstott.org, and a small donation will be made to John Stott Ministries.

Read the Back Cover:

John Stott is without question one of the most beloved and significant pastors and authors of the last fifty years. Named by Time magazine in 2005 as one of the world's 100 most influential people and as one of the 25 most influential people impacting evangelicals in America, Stott commands a huge following that defies his quiet demeanour.

Now, in *Through the Bible, Through the Year*, Stott offers original, never-before-published reflections on the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. These daily readings take you through the Scriptures with an emphasis both on the "big picture" of the story of God and the nature of God as Trinity. Christians seeking a stronger, holistic grasp on the Bible will treasure this work that overflows with wisdom gleaned from a life of study and reflection by an internationally beloved pastor and scholar.

"I can't think of anyone who has been more effective in introducing so many people to a biblical worldview. He represents a touchstone of authentic biblical scholarship that, in my opinion, has scarcely been paralleled since the days of the 16th century European Reformers."—Billy Graham in Time magazine

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