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AN ANALYSIS OF JOHN STOTT'S UNDERSTANDING
OF THE THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving, supportive wife, Jean. Without her help, encouragement, and editing, this dissertation would never have been completed. Furthermore, I want to offer a special thanks to Kevin and Jamie Bowers, whose generous hospitality in providing a place for me to stay in Louisville during my trips to Southern gave me the opportunity to pursue this degree.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Evangelism and Social Responsibility: A Contemporary Tension	2
Definitions	3
Mission	3
Evangelism	7
Social Responsibility	9
Social Justice	10
Survey of the Scholarship on this Tension	15
Statement of the Problem	24
Research Methodology	28
2. JOHN STOTT IN CONTEXT	32
Biography of Stott	34
Cultural Influences on Stott's Life and Ministry	55
Theological Influences on Stott's Life and Ministry	56
Stott's Development of Balance as a Value	58
3. STOTT AND THE TENSION IN A PASTORAL CONTEXT	61
Stott and Evangelism in a Pastoral Context	62
Emphasis on the Proclaimed Gospel	64
Emphasis on Laity Involvement in Evangelism	68

Chapter	Page
Stott and Social Responsibility in a Pastoral Context	73
Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Preaching	76
The Practical Nature of Stott’s Theological Position	82
4. STOTT AND THE TENSION IN A LEADERSHIP CONTEXT	85
Stott and the Lausanne Covenant	86
History of Lausanne	88
Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Debate	91
Debate at Lausanne	91
Debate at Mexico City	96
Debate in Lausanne Consultations	100
Debate at CRESR	104
Debate at Manila	113
Stott and the Tension as an Author and Leader	115
Stott’s View of Christian Mission	115
Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Christian Mission	119
Implications for Social Justice	120
Stott’s Paradigm in Application	124
5. STOTT’S INFLUENCE ON THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE	129
Implications of Stott’s Position	129
Survey of Stott’s Contemporary Influence	131
Stott’s Influence on a Narrow View of Mission	132
Arthur P. Johnston.	132
C. Peter Wagner	134
Stott’s Influence on a Broad View of Mission	136
Orlando Costas	136

Chapter	Page
René Padilla	138
Samuel Escobar	140
Ronald Sider	143
Stott's Influence on Contemporary Evangelicalism	146
Christopher J. H. Wright	146
Duane Litfin.	150
6. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STOTT'S POSITION	156
Exegetical Analysis	156
Analysis of John 20:21	157
Analysis of Matthew 5:13-16	166
Theological Analysis	174
Broad Doctrinal Themes	174
Stott's Views on Annihilation	181
Practical Analysis	188
Strengths and Weaknesses of Stott's Position	196
Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Context	196
Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Scripture	197
Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Theology	198
Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Application	199
7. CONCLUSION	202
Social Responsibility and Discipleship: Matthew 25:31-46	202
Social Responsibility and the Disciple's Life	213
Implications from Stott's Solution	216
BIBLIOGRAPHY	223

PREFACE

One can arrive at a dissertation topic in a variety of ways. Certainly, those who are able to write on their subject in their seminars and colloquia begin the dissertation process with an advantage. Some, however, arrive at their topic over time. Early on in my seminar work, I knew that I wanted to research the topic of evangelism and social responsibility. At this point though, I did not know the angle at which I wanted to explore the issue. What began for me as curiosity, has blossomed into a project with spiritual, academic, and pastoral fruitfulness.

At this stage of my academic career, I believe the reading, research, and writing from my years in school have had some measurable spiritual influence on my life. I am confident that this dissertation has been equally a spiritual task and an academic one. Initially, my choice of John Stott's understanding of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility came as a result of his extensive writing, preaching, and influence on the topic. In the process of reading his booklets, books, and articles, listening to his sermons, and examining the more intimate elements of his pastoral career from his correspondence and diaries, I became aware of a glaring reality. For all of his influence, John Stott was a humble pastor seeking the glory of his heavenly Father.

Most assuredly, Stott was neither a perfect man nor a perfect model. He would be the first to argue that Christ is the ideal Christian exemplar. Stott's life and ministry offer contemporary church leaders an example of diligence, discipline, humility, service, and exactness worthy of emulation. Stott's theology, as does every man's, contains its share of flaws. In point of fact, the impetus for this dissertation is a perceived flaw in his definition and explanation of Christian mission. But if I am to research a man and his theology, I could do much worse than John Stott. Hopefully, this dissertation will display

a certain academic aptitude, but there is no doubt in my own spiritual life that the research required has been one of significant spiritual benefit. While I do have a *godly ambition*, to borrow Alister Chapman's title for his biography of Stott, that my research might benefit evangelicalism at large, I know that this process has been invaluable to my own spiritual growth.

I must offer a word of thanks to Mud Creek Baptist Church and Dr. Greg Mathis. Your encouragement and freedom to accept the requirements for me to complete this degree were invaluable. As an employer, you shared me with my academic work. As an encourager, you spurred me toward the finish. As a supporter, you provided the time and many of the resources necessary for me to engage and complete the task. I pray that God will continue to richly bless Mud Creek Baptist Church. Dr. Mathis, I also pray that God will favor your ministry for years to come. Thank you for mentoring, encouraging, and challenging the ministers on your church staff. I am indebted and grateful. As my pastor, thank you for giving your blessing to this degree and this dissertation.

A word of gratitude to my family is necessary for sharing me with the work for this degree. To my parents, Conrad and Elaine Hefner, thank you for challenging me to pursue academic excellence. It is my sincere hope that the sacrifices of my family will bear fruit in the years to come. You have not only supported me, but aided me tremendously in completing this dissertation. Special appreciation goes to my wife, Jean. With painstaking precision you proofread, edited, and sharpened each chapter of this dissertation. I will forever be grateful to you for your inestimable part in this endeavor. You have truly lived up to the meaning of your name through this process, a most gracious gift from God. In my own way, I entered this doctoral work under a sense of calling from God. But in my mind there is little doubt that my inspiration to finish as well as my joy in the midst of writing has come from another of God's gifts – our son, Will. It has been a treasure to watch you grow and develop in concord with the

development of this dissertation. May you, who will know me best, be able to say of me as so many said of Stott that he was a man of humility and integrity.

Christopher Clayton Hefner

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between evangelism and social responsibility is an evangelical tension established in historical contexts which contains implications for contemporary Christianity. Theologians, pastors, and church leaders for more than a century have discussed and debated the implications of the biblical mandates of evangelism and justice.¹ Indeed, this tension is not new to Christianity and the debate continues in evangelicalism today. Few Christian thinkers have addressed this issue as thoroughly or influentially than John R. W. Stott. He advanced this topic through his chairmanship on the drafting committee for the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which presented Christian mission in broader terms that entailed both evangelism and social responsibility. Stott's basic understanding of this tension forms the main topic for this dissertation. His views on the subject provide the content this dissertation will explore. Stott ignited this tension anew at Lausanne and fanned the flames through his clarifications in later writings. Though he declared his positions with theological cogency, he did not settle the issue. Indeed, this debate continues into the twenty-first century.

¹See for example the diversity of Christian understandings on this particular issue. Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice*, Kindle ed. (New York: Penguin Group, 2010); Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Abingdon, 1960); Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus* (New York: Association Press, 1916); Abraham Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, trans. Dirk Jellema (repr., Grand Rapids: Piet Hein, 1950); Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953); Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947); Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009); C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981); John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975). These authors do not represent an exhaustive list, but are simply illustrative of the variety of views and broadness of discussion related to evangelism and social responsibility.

Evangelism and Social Responsibility: A Contemporary Tension

Theologians and Christian leaders continue to wrestle with the implications of evangelism and social responsibility. For example, in October 2011, the Carl F. H. Henry Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School held a formal debate between Jim Wallis and Albert Mohler on whether social justice was an essential part of the church's mission. In the discussion, Wallis argued that social justice is an essential part of the church's mission while Mohler contended that social justice is not.² Mohler conceded that Christians were to engage in the good works of justice mandated in the Scriptures, but that the church's mission was kerygmatic, focusing primarily on gospel communication.³ Taking the other position, Wallis did not contend that acts of justice were more important than the gospel, but that they were necessary components alongside the gospel.⁴ It can be argued that this specific debate is partially representative of a larger discussion concerning the church's responsibilities for evangelism and social action.

Contemporary Christian literature has added to this perceived tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Books such as *The Hole in Our Gospel* by Richard Stearns and *Generous Justice* by Timothy Keller are continuing the conversation as to how evangelism, gospel, and social justice relate within Christian mission. Other works, like *What is the Mission of the Church?* by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert and *Word Versus Deed* by Duane Litfin, seek to reframe the discussion by emphasizing contextual biblical exegesis of the popular passages related to the tension. Christian thinkers of the past have addressed the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Part

²Jim Wallis and Albert Mohler, "Is Social Justice an Essential Part of the Mission of the Church?" Trinity Debate at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, audio, <http://www.henrycenter.org> (accessed October 27, 2011).

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

of this chapter will survey important thinkers on this discussion in order to set a theological and cultural context for John Stott's engagement of the issue. Before a historical survey of the tension will be profitable, certain terms must be defined.

Definitions

A significant reason for the lack of precision in the evangelical world regarding evangelism and social responsibility relates to defining the terms involved. Generally, I will seek to adopt the terms as Stott defined them. Yet, there are some nuances and details concerning the subsequent terms that require clarification. In the following paragraphs I will define the terms *mission*, *evangelism*, *social responsibility*, and *social justice* as they will be used in this dissertation.

Mission

Mission is the first term that must be defined. Lack of clarity concerning this term will inevitably lead to confusion among the other terms. Indeed, one's definitions of evangelism, social responsibility, and social justice flow out of one's understanding of Christian mission. The broadness of the term mission, and the fact that it acts as a foundation to the other terms to be defined, necessitates a more comprehensive treatment which will follow. In their book *What is the Mission of the Church?*, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert propose that mission concerns, "being sent and being given a task."⁵ They argue that what Jesus sent his followers into the world to accomplish must remain the mission and priority of the church.⁶ They further aver that Jesus' mission mandate to the church remains entrenched in gospel proclamation and disciple-making.⁷ DeYoung

⁵Kevin DeYoung and Gregory D. Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and Social Justice*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 19.

⁶Ibid., 29.

⁷Ibid., 53-54.

and Gilbert would agree with Albert Mohler when he argued that mission is “inherently kerygmatic,” or that the mission of the church is primarily about proclamation and not service.⁸ Though he does not specifically define Christian mission, Duane Litfin in his book *Word Versus Deed* argues that mission does include both verbal and nonverbal elements.⁹ Litfin emphasizes careful exegesis of social responsibility passages and contends for the overwhelming priority of a person’s eternal needs.¹⁰ These authors contend that proclamation is the centerpiece of Christian mission. Their definition narrowly confines the mission of the church to proclamation and discipleship.

Samuel Escobar describes a different perspective of mission. Escobar provides an interesting analysis of the concept of mission, not because he defines mission so clearly, but because of his holistic understanding of mission. He joined Stott on the Lausanne Covenant drafting committee as a voice for the social implications of the church’s mission.¹¹ In his book *Christian Mission and Social Justice*, Escobar offers a corrective to what he argued was the popular view of missions as primarily a numerical and geographical expansion.¹² He believes the mission of the church includes the uniqueness of the biblical gospel, but argues that churches should adopt a kingdom mindset where congregations in particular contexts can bring a practical ethos toward social change.¹³ For Escobar, the mission of the church includes pursuing justice.¹⁴ In

⁸Wallis and Mohler, “Is Social Justice and Essential Part of the Mission of the Church?”

⁹Duane Litfin, *Word Versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 138.

¹⁰Ibid., 166, 199-200.

¹¹John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 9.

¹²Samuel Escobar and John Driver, *Christian Mission and Social Justice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1978), 16.

¹³Ibid., 78.

¹⁴Ibid., 83.

The New Global Mission Escobar clearly connects the mission of the church to God's mission of redeeming mankind by first sending his Son and then the church.¹⁵ He further uses Christ's incarnational compassion and care for the poor, downtrodden, and sick of society as a model for Christian missionaries.¹⁶ Escobar interprets mission in light of not only gospel proclamation, but also sacrificial service and pursuit of justice.

Christopher J. H. Wright suggests another, more precise definition for Christian mission. He writes, "Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of the world for the redemption of God's creation."¹⁷ Wright refuses to separate the mission of the church from God's mission recognizing that it is God alone who can accomplish his mission.¹⁸ Wright argues for seeing the mission of God as holistic, including such biblical expectations as preaching the gospel, ministering to the needy and poor, pursuing justice, and offering education.¹⁹ He further suggests that mission which fails to include evangelism is defective, but evangelism alone is not mission.²⁰ Wright rejects the language of evangelism as primary in his scheme of mission and suggests that the church's mission must be holistic in scope.²¹ Wright's broad version of Christian mission includes mandates for social action as well as evangelism.

¹⁵Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 86.

¹⁶Ibid.,106.

¹⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 23.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 316.

²⁰Ibid., 319.

²¹Ibid., 316-19.

Stott's position on Christian mission carried significant influence. His works were a source for each of the authors of the preceding definitions. Stott himself suggested that mission carried with it two predominant but extreme positions. He presented the first extreme view of mission as verbal proclamation alone which is essentially evangelism in a foreign context.²² He argued that the second extreme was generally more ecumenical and declared that mission is bringing *shalom* or God's peace in social situations to the world.²³ Stott believed neither of these positions clearly depicted the biblical expectations. He synthesized the extremes by using the Great Commission and the sending dynamic found in Scripture – God sending the Son and the Son sending the disciples.²⁴ He primarily noted John's version of the commission in John 20:21 where Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."²⁵ Stott affirmed the Great Commission's inclusion of proclamation, teaching, discipleship, and service by pointing out Jesus' mission was one of service which should be understood to be the mission of the church.²⁶

While the preceding definitions certainly do not represent an exhaustive treatment of the subject of Christian mission, they do offer an illuminating contrast. On one hand, Mohler, DeYoung, Gilbert, and Litfin emphasize the Commission mandate for redemption as the specific mission of the church. On the other hand, Escobar, Wright, and Stott contribute an important perspective to the church. They note that the Christian life and witness is necessarily broader than mere proclamation. Even so, in their attempt to see mission in more holistic terms, they appear to neglect the clarity of Jesus' Great

²²Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 25-26.

²³Ibid., 28-29.

²⁴Ibid., 35-36.

²⁵Ibid., 37.

²⁶Ibid., 37-40.

Commission mandate. This dissertation will adopt the more narrow definition of Christian mission as God's sending his people into the world as disciple making partners in his redemption of mankind. This definition underscores the biblical focal point of redemption, emphasizes the eternal significance of the gospel message, and recognizes the Great Commission component of disciple making as God's redemptive method. It also recognizes that while the church's mission flows from God's mission, there are elements of God's mission as well as his mission in Jesus that are not to be adopted by the church.²⁷ Examples of God's mission that are not specifically parts of the church's mission are Christ's sacrificial death on the cross or God's acts of eternal judgment.²⁸ The church cannot functionally redeem the world, and as a result, cannot fully adopt Jesus' mission. In addition, the church will not finally judge the world, which is certainly a part of God's mission. Thus, while the church's mission is contained within God's mission in and through Christ, they are not exactly the same. Furthermore, this definition of mission provides a foundational basis for evaluating Stott's understanding of evangelism and social responsibility in chapter six.

Evangelism

The second term that requires definition is *evangelism*. Evangelism is a more straightforward term and carries fewer broad implications than mission. Furthermore, evangelism was clearly and specifically defined in the Lausanne Covenant, which will provide the basic definition for this dissertation. Evangelism is most simply the spread of the good news concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁹ The paragraph on

²⁷DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 41. DeYoung and Gilbert correctly point out that the mission of the church flows from the mission of God in Christ, but it must be specifically different in task.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 20-21.

evangelism from the Lausanne Covenant explains,

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.³⁰

Stott and the Lausanne committee kept evangelism biblically specific. Evangelism should be understood as a part of the church's mission. Evangelism is not the only component of Christian disciple making, but it is the initial and principal component to the church's mission. Lausanne would affirm further that evangelism is "primary" in the church's mission.³¹ Future Lausanne documents would continue to underscore the primacy of evangelism in relation to social responsibility. The Consultation on World Evangelization in Thailand in 1980 argued for the urgency of evangelization based on the unreached peoples of the world while the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR) in Grand Rapids in 1982 emphasized the logical priority of the gospel because of the eternal destiny of the unevangelized.³²

Though the Lausanne statements concerning evangelistic primacy are helpful, the argument of this dissertation is that a clear understanding of biblical mission makes irrelevant the need to specify whether evangelism or social responsibility is primary or secondary as partners in the mission task. Coupling the concepts of biblical mission (believers being sent as God's partners in redeeming the world through disciple making) and evangelism (proclaiming the historical gospel toward repentance and faith) will

³⁰Ibid., 20.

³¹Ibid., 30.

³²John R. W. Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 159, 183.

accentuate evangelism as the central thrust in the church's mission of partnering with God in redeeming mankind. Social responsibility, as will be defined in the following section, may extend logically and necessarily from the disciple's life, but evangelism remains the heart of the church's mission in the biblical mandate.

Social Responsibility

Although the preceding terms, mission and evangelism, may garner disagreement among believers as to their definition, they do anticipate considerable specificity. Nuances aside, mission certainly refers to being sent as partners in God's redemptive task, and evangelism definitely suggests communicating verbally the gospel witness. On the other hand, *social responsibility* demonstrates ambiguity regarding its definition. In fact, this ambiguity may affect the controversy concerning the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Nevertheless, a definition that flows from the Lausanne Covenant's paragraph on Christian social responsibility is possible. Stott and the committee grounded social responsibility in God who created mankind in his image and pursues justice in the world today, as well ultimately in the final judgment.³³ Furthermore, the committee was careful to delineate between evangelism and social responsibility, while they claim that both are "part of our Christian duty."³⁴ Although some of these clarifications are helpful, the original covenant failed to specify what social responsibility looked like in the Christian life.

CRESR, eight years after the original Lausanne statement, includes both social service and social action in social responsibility.³⁵ Social service is "Relieving human need, philanthropic activity, seeking to minister to individuals and families, works of

³³Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary*, 25.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 196.

mercy,”³⁶ while social action is, “removing the causes of human need, political and economic activity, seeking to transform the structures of society, the quest for justice.”³⁷ Stott argued that social service and social action should not be divorced from one another because some issues require political engagement and cannot be justly addressed apart from socio-political action.³⁸ Thus, Stott and the Grand Rapids committee intrinsically connected areas of social ministry with socio-political action. In their mind, social responsibility contained more than ministering to immediate needs. It also anticipated and expected Christians to engage political issues ranging from the economy to injustice. Following Stott’s broad application of the term, I will adopt his inclusive understanding of social responsibility. Explanations and critiques which specifically relate to social service or social action will be clearly delineated throughout the dissertation.

Social Justice

The final term which requires specific definition is *social justice*. A specific understanding of this term is necessary because social justice has been embraced by persons of various political and theological persuasions. Lack of clarity in defining this term will create more ambiguity concerning the understanding of Christian activity in the world. Furthermore, defining social justice will be helpful in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Chapter 5 will survey the scholarship following Stott and will allude to the popularity of social justice as a correlative term to social responsibility in contemporary Christian vernacular. Chapter 7 will evaluate the theological implications of Stott’s position including the relation of his views to the issue of social justice. These chapters will explore social justice in relation to appropriate Christian social activity. More than

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 35.

³⁸Ibid., 36.

any of the preceding terms, social justice is a loaded term. It has been connected with economic justice, as in the perceived economic oppression of categories of people.³⁹ Contemporary usage of the term necessitates an attempt at a definition.

A variety of Christian thinkers have assumed social justice terminology. Samuel Escobar believed that the gospel itself contains the framework for helping individuals who face injustice as well as “challenging and sometimes transforming the evil structural roots of social injustice.”⁴⁰ Escobar connected injustice to issues driven by economic situations like poverty and oppression.⁴¹ Within a theologically conservative framework, Timothy Keller stated, “God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to ‘do justice.’”⁴² In the *Handbook of Social Justice*, Mae Cannon argued: “Justice is the manifestation of right action. Simply put, the basic concepts of *work* (or action) and *faith* (or righteousness) help lay the foundation for what God has to say about justice.”⁴³ Quoting Dr. Cornel West in her book *Everyday Justice*, Julie Clawson stated, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”⁴⁴ Arthur Holmes suggested that biblical love and justice must develop together within the Christian.⁴⁵ For him, love represented the inner growth of the believer and justice the outer application of biblical principles.⁴⁶ He further

³⁹Don Prange, “Discipleship and Economic Justice,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10 (1983): 342.

⁴⁰Escobar, *The New Global Mission*, 148.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Keller, *Generous Justice*, 5.

⁴³ Mae Elise Cannon, *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 19.

⁴⁴Julie Clawson, *Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of our Daily Choices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 21.

⁴⁵Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 161.

⁴⁶Ibid.

acknowledged that the modern preoccupation with “social justice has been expressed in terms of equal human rights, a tradition that has roots in Roman jurisprudence as well as in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures”⁴⁷ Brian McLaren simply stated that justice was “the right use of power in our relationship with others.”⁴⁸ These thinkers believe that social justice is learning to act publicly or socially in the just manner that God desires of his people.

However, these thinkers represent just a sample of the understanding of social justice as it relates to Christian principles. For example, Mark Cherry offered a contrasting position concerning social justice. He submitted, “In part, as I explore, appeal to human rights and social justice is problematic for Christians because such language is not a Christian language. It is the language of secular modernity, which specifically attempts to empty itself of particular religious meanings.”⁴⁹ Cherry further suggested that Christianity’s role in social issues must be understood in light of the greater purpose of eternal salvation rather than human rights’ concerns which are limited to the temporal.⁵⁰ Albert Mohler presented a similar position in his debate with Jim Wallis on whether or not social justice was a part of the mission of the church. He contended that the mission of the church was the proclamation of the gospel message concerning Christ’s redemptive work and did not include a mandate for social justice.⁵¹ Furthermore, he argued that the term “social” does not need to be a part of the Christian

⁴⁷Ibid., 183.

⁴⁸Brian McLaren, “What is Justice?” in *The Justice Project*, ed. Brian McLaren, Elisa Padilla, and Ashley Bunting Seeber (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 22.

⁴⁹Mark J. Cherry, “Human Rights, Social Justice, and Other Secular Evils: Why Christian Ethics and Christian Bioethics Must be Traditionally Christian,” *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 54 (2010): 135.

⁵⁰Ibid., 160.

⁵¹Wallis and Mohler, “Is Social Justice and Essential Part of the Mission of the Church?”

discussion of justice because in a real sense all justice relates to social concerns and justice is an integral part of the character of God himself.⁵²

One of the challenges with using the term *social justice* is that it is not limited to Christian perspectives. For instance, John Rawls connected the concept of social justice to organizing societal institutions toward the just benefit of everyone in society.⁵³ Rawls subsequently confessed that this understanding did not address all the “important questions,” but rather created a framework for discussion.⁵⁴ A naturalistic understanding of ethics can also suggest a sense of economic equality as a type of justice within society. For example, Howard Wilcox in *Ethics without God*, argued for a type of economic social justice:

Better than individual charity are realistic and systematic activities by scientifically informed persons seeking to relieve the evils present in today’s world. Such activities can well be supported by taxes levied on all of a community’s citizens in accordance with the magnitudes of their wealth or income. People’s charitable impulses can then find satisfaction through their payment of such taxes plus their enjoyment of the beneficial results produced with the aid of those taxes.⁵⁵

While Wilcox does not specifically offer a definition of social justice, he does suggest the rightness of economic equality. Wilcox’s understanding is used here for illustrative purposes. Social justice terminology is evident in both theological and political spectrums.

Because social justice has been embraced comfortably by individuals on each end of the theological and political spectrum, it becomes at best an awkward term to define and use with clarity. The nebulous nature of the term motivated Harold Lindsell to

⁵²Wallis and Mohler, “Is Social Justice and Essential Part of the Mission of the Church?”

⁵³John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 4-6.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁵Howard A. Wilcox, *Ethics without God* (Gaberville, CA: McGilvra Brown Press, 1996), 227.

suggest to Stott that it be removed from the Grand Rapids report on evangelism and social responsibility.⁵⁶ Stott responded by removing “the adjective social” from before the word “justice” in the document, and it remains absent from the final, published report.⁵⁷ Considering the contentious nature of the term, dropping it from the CRESR statement appeared to be a wise decision.

This dissertation will not attempt to debate the biblical definition of justice, but rather discuss the implied activities advocated when the terms “social” and “justice” are combined. For instance, after Cannon presents a rather uncontroversial understanding of justice for Christianity, she proceeds to connect the manner in which justice is employed by advocating economic equality which is also the argument Wilcox adopted.⁵⁸ Herein lies the tension described by Cherry when he sought to avoid terminology that he argued was better suited in secular rather than biblical ethics. As a result of this linguistic conflict, this dissertation will refrain from using social justice and social responsibility interchangeably.

Because this dissertation is only indirectly related to the definition and tension concerning the term social justice, DeYoung and Gilbert’s simple analysis will be adopted. They state, “Doing justice, then, implies fairness, decency, and honesty.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, they propose that redistribution of wealth is not a necessary component of justice, but rather justice entails combating evil and pursuing assistance for those in need.⁶⁰ It was necessary to explore this particular linguistic conundrum in the

⁵⁶Harold Lindsell to John Stott, August 7, 1982, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

⁵⁷John Stott to Harold Lindsell, August 24, 1972, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

⁵⁸Cannon, *Social Justice Handbook*, 19-20.

⁵⁹DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 161.

⁶⁰Ibid.

introduction because analysis will show that John Stott's advancement of the understanding of Christian social responsibility set a foundation for some believers to accept social justice as an important part of Christian duty. Future chapters of this dissertation will discuss the contemporary implications of Stott's views on the tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Survey of the Scholarship on this Tension

Issues of justice and social responsibility are certainly not novel to Christianity. Indeed, many theologians and pastors have broached the topic. Furthermore, Christianity from its earliest beginnings was a faith that sought to influence the societies and cultures surrounding it. Interaction with social ills is a thoroughly Christian activity, and will be presented below by noting a few of the ways in which Christianity has engaged social problems and injustices. The tension that leads this dissertation toward John Stott's analysis is not whether Christians have been involved in socially conscious ministries, but where those ministries fit within the context of Christian mission and how they relate to evangelism. Examples below will set a historical foundation for describing Christianity as a force for engaging social good. The scholarship following the historical section will reveal the theological context on the issue of evangelism and social responsibility that helped shape twentieth century evangelical Christianity.

Christianity in the first three centuries did not have a political voice within its culture. Even so, early Christians did recognize prevalent Roman practices such as abortion, infanticide, and child abandonment as murder.⁶¹ History shows that as Christianity was legalized, believers were empowered to institute Christian values in the

⁶¹Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 51-54.

social arena. For example, In A.D. 374 under Christian emperor Valentinian, Rome formally outlawed the practice of infanticide.⁶² Christians also sought to restore a high view of marriage and marital fidelity.⁶³ Furthermore, Christians recognized the evil of pederasty and pedophilia, which were common in the Greco-Roman world.⁶⁴ Although centuries passed before women gained equal status with men, nations influenced by the biblical worldview gave women have their highest value and sense of equality.⁶⁵ As Christianity developed through the centuries, believers compassionately recognized the need for orphan care, showed concern for the poor and lower classes, and aided the sick.⁶⁶ Christians may also be credited with building the first hospital.⁶⁷ Christian views of humanity differed significantly from the prevailing Greco-Roman values of the day. Followers of Jesus accepted the biblical value of human life, and as they had opportunity, sought to apply biblical principles to social issues.

Early Christianity is not unique in its influence on social issues. Throughout its existence as a religion, Christianity has effected social change throughout culture. In more recent history, Christians helped bring dignity to the working class by assisting workers in earning fair wages.⁶⁸ Many believers also sought to apply biblical principles to the social injustice of race based slavery. While one cannot deny that slavery existed in the biblical story, even by those who were followers of God, the institution of enslaving a race or category of people is foreign to the biblical data. The abolition of

⁶²Ibid., 51.

⁶³Ibid., 84.

⁶⁴Ibid., 87.

⁶⁵Ibid., 122.

⁶⁶Ibid., 130-31.

⁶⁷Ibid., 156.

⁶⁸Ibid., 198.

slavery in the United States and throughout Europe can be attributed to Christians who began to recognize the utter injustice of enslaving people solely based on race.⁶⁹ While it is certainly true that not all believers universally opposed slavery, Christianity, more than any other religion or philosophy, is responsible for its abolition, and Western culture is a glowing example of post-slavery culture.⁷⁰

The preceding evidence reveals believers who sought to engage their world on social issues. Whatever can be argued concerning the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, Christianity has historically been a religion of social activity. This dissertation will not argue against Christian social responsibility, but will rather attempt to clarify where social responsibility fits in relation to Christian mission and evangelism. Thinkers and theologians for more than a century have built their apparatus for social ministry on their interpretation of the biblical evidence. The ensuing review will formulate a theological context for John's Stott's understanding of the tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Abraham Kuyper is the first theologian and thinker advanced in this survey. He was a theologian, pastor, and politician in the Netherlands around the turn of the twentieth century. He believed that the Calvinistic theological system provided a

⁶⁹Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 360.

⁷⁰Ibid., 365. Stark argued that predominant theological and biblical arguments concerning slavery came from abolitionists who insisted that the biblical evidence pointed to an equality of mankind that made slavery based on race an untenable and morally objectionable position. Ibid., 346-48. While Stark was correct to point out Christianity's influence on the abolition movement during the Civil War, American Christianity did not hold a monolithic position concerning slavery. Mark Noll commented that interpretation of Scripture on the issue of slavery was divided throughout the nation. Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Kindle ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), location 419. Noll summarized, "With debate over the Bible and slavery at such a pass, and especially with the success of the proslavery biblical argument manifestly (if also uncomfortably) convincing to most Southerners and many in the North, difficulties abounded. The evangelical Protestant churches had a problem because the mere fact of trusting implicitly in the Bible was not solving disagreements about what the Bible taught concerning slavery." Ibid., location 663. In essence, various biblical and theological positions spurred the debate concerning slavery. Noll concluded that Civil War itself became a deciding factor in the biblical interpretation of American slavery.

framework for understanding man and God as well as how man should engage the world socially.⁷¹ Kuyper taught that God was sovereign and that he created man in his own image.⁷² He argued that man being created in God's image gave him a unique role in the world:

But just as the entire creation reaches its culminating point in man, so also religion finds its clear expression only in man who is made in the image of God, and this not because man seeks it, but because God Himself implanted in man's nature the real essential religious expression, by means of the 'seed of religion' (*semen religionis*), as Calvin defines it, sown in our human heart.⁷³

Kuyper concluded that the image of God in man and the sin which resides in the human heart makes all men, regardless of social status, equal before God.⁷⁴ He believed that God's primary solution for the human social dilemma was Jesus' death on the cross, by which he made union with God possible both for the rich and the poor.⁷⁵ He further adopted the methodology that the church was to engage the world socially in terms of charity, thus involving herself in the public arenas.⁷⁶ Kuyper developed his program for social engagement from his theology. Personally, he employed his philosophy for social engagement as he served within the Dutch government. He founded a university and a Christian political party as he considered people of all backgrounds to be equal, and sought to give them each a political voice.⁷⁷ Kuyper's major influence on the issue of Christian social responsibility stems from his view that

⁷¹Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 17.

⁷²Ibid., 45, 79.

⁷³Ibid., 45-46.

⁷⁴Ibid., 27.

⁷⁵Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, 27.

⁷⁶Ibid., 80.

⁷⁷Clifford Blake Anderson and Christine Schwartz, "From Manuscripts to Megabytes: How Princeton Seminary is Digitizing the Abraham Kuyper Archives," *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 61 (2007): 104.

Christians should engage the political process as a part of their duty to preserve and cultivate culture.

Walter Rauschenbusch, another Christian thinker around the turn of the twentieth century, largely influenced the tension between evangelism and social action. Rauschenbusch's social theology stemmed from his pastorate in the slums of the Hell's Kitchen district in New York City.⁷⁸ Following his service as pastor, he became a professor at Rochester Seminary. His professorship allowed him the flexibility to write, which became his most influential medium for promulgating his social gospel.⁷⁹ Rauschenbusch claimed that the gospel was primarily social in its understandings and implications, and that "Salvation is always a social process."⁸⁰ Rauschenbusch believed that the gospel itself demanded social action and sought to retrieve the social aspect of Christianity for the American church.⁸¹ He adopted a theology of optimism, believing that Christianity rightly understood would bring the kingdom of God on earth through what he espoused was the legitimate gospel, his social gospel.⁸² He contended from the life and ministry of Jesus, "It is clear that our Christianity is most Christian when religion and ethics are viewed as inseparable elements of the same single-minded and whole-hearted life, in which the consciousness of humanity completely blend."⁸³ In actuality,

⁷⁸Christopher Hodge Evans, *The Kingdom is Always but Coming: A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 112.

⁷⁹C. Howard Hopkins, "An American Prophet: A Biographical Sketch of Walter Rauschenbusch," in *A Gospel for the Social Awakening; Selections from the Writings of Walter Rauschenbusch* (New York: Association, 1950), 21-22.

⁸⁰Walter Rauschenbusch, "Christianizing the Social Crisis," in *Walter Rauschenbusch: Selected Writings*, ed. Winthrop S. Hudson (New York: Paulist, 1984), 176.

⁸¹Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus*, 196.

⁸²Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Abingdon, 1960), 105, 77.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 14.

Rauschenbusch redefined the gospel. He considered his social gospel a return to the original roots of Christian theology which he argued was a gospel primarily concerned with counteracting the social evils of the world.⁸⁴ Knowledge of Rauschenbusch's theology is vital to any contemporary understanding of the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. His ideas spawned a rift within American Christianity which would divide a liberal social gospel against a fundamentalist proclamation-centered orthodoxy. Indeed, evangelical fears surrounding the liberalism of the social gospel contributed to the significant tensions apparent in Stott's attempts at partnering evangelism and social responsibility.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian famous for his focus on Christian discipleship. Bonhoeffer's contribution to this tension relates to connection of social responsibility to a believer's growth as a disciple. Bonhoeffer oriented his understanding of Christianity on following the person and life of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸⁵ Because he related discipleship so stringently to allegiance to Jesus, he believed that followers of Christ should remain unconscious of their own goodness.⁸⁶ In this way, Bonhoeffer expressed how to interpret Jesus' possible contradicting commands to his followers in the Sermon on the Mount to shine as lights (Matt. 5:16), contrasted with not knowing one's own generosity (Matt. 6:3).⁸⁷ His interpretation of Christ's judgment on his followers and those consigned to eternal judgment in Matthew 25 further clarifies his understanding of the manner in which disciples should be unaware of their own good deeds:

⁸⁴Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus*, 196.

⁸⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 45.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 150.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 149.

On that day, Jesus Christ himself will reveal to us the good works of which we had been unaware. Without knowing it, we have fed him, provided him with drink, given him clothes, and visited him; and without knowing it, we have turned him away. On that day, we will be greatly astonished, and we will recognize that it is not our works which endure here but only the work which God, in God's own time, accomplished through us without our intention and effort (Matt. 25:31 ff.). Once again, the only thing left for us is to look away from ourselves and to look to the one who has already accomplished everything for us and to follow this one.⁸⁸

This passage, including Bonhoeffer's interpretation, is of primary importance concerning the discussion of social responsibility as an aspect of discipleship. Most importantly, Bonhoeffer understood discipleship to include social responsibility. Because Jesus himself engaged in social ministry, Bonhoeffer's model for discipleship reflected Jesus' ministry by addressing the Church as an instrument of reform in the world.⁸⁹

Carl F. H. Henry is another Christian thinker who recognized the believer's responsibility to engage social issues. In the mid-twentieth century, he wrote *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* which addressed conservative biblical theology and issues of social ministry. Henry lamented that evangelical theology reacted too far against the liberal leanings of the social gospel by neglecting virtually all emphasis on social ministry.⁹⁰ He was one of the most vocal evangelicals who recognized the inherent division between the evangelistic and social ministry factions of American Christianity.⁹¹ He sought to refocus evangelical Christians to an essential biblical understanding of human morality and ethics based on God creating man in his own image.⁹² He further critiqued fundamentalist Christian theology for what he described as a "preoccupation

⁸⁸Ibid., 279-80.

⁸⁹Patricia A. Schoelles, "Discipleship and Social Ethics: Defining Boundaries for the Church of the Diaspora," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1989): 190-91.

⁹⁰Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), location 206.

⁹¹Carl Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 15.

⁹²Carl Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 151-52.

with personal evangelism at the expense of public concerns.”⁹³ Henry not only believed that the church must engage the culture with proclamation of the gospel, but that Christian social responsibility stemmed from the biblical expectations of “godliness and morality.”⁹⁴ Though he believed that Christians were responsible socially, he did not think churches should offer specific solutions in all issues related to politics and economics.⁹⁵ He preferred to leave specific actions and solutions to individuals, and believed churches should generally communicate the mandates related to the biblical values of justice and morality.⁹⁶ Henry, like Kuyper, grounded his understanding of Christian social responsibility on the reality that God created man in his own image.

William Temple represents a final contextual addition to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility that helped shape John Stott’s understanding of the issue. Temple may not have been as internationally influential as the previous thinkers, but he was prominent in Stott’s life as an evangelist and proponent of Christian social duty.⁹⁷ Temple passionately believed in evangelism, but he also held that social witness was indispensable to successful evangelism.⁹⁸ He believed motivation for engagement of social issues flowed from God’s goodness as Creator and his expectation of Christian obedience so as to represent his commands to the world.⁹⁹ Temple grounded his

⁹³Carl Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1984), 39.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁵Richard J. Mouw, “Carl Henry was Right: *Christianity Today*’s First Editor Grasped What I as a Young Theologian Failed to Understand about Church Involvement in Social Justice,” *Christianity Today* 54 (2010): 33.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 35.

⁹⁸William Temple, *Social Witness and Evangelism* (London: Epworth, 1943), 7-8.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

inspiration for Christian social order with man being created for God's purposes.¹⁰⁰ He expanded his Christian social order on the principles of freedom, fellowship, and service as the derivative values by which believers should engage the world.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Temple avowed that engaging the world could not substitute for the believer's evangelistic responsibility.¹⁰² He stated, "On the contrary, a Christian approach to questions of social justice will lead us back to a renewed belief in the need for individual conversion and dedication. The essential Gospel does not change. From generation to generation, it is the proclamation of the Holy Love of God disclosed in His redeeming acts."¹⁰³ Temple was a spiritual leader in England during Stott's theologically formative years adjacent to his conversion and call to the ministry. Temple's espousal of balance between evangelism and social action likely affected Stott's future role in the tension.

The theological context into which Stott entered around the turn of the twentieth century had seen a variety of perspectives concerning evangelism and social responsibility. Kuyper's vision encouraged believers to engage the world as a result of a holistic theological system. Rauschenbusch's social gospel minimized gospel proclamation in favor of social ministry. Bonhoeffer opted for social engagement based on Christian discipleship.¹⁰⁴ Henry made note of the unhealthy fundamentalist retreat from social issues in backlash against the social gospel. Temple advanced a balanced approach that refused to isolate Christian social action from evangelism. Each of these

¹⁰⁰William Temple, *Christianity and the Social Order* (repr., New York: Seabury, 1977), 62-63.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 67-77.

¹⁰²Temple, *Social Witness and Evangelism*, 9.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Bonhoeffer's placement of social responsibility under the heading of Christian discipleship is a helpful development and will be explored as an alternative to Stott's position in the evaluation portion of this dissertation.

thinkers advanced the discussion concerning Christian social responsibility, but John Stott's arrival into this theological tension synthesized and evaluated the subject even further.

Statement of the Problem

The previous survey reveals the variety of Christian thought on the issue of evangelism and social action. John Stott's understanding of the tension provides a beneficial case study for contemporary Christianity. At a young age he assumed the position of rector at one of London's premier Anglican churches, All Souls, Langham Place.¹⁰⁵ Stott's influence grew as he passionately sought the conversion of the souls within his parish.¹⁰⁶ His combination of evangelicalism and intellectual erudition presented him with international speaking opportunities.¹⁰⁷ By the time Billy Graham envisioned the Lausanne World Congress to stimulate Christians for world evangelism, Stott was known internationally. When Graham invited Stott to join the planning committee for the congress, Stott accepted with the condition that he could assist in shaping the purpose and structure of the congress.¹⁰⁸ Lausanne served as an occasion for Stott's giftedness and perspective to shine on the evangelical stage, and it plunged him into the middle of the debate concerning evangelism and social responsibility.

Billy Graham invited Christian leaders and evangelists from all over the world to Lausanne in 1974 to stress the need for evangelicals to refocus on world evangelism.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56-57.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 75-76.

¹⁰⁸Billy Graham to John Stott, April 3, 1972, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College; John Stott to Billy Graham, May 30, 1972, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

¹⁰⁹William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 442.

Because Stott was known as an intellectual and evangelistic evangelical, he was an obvious selection to chair the committee responsible for authoring the Lausanne Covenant. One of the meeting's tasks was to draw up a covenant that would specify the congress' positions on evangelism, mission, and the social implications for Christians across the globe.¹¹⁰ Stott's authorship of the covenant was as brilliant as it was controversial. Balancing the meeting's overwhelming emphasis on evangelism with his developing understanding of the necessity for Christian social responsibility was not an easy task. Stott was the chief author of the statement though he was joined by Hudson Armerding and Samuel Escobar on the drafting committee, with additional help by Leighton Ford and Jim Douglass.¹¹¹

One of the more controversial, though very clear, statements within the covenant highlights the tension between evangelism and social responsibility: "Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty."¹¹² The controversial part of this statement, even decades after the original document, lies in the final phrase which states that Christian duty includes both evangelism and socio-political action. In recognition of the controversial paragraph on social responsibility, the following paragraph on evangelism and the church affirmed, "In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary."¹¹³ Stott explained that evangelism must remain primary because of the "immensity" of the task of world evangelization, and because the church is

¹¹⁰Ibid., 448-49.

¹¹¹Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant*, 9.

¹¹²Ibid., 28.

¹¹³Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary*, 30.

first and foremost a spiritual force in the world and not an organization for social change.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, raising the issue of social responsibility to the level of partner with evangelism was controversial. Even Stott stated, following Lausanne, that it was interesting that social responsibility was such a part of the discussion in the midst of a conference on world evangelization.¹¹⁵ Though this particular tension within Stott might not represent the definitive theological issue of his ministry, it certainly played a significant role for the rest of his life. As an evangelical leader speaking with international influence, he remained firm that both evangelism and socio-political action were required of the Christian. The manner in which Stott discussed and defended this position will represent the foundation for this dissertation.

Stott followed his authorship of the Lausanne Covenant with other writings which more clearly delineated his position on evangelism and social action. *Christian Mission in the Modern World* was first published in 1975 the year following Lausanne. Stott argued in this short, but clear work that evangelism and social action should be seen as partners working together.¹¹⁶ This partnership terminology was also the conclusion from the Grand Rapids report on evangelism and social responsibility that Stott chaired in 1982.¹¹⁷ Using both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment as scriptural mandates for the believer, Stott believed sharing the gospel and loving others through sacrificial service were parts of the same general task of Christian mission.¹¹⁸ Stott

¹¹⁴Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁵John R. W. Stott, "Significance of Lausanne," *International Review of Mission* 64 (1975): 290.

¹¹⁶John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 43-44.

¹¹⁷ Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 182.

¹¹⁸Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 44-45.

further declared his assertion on the partnership between evangelism and social responsibility by linking his perspective to God's character: "Our God is a loving God who forgives those who turn to him in repentance, but he is also a God who desires justice and asks us, as his people, not only to live justly but to champion the cause of the poor and powerless."¹¹⁹ Stott's passion for the church to engage in works of evangelism and social ministry continued through the last years of his ministry in his book *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*. He believed that Christians, living as salt and light in the world, should permeate society as a whole.¹²⁰ He continued with a question:

Will Christians be able to influence their country so that the values and standards of the kingdom of God permeate the whole national culture—its consensus on moral and bioethical issues, its recognition of human rights, its respect for the sanctity of human life (including that of the unborn, the handicapped, and the senile), its concern for the homeless, the unemployed and people trapped in the cycle of poverty, its attitude to dissidents, its stewardship of the environment, its treatment of criminals, and the whole way of life of its citizens?¹²¹

Stott remained passionate concerning the church's evangelistic advance which would positively affect society as a whole.

His treatment of the tension is a worthy study because of his committed evangelical stance while yet holding to a passion for justice in the world. Throughout his writings, Stott reiterated his position that social responsibility and evangelism are partner expectations. A further reason for exploring Stott's understanding of this tension is his penchant for theological balance. During one of his memos as chairman of the Lausanne Theology and Education Group, he argued his version of theological equilibrium, "Don't let the theologians run away with an academic debate which is not earthed in evangelistic

¹¹⁹Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 24.

¹²⁰John R. W. Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 128.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 128-29.

strategy. Equally, don't let the practical people stifle the discussion of important theological issues. Keep the balance!"¹²² Stott not only strove for the balance between evangelism and social responsibility as associate concepts in his writings, he believed it was an achievable goal for evangelicalism.¹²³

The following chapters of this dissertation will explore the development of Stott's views on the relationship of evangelism and social responsibility. Stott's context, values, giftedness, and opportunities had significant effects on various perspectives involving this tension. Stott's writings on the subject offer occasions both to praise his earnest treatment of a contentious subject and critique his apparent lack of theological precision in other instances. This dissertation proceeds with a requisite sense of trepidation concerning the appraisal of an authentic evangelical stalwart. This dissertation also proceeds with a heightened sense of purpose, recognizing that however well-intentioned, any misunderstanding of the gospel and Christian mission is detrimental to the evangelical church.

Research Methodology

Stott's extensive literature related to evangelistic subjects as well as his service with the Lausanne movement provide ample resources to evaluate his positions on the tension. A gifted and erudite synthesizer of ideas, Stott was afforded opportunities with Lausanne to consider and tighten his understanding of the tension on more than one occasion. This dissertation benefits from Stott's privileged position, allowing him to clarify his ideas over time. Moreover, Stott's abilities as a writer allowed him to publish

¹²²John Stott Memorandum to International Coordinators and Mini-Consultation Chairmen, Secretaries and Recorders, April 16, 1980, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

¹²³John Stott's Chairman Report from the Lausanne Theology and Study Group to Lausanne Congress of World Evangelism Executive Committee November 1979, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College.

a considerable number of works that deal primarily or partially with his views on the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. The resulting plethora of primary source material from Stott on this issue will allow the preponderance of material for this dissertation to engage Stott directly. Though secondary sources will be helpful, especially for biographical material, Stott's own words provide the centerpiece for analyzing his understanding of tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 2 will examine the contexts which shaped John Stott's theological views. Three particular biographers have presented careful works on Stott. Timothy Dudley-Smith has written a two-volume biography where he details Stott's development as a Christian leader in volume 1 and develops his global ministry in volume 2.¹²⁴ Roger Steer presented an intimate look at Stott's life and ministry in his work, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott*. Alister Chapman wrote the most recent biography of Stott called *Godly Ambition*, displaying the development of Stott's motivation to serve the church locally and internationally. This dissertation will rely heavily on these sources for the biographical section. The major emphasis of this chapter will be to show the personal, theological, and relational influences in Stott's life that shaped his penchant for theological balance, as well as drove his views on evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 3 will advance Stott's practical theology of evangelism and social responsibility from his pastoral perspective. One of his later books, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*, emphasizes the pastoral heart that Stott sought to emulate long after his career moved him away from the daily activities of the rectory. His passion for pastoral evangelistic leadership will take center stage in this chapter. Stott garnered the evangelical credibility to arrest international attention concerning the

¹²⁴Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999); Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

perceived poles of evangelism and social responsibility in part because he practiced evangelism as a successful pastor. Furthermore, Stott's emphasis on preaching was both evangelistic and culturally attuned to social issues. His pastoral leadership displayed the practitioner nature of his theology. Though Stott comfortably interacted with the theologically astute, he remained a pastor who gave his heart to the people of his parish.

Chapter 4 will address Stott's role in evangelical leadership. Specifically, Stott articulated his views on this tension with the international opportunities afforded him through Lausanne and its continuing work. As the lead author on the drafting committee, Stott can be credited for making social responsibility a major part of the discussion emphasis in the Lausanne movement. Stott would remain committed to his vision of evangelism and social responsibility as partner duties through a variety of roles within the Lausanne movement. This chapter will explore Stott's developing ideas on the tension through the events in Mexico City 1975 with the Lausanne Continuation Committee, the Consultation on Gospel and Culture at Willowbank in 1978, the Consultation on a Simple Lifestyle in 1980, the Consultation on World Evangelization in Thailand 1980, the Consultation on the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility at Grand Rapids in 1982, and Lausanne II in Manila in 1989. These particular Lausanne meetings cemented Stott's views concerning evangelism and social responsibility. This chapter will also examine how Stott articulated his position in various writings after the first Lausanne meeting in 1974. The concision and clarity displayed by Stott in future writing was forged by his opportunities, experiences, and leadership which occurred during these Lausanne meetings. This chapter, more than any other, will articulate definitively Stott's views on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 5 will show the influence of Stott on evangelicalism. His positions on the issue drew considerable attention. Contemporary leaders have adopted, critiqued, or

synthesized Stott's position on this tension. The leaders surveyed will be limited to Stott's contemporaries as well as those who have been strongly influenced by his writings on evangelism and social responsibility. As with the survey in this introductory chapter, the survey presented in chapter 5 will not be exhaustive. Rather, this survey is presented as an exhibit of Stott's influence on other thinkers venturing into the theological arena of evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 6 will present the exegetical, theological, and practical critique of Stott's views on the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility. The exegetical critique will focus on the passages Stott used to formulate his positions. As an example, Stott's argument from John 20:21 states that Jesus was sent as a servant and his sending of the disciples into the world in like manner requires an overarching service theme to the Great Commission. Theologically, Stott's views concerning evangelism and social responsibility have far reaching implications. This evaluation will seek to show the value of Stott as a theologically-minded practitioner of Christianity. However, Stott's broad view of Christian mission seems to open the door for minimizing evangelism through raising social responsibility to partner status. On the practical evaluation, Stott's prescriptions will be examined. Can the church actually fulfill the evangelism and social responsibility mandate Stott defended?

Chapter 7 will conclude the dissertation by advancing a summary of the analysis as well as positing the implications for contemporary evangelicals. Contemporary Christianity is favored to stand on the shoulders of such theologically astute leaders as John Stott. But certain questions come to mind when considering the implications of Stott's positions on evangelism and social responsibility. What issues did Stott raise that remain for Christianity to grapple with today? How much does one's cultural, political, and geographical context affect one's understanding of Christian social responsibility? Does employing loaded terminology, such as social justice, aid or inhibit

the fulfillment of Christian mission in the world? These questions represent a sampling of the repercussions associated with the evangelical conundrum of evangelism and social responsibility.

CHAPTER 2

JOHN STOTT IN CONTEXT

In a dissertation that focuses primarily on an individual's theological development, biographical context is necessary. John Stott's interests and abilities were shaped by a variety of influences. This biographical section will rely heavily on the three most important biographers of Stott's life, Timothy Dudley-Smith, Roger Steer, and Alister Chapman. Each account highlights particularities within Stott's life and ministry. Dudley-Smith's two volumes, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* and *John Stott: A Global Ministry* were clearly written from the perspective of a friend and admirer. Dudley-Smith recognized both the benefits and drawbacks to writing about a close friend.¹ Roger Steer admitted to using Dudley-Smith's work as seminal research tool in the research and writing phase of his biography of Stott, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott*.² Alister Chapman's work *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* is more critical and evaluative in content than the previous biographies. His work analyzes Stott's leadership as a prominent evangelical Anglican. Chapman's book stems in part from his dissertation, "John R. W. Stott and English Evangelicalism 1938-1984."

Each of these works offer unique perspectives on the life and ministry of John Stott. Thus, this chapter does not purport to delineate Stott's life exhaustively. Rather,

¹Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 14.

²Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 17.

this chapter will be concerned primarily with the life circumstances, influences, and opportunities that shaped Stott's views on the subjects of evangelism and social responsibility. This chapter is designed to evaluate John Stott in his own context. Exploring his personal and ministerial context should provide important insights into the cultural and theological influences that forged Stott's abiding passions for evangelism and social engagement. A final objective of this chapter is to highlight particular elements within Stott's personality and ideals that drove him toward his penchant for holding competing theological tensions in balance.

Biography of John Stott

John Robert Walmsley Stott was born on April 27, 1921, to Arnold and Lily Stott.³ John would be their only son and was the last of three children.⁴ Two older sisters preceded him: Joanna was nine years his elder, and Joy two.⁵ Arnold was a doctor who believed in pursuing the betterment of society as an Enlightenment humanist.⁶ A student of nature, Arnold instilled his love for nature into young John through bird-watching, a hobby John would practice throughout his life.⁷ Though Arnold was not particularly religious, John and his sister Joy attended the afternoon Sunday School at All Souls Church, Langham Place.⁸ Unbeknownst to young John, his first church would prove to be his final church. Lily Stott, John's mother, came from a German heritage and held to Lutheran piety.⁹ She was the primary religious influence on her children during their

³Ibid., 21.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 24.

⁷Ibid., 41-42.

⁸Ibid., 45.

⁹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 22.

formative years. Arnold was not necessarily antagonistic toward religion, but had little place for it in his own life, adopting a hopeful outlook on the world through his belief in reason to solve the world's challenges.¹⁰ Even in the earliest years of John's life, he existed between the tensions of Christian piety and humanistic skepticism. Though Arnold and Lily's religious differences did not appear as a point of contention in the Stott household, their views on religion certainly shaped the life experience of John Stott.

John excelled as a student at Oakley Hall where his parents sent him as an eight year old boy.¹¹ Before leaving Oakley, John would make Head Prefect.¹² Hints of John's acumen as a student were evident early in his educational career. His parents were well aware of his academic aptitude. Both had high hopes for John's future. As a teenager, John was enrolled at Rugby School, a well-respected boarding school for young boys.¹³ John's time at Rugby, the mid 1930's, were marked by significant international turmoil with the imminence of another world war. Regardless of the international scene, John learned discipline and diligence as he excelled in his studies.¹⁴ Many of the habits forged during these early years would pay dividends the rest of his life.

Though John's academic distinction was his parent's primary motivation for sending John to Rugby, it was not the most significant event that occurred during his teenage years. The young John Stott was waking up spiritually. A sign of his tenderness and hint of a burgeoning social conscience can be seen in an organization called the "ABC society" which stood for "Always be a Christian" and "Association for the Benefit

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 67; Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

¹²Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 67.

¹³Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 8.

¹⁴Ibid.

of the Community.”¹⁵ John and his friends who started this organization would offer baths to local tramps as a way of showing concern and kindness to the less fortunate.¹⁶ Growing up in an Anglican Church, acting as a Christian was expected, and what John desired in his own life. Though Stott sought to act as a Christian, he was experiencing spiritual conflict because he was not certain of his salvation. This struggle ultimately resulted in John’s conversion, undoubtedly the premier event of his formative years.¹⁷

One of the most important influences on John Stott’s life was Eric Nash, or as he was known to Stott and other students, “Bash.”¹⁸ Bash was a devoted Christian and Cambridge graduate who wanted to impact Britain with the gospel.¹⁹ Bash strategized that young leaders who would become followers of Christ were the best means toward promoting the gospel in Britain.²⁰ John Stott was one of those young men who crossed Bash’s path. Bash came to Rugby to speak at a Christian Union meeting where Stott had been invited by John Bridger, a friend and fellow student.²¹ Bash preached on the subject of Pilate’s question, “What is truth?”²² Though John had been baptized and confirmed in the Anglican Church, he was keenly aware that he did not know God.²³ Bash’s preaching was effective enough to stir John’s curiosity concerning the faith. After the meeting, Bash sensed John’s openness and invited him on a car ride where he took the time to

¹⁵Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 75.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Steer, *Basic Christian*, 32.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 33-34; Julia Cameron, *John Stott: The Humble Leader* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 34-35.

²²Steer, *Basic Christian*, 34.

²³Cameron, *John Stott*, 35.

answer John's questions concerning Christ and the gospel.²⁴ Bash used Revelation 3:20 as a concluding text to point John toward the reality that Christ wanted a relationship with him.²⁵ Though Bash did not press for an immediate response, John took the experience and the gospel message to heart, praying later that night in the quietness of his dormitory "opening the door to Christ."²⁶ John's conversion took place shortly before his seventeenth birthday in February of 1938.²⁷

Stott would describe his conversion later in his book, *Why I am a Christian*, "That is, it is due to Jesus Christ himself, who pursued me relentlessly even when I was running away from him in order to go my own way."²⁸ John Stott's conversion was a turning point in his understanding that salvation had nothing to do with a person's works and everything to do with Christ. He further declared, "With the vibrant idealism of youth I had a heroic picture of the sort of person I wanted to be—kind, unselfish, and public-spirited. But I had an equally clear picture of who I was—malicious, self-centered and proud. The two pictures did not coincide. I was high-idealed but weak-willed."²⁹ Though John Stott had sought to do good things, such as the "ABC society," he realized when confronted with the gospel that he fell short of God's standard. John's personal conversion marked an unmistakable turning point in his life. The brilliant young student who might have been destined for academic and public honor had entered into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus whose plans for Stott's life steered him toward ministry and service.

²⁴Steer, *Basic Christian*, 34.

²⁵Steer, *Basic Christian*, 34; Cameron, *John Stott*, 37.

²⁶Steer, *Basic Christian*, 34.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 33.

²⁸John Stott, *Why I am a Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 14-15.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 29-30.

Bash's influence steered John not only into a personal relationship with Christ, but he remained in touch with Stott, seeking to disciple and challenge him toward spiritual development.³⁰ Bash wrote to John for the next five years, addressing certain spiritual disciplines and even theological issues.³¹ Bash believed that by influencing promising young leaders like John Stott, he would have an opportunity to increase the kingdom of God greatly. Bash invited John to join his camp ministry as secretary and gave Stott his first opportunities to speak.³² There can be little doubt that Bash was a significant influence on Stott's life. He took the role of spiritual mentor as he noticed Stott's gifts and provided him leadership opportunities to hone his natural abilities.

During Stott's senior year at Rugby, Britain officially declared war on Germany, entering World War II. The war which was destined to shift the balance of worldwide politics would also play a transformative role in Stott's life. Many young men around John's age were enlisting for the war. John's father, Arnold, had served during World War I and expected national service of his son. John, however, had set his mind upon ordination and a life dedicated to the ministry of the church.³³ John's pursuit of ordination led him to Trinity College at Cambridge University. His parents agreed that John should continue his education at Trinity, but they refused to allow John's ordination to proceed at this time.³⁴ Stott's pursuit of ordination would allow him to abstain from military service without facing a tribunal and claiming the status of "conscientious objector."³⁵ John's parents were not inclined that John should be ordained considering

³⁰Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 91-98.

³¹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 34.

³²Cameron, *John Stott*, 47-48; Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 107.

³³Steer, *Basic Christian*, 36.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 38-40.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 38.

John was still “young, very impressionable and more than usually sensitive.”³⁶ Arnold especially wanted John to reconsider at least until his degree was completed.³⁷

John sensed a definite call into the ministry and pursued ordination out of his calling, and not from an unwillingness to serve his country.³⁸ In fact, John believed his nation required spiritual service as well as military service.³⁹ Another influence on John’s view of the war came through his readings of the Sermon on the Mount.⁴⁰ He came to believe at this point in his Christian life that pacifism as it related to war was the appropriate Christian position.⁴¹ Arnold and Lily did not agree with John’s pacifist view, and Arnold even threatened to withhold payment of his tuition at Cambridge because John so stubbornly held to both his calling and his pacifism.⁴² Though eventually Arnold relented concerning John’s tuition, many tension-filled letters were shared between John and his parents concerning his position on the war.⁴³ Timothy Dudley-Smith provided an interesting evaluation of this history between John and his parents:

Had a biblical theologian been able to unfold to him in his days at Trinity the apostolic teaching on the authority of the State and the Christian theory of ‘Just War’, then perhaps all this estrangement, loneliness and heart-ache might have been avoided. But history is shaped, not by what might have been but by what was. And in the over-ruling providence of God, it is hardly fanciful to see in these fiery trials the forging of a character fitted to meet a lifetime of challenges ahead.⁴⁴

³⁶Ibid., 39.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 38.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 110; Steer, *Basic Christian*, 37.

⁴¹Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 110; Steer, *Basic Christian*, 37.

⁴²Cameron, *John Stott*, 52-53.

⁴³Steer, *Basic Christian*, 45-48.

⁴⁴Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 177-78.

Stott also admitted later that he had been insensitive toward his parents in the way that he handled himself during this time period.⁴⁵ But there can be little doubt that holding convictions in the face of strong parental objections strengthened John Stott's personal resolve for the rest of his life.

Stott was an excellent student at Cambridge despite the more liberal bent of his lecturers.⁴⁶ Stott remained evangelical during his days as a student and throughout his lifetime. Concerning Stott's good grades at Cambridge, Alister Chapman suggested that either Stott moved toward agreement with his professors on certain theological issues or he wrote adroitly without committing himself to a conservative stance.⁴⁷ Even though Stott developed his theological values while at a predominately liberal institution, he held to basic evangelical doctrines. Cambridge challenged Stott to become a disciplined student and articulate thinker. Indeed, he disciplined himself rigidly to rise at 6:00 A.M. every morning for devotions before beginning his studies for the day.⁴⁸ The self-discipline he developed during his days at Cambridge began a lifelong pattern for Stott.

Though he pursued ordination immediately after his degree was complete, it did not happen. He stayed at Ridley Hall for post-graduate studies which allowed him time for extensive camp ministry with Bash along with more variety in his reading.⁴⁹ The addition to his educational experience provided him the opportunity for continued development and even met with his father's approval. Arnold was pleased to have John continue with studies and reading that extended beyond theology.⁵⁰ It cannot be argued

⁴⁵Ibid., 162.

⁴⁶Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 26.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 125.

⁴⁹Ibid., 197.

⁵⁰Cameron, *John Stott*, 62.

that Arnold was thrilled with a son who was to be ordained into the ministry of the church, but he did expect John to use the intellect he had been given. Indeed, the tension that existed between John and his family during his time at Cambridge may have imprinted a passionate ambition into John to take his studies even more seriously. Certainly, Stott's educational experience advanced his theological development, biblical seriousness, and breadth of intellectual engagement.

The extra semester at Ridley Hall also provided Stott the occasion to hear Harold Earnshaw-Smith preach at the school.⁵¹ Earnshaw-Smith was the rector at All Souls, Langham Place where Stott had attended as a child. Earnshaw-Smith offered for John to return to All Souls as a curate. On December 21, 1945, Stott was ordained at All Souls and began his life-long ministry at the church of his youth.⁵² This move further allowed Stott to develop his ministry gifts. He had begun honing his gift of preaching with the opportunities Bash had given to Stott at the camps. After beginning at All Souls, he was able to continue ministering to university students as he preached at both Cambridge and Oxford in the years following his graduation.⁵³ These early forays into preaching ministry were largely deemed successful as Stott preached the gospel with clarity.⁵⁴ On one such mission, nearly three hundred students responded to Stott's gospel preaching by committing their lives to Christ.⁵⁵ The combination of opportunities being afforded to the young curate effectively polished his communication skills and developed his ministry qualifications. Earnshaw-Smith also proved to be a helpful mentor as Stott learned pastoral ministry.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 206.

⁵³Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 33.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

All Souls parish existed then, as it does now, in the midst of a business district on the West-end of London.⁵⁶ The parish was and is international and economically diverse.⁵⁷ One of the more unique ways Stott sought to understand All Souls' parish was to see it from the eyes of a homeless man. For a few days, he let his beard grow, put on old clothes, and made his way to a place under the Charring Cross Bridge.⁵⁸ The experience also afforded him an opportunity to visit a Salvation Army under his homeless guise.⁵⁹ Stott was beginning to see the necessity of employing his theology in practical ways. Experiences like this one were seminal parts of his theological development that helped him to see pastoral ministry as holistic.

Not many months after Stott began to serve at All Souls, Earnshaw-Smith became ill and was confined to bed.⁶⁰ This turn of circumstances required the young Stott to take on additional responsibility and assert more leadership within the congregation.⁶¹ Early in 1950, the rector's health complications turned into a tragedy. Harold Earnshaw-Smith died of cardiac asthma.⁶² Replacing an Anglican rector at All Souls was not a simple process. Because it is a Crown living, not only were the church council and bishop of London involved in the process of selecting a new rector, but the prime minister and ultimately the king were as well.⁶³ In spite of the complexity of the selection process, the church council's choice of John Stott, in part because he was an

⁵⁶Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 222.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Steer, *Basic Christian*, 72.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 54.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 242.

⁶³Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 54.

evangelical, was approved by the king, and Stott became rector at All Souls at the age of twenty-nine.⁶⁴

Dudley-Smith offered an analysis of Stott's disciplined practices and habits as a young rector:

Given John Stott's temperament, his style of teutonic thoroughness, and his comparative youthfulness and lack of experience, it is not surprising that he found he could manage best by giving personal attention to detail and by what seemed to some to be an obsessively careful management of his time and diary. It was important to him to lead and teach with confidence and the assurance that comes from study and preparation.⁶⁵

Pour himself into his pastoral work, he would. Stott envisioned an evangelistic and mission minded congregation that would reach the parish and even Britain with the gospel. He innovated the congregation, employed new methods of evangelistic outreach, and above all, focused on expository preaching.⁶⁶ He initiated lunch hour services, used evangelistic films, promoted personal evangelism, and joined with the Billy Graham crusade in 1954 as specific means of flooding his parish with the gospel.⁶⁷

Joining the Graham crusade might have been one of the more significant interactions of Stott's early pastoral years. Not only was he able to participate with the crusade, but unofficially became a pastor to Billy Graham's team while they were in London.⁶⁸ Partnering with the crusade also allowed him to share in the follow-up process for the numerous decisions made.⁶⁹ Graham's crusade gave Stott the opportunity to emphasize evangelism in his church as well as set the stage for a friendship that would

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 231.

⁶⁶Ibid., 266.

⁶⁷Ibid., 269.

⁶⁸Ibid., 297.

⁶⁹Ibid., 300.

help to define and expand Stott's ministry. Their friendship was one of the factors in Graham's invitation for Stott to be a part of the drafting committee at Lausanne some years later.

The theological and practical emphases of Stott's pastoral ministry will be explored in detail in the next chapter. What can be said in summary of Stott's pastoral ministry at All Souls is that he emphasized evangelism, preached the Bible with clarity, and the church experienced significant growth under his ministry. His ministry success began to breed more far-reaching opportunities. In the latter part of 1956, Stott was both surprised and humbled to be invited on an international preaching tour that would span four months into early 1957.⁷⁰ Stott was now becoming more than just a gifted rector; he was developing an international ministry. While the latter part of the 1950s saw Stott's expanded ministry, it also revealed some of the frustrations he was experiencing as a rector. Simply put, not enough people were coming to know Christ in his parish.⁷¹ A full congregation might be enough to keep many ministers content, but Stott dreamt of all Britain coming to faith in Christ.⁷²

Stott experienced a personal tragedy in 1958 when he heard of the death of his father, Arnold.⁷³ Their relationship had vastly improved from the conflicts surrounding John's ordination and call to ministry.⁷⁴ Arnold had even taken an interest in his son's ministry at All Souls, travels, and writing.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, Arnold died while John was

⁷⁰Ibid., 376.

⁷¹Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 65.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 333.

⁷⁴Ibid., 403.

⁷⁵Ibid.

on a preaching mission in Australia, making John unable to be at his father's bed when he died.⁷⁶

The 1960s were a challenging decade for an international city like London. While Stott's personal and international ministry was expanding, his pastoral ministry appeared to be plateauing. His evangelism methods and strategies were not wholly unsuccessful, but were not meeting Stott's expectations. Moreover, his ambitious goal to lead All Souls to reach a diverse socio-economic population met with challenges.⁷⁷ London's elite, which made up a substantial portion of All Souls, found it difficult to adapt their church to facilitate different socioeconomic classes of people.⁷⁸ Their attempts at social ministry were genuine, but not very effective.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the social and cultural transitions taking place in London did little to motivate church attendance or inspire revival. The combination of changing social mores, feminism, and rising incomes all competed for the attention of people.⁸⁰ These challenges, along with other factors, affected the attendance at All Souls, and they certainly incited their rector to preach more consistently and directly against the cultural, religious, and moral decline that was occurring in this tumultuous decade.⁸¹

John Stott was not a man with little vision. In spite of the challenges of his day to day ministry, he started a rather successful endeavor aimed at evangelical Anglicans. The ministry was called the Eclectic Society and sought to provide evangelical Anglican

⁷⁶Ibid., 400.

⁷⁷Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 66-67.

⁷⁸Ibid., 67.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 70.

⁸¹Ibid., 71-72.

clergy with opportunities for fellowship and influence within the Church of England.⁸² The venture surprisingly grew to more than one thousand evangelical clergyman members spread throughout seventeen groups in England by 1966.⁸³ Stott had garnered quite the following. In fact, he hoped for the opportunity to influence Anglicanism with his brand of evangelicalism. Aware that the cultural and social trends were hindering the growth of the church, and even more keenly aware that the liberal wing of the Church of England appeared to breed religious apathy, Stott positioned himself as an evangelical voice who sought to be heard.⁸⁴ Chapman offered that Stott may have been motivated by a desire to serve the Church of England in a larger capacity.⁸⁵ Dudley-Smith noted that Stott anticipated the opportunity to become a bishop in the Church of England and even expressed some regret that he never had the privilege of using that platform to serve greater evangelicalism.⁸⁶ While Stott's internal motivations will not be uncovered, his outward actions revealed a man who wanted to see evangelicalism spread throughout the Church of England.

His attempt at rallying evangelicals within the church was mildly successful. In 1967, the University of Keele hosted the National Evangelical Anglican Congress.⁸⁷ The congress met to address particular theological issues related to the Church of England and even crafted a lengthy statement which was to be revised and subsequently adopted.⁸⁸ Stott was a central author of the Keele statement and the conference

⁸²Ibid., 81-82.

⁸³Ibid., 82.

⁸⁴Ibid., 88-89.

⁸⁵Ibid., 89.

⁸⁶Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 44.

⁸⁷Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 95.

⁸⁸Ibid., 96.

represented his first foray into crafting a conference statement.⁸⁹ In 1976, a mere ten years after the first meeting, internal conflict and resistance to genuine dialogue dampened the confidence and impact of the evangelical wing within the Anglican Church. Though evangelicals still exist within Anglicanism, Stott's desire that they grow into the majority voice was not to become reality. The political climate within the Church of England, coupled with the necessary requirement for meaningful dialogue between evangelicals and liberals, inhibited the National Evangelical Anglican Congress from becoming more prominent in the Church of England.⁹⁰

One influential opportunity Stott received in this decade of ministry came at the Berlin Congress for World Evangelism in 1966. Stott gave one of the main addresses on the topic of the Great Commission at the Congress.⁹¹ This ecumenical congress highlighted the discussion concerning evangelism and social action.⁹² Using the Great Commission accounts from John 20, Matthew 28, and Luke 24, he held to the nature of evangelism as proclamation.⁹³ The World Council of Churches was a part of the Berlin meeting, and, at some level, Stott's insistence on the proclaimed gospel may have been aimed at their redefinition of evangelism away from proclamation and toward social

⁸⁹Ibid. Undoubtedly, Stott's opportunity at Keele provided experience that would benefit his authorship of the Lausanne Covenant.

⁹⁰Ibid., 97-102.

⁹¹Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 122.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid. Jacob Thomas, *From Lausanne to Manila: Evangelical Social Thought: Models of Missions and the Social Relevance of the Gospel* (Dehli, India: ISPCK, 2003), 56. Thomas noted that in one of Stott's messages to the congress, he argued that evangelism represented proclamation not social ministry. Moreover, Thomas also pointed out that Stott corrected his position eight years later at his opening address at Lausanne eight years later. Stott said the following at Berlin: "The commission of the Church, therefore, is not to reform society, but to preach the Gospel. But the primary task of the members of Christ's Church is to be Gospel heralds, not social reformers." John Stott, "The Great Commission, Luke 24:44-49," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: The World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin, 1966*, vol. 1., ed. Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1967), 50-51. Stott's publicly stated position on this topic would transition over the next few years.

action. Stott would later engage the World Council's move in his book *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, where he sought to provide clear definitions for evangelism, mission, and social responsibility. Stott's defense of the biblical expectation of the proclaimed gospel is instructive and foundational for his developing views on social responsibility. While the manner in which he understood the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility most certainly morphed over the next decade, he would, for the duration of his ministry, insist that the gospel is centrally a message to be proclaimed.

The 1960s represented a period of time in Stott's life where his realms of influence were changing. Though he dreamed of a converted nation, the cultural mores of the decade hampered evangelistic growth. He sought to rally conservative evangelicals within the church, but discord and disenchantment ultimately limited his effectiveness. Though Stott's ambitious goals were not fully met in the 1960s, his influence was indeed growing. More opportunities for leadership, speaking, and writing came his way. It is plausible that Stott's busyness related to opportunities outside the church, played a role in the waning effectiveness of All Souls at evangelism within the parish.⁹⁴ He was a man with many important tasks, and at least some of those tasks distracted from his ministry at All Souls. The task of leading his congregation had slipped on his priority list. Dudley-Smith aptly titled the second volume of his biography, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*. Stott's ministry was indeed becoming global, and the next decades would seal his place as an international evangelical voice. Chapman summarized Stott's burgeoning influence as it grew from his pastoral leadership:

⁹⁴Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 75. In a story related by both Alister Chapman and Timothy Dudley-Smith, Ted Schroder, an assistant minister at All Souls caught Stott "not paying attention" in a staff meeting. Chapman writes, "Stott later admitted that the conversation had not interested him and that he had 'switched off.'" Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 75; and Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 28.

In addition, the fact that Stott had been the senior minister of a church for two decades gave him a credibility with other pastors that he would have otherwise lacked. In all these ways, Stott's years at All Souls laid the groundwork for his global renown.⁹⁵

Recognizing the need for a transition at All Souls, Stott and the leadership team at All Souls brainstormed ways in which to share the load of responsibility at the church. They moved to add a vicar to the team who would be accountable to Stott but would oversee the day to day church activities and be the residential spiritual leader.⁹⁶ Stott would share in leadership responsibilities as well as the preaching duties, but would be freed up to increase his ministry while remaining ever connected to a local congregation. The year was 1970 and the vicar was Michael Baughen.⁹⁷ Baughen was younger than Stott, more keenly attuned to the nuances of modern culture, and willing to transition All Souls at a time when the culture necessitated it.⁹⁸ In 1975, after five years in this shared arrangement, Stott took the title, rector emeritus, and Baughen became rector of All Souls.⁹⁹ To adequately address the financial strain of adding a staff member, the Langham Trust had been set up by the church treasurer, Raymond Dawes.¹⁰⁰ The Langham Trust subsequently provided the financial buffer for Stott's international ministry as well as provided Stott's income after transitioning to emeritus status.¹⁰¹ This transition offered Stott the flexibility to engage fully in a global ministry.

⁹⁵Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 77.

⁹⁶Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 140.

⁹⁷Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 140; Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 76.

⁹⁸Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 76.

⁹⁹Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 148-49.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

Although Stott had participated in international ministry in the 1950s, the success of his classic book, *Basic Christianity*, first published in 1958, helped build his reputation as a conservative author and pastor. Incidentally, the book is still in publication today as a testament to its clarity and timeless content. He continued writing over the next decade, addressing concerns about theological issues. For example, *Fundamentalism and Evangelism* (1959) was adapted from two articles he had written and highlighted the distinction between the type of legalistic fundamentalism prevalent in the 1950s from the brand of evangelicalism he supported.¹⁰² Stott wrote *Baptism and Fullness* in 1964 to address the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life in light of the theological controversies surrounding the expanding Pentecostal movement. Before transitioning out of the daily responsibilities of rector, Stott made time to write commentaries, books, articles, as well as booklets aimed at explaining and motivating his congregation toward evangelism.¹⁰³ Stott's proclivity and success in writing certainly expanded his ministry, but as noted previously, added to the schedule of an already busy rector.

One of the more interesting storylines in Stott's life during this period concerns his lifelong singleness. Though he did have the usual crushes as a teenager as well as at least two closer relationships that could have ended suitably in marriage, Stott did not marry.¹⁰⁴ He did not claim any sense of special calling toward singleness and was not averse to marriage itself, but as his ministry expanded, particularly with international

¹⁰²Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 10.

¹⁰³The bibliography provides a complete list of works. The particular works addressing evangelism will be explored in chapter 3 when addressing Stott's understanding of evangelism in a pastoral context.

¹⁰⁴Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 64.

travel, he recognized the benefit of remaining single.¹⁰⁵ Though marriage did not suit his increasing ministry, there was room for one particular lady in his close circle of influence, Frances Whitehead.¹⁰⁶ She had been converted under his ministry at All Souls, and Stott suggested that she come to work for him as secretary.¹⁰⁷ She served in this capacity for fifty years and was a greatly appreciated asset to his ministry.¹⁰⁸

The first twenty-five years of Stott's ministry had been defined by his service at All Souls. As rector of a large church in an even larger city, evangelism had been the centerpiece of Stott's practitioner theology. Witnessing what he viewed as the social disintegration of London, and even the world, Stott's perspective began to change.¹⁰⁹ His strategic move toward social engagement was not new, as he had always expressed a tender social conscience. However, as he considered societal trends, declining church growth by evangelism, and the social ills plaguing London and the world, Stott took up the cause of Christian social action. The primary event in his life that displayed this move was his authorship of the Lausanne Covenant.

Lausanne was the dream of evangelist Billy Graham. He longed for a movement that would coalesce international evangelicals around worldwide evangelism. For Stott, Lausanne represented an opportunity to serve the international church. It would become the platform to display his articulate giftedness. The Lausanne movement also helped shape Stott's changing views on the theological relationship between

¹⁰⁵Ibid. Chapman further suggests that Stott's mentor and spiritual father, Eric Nash, influenced this abiding decision in Stott's life. "Bash," as Stott had come to know him, remained single in order to expand and build on his ministry. His example provided a likely influence in Stott's own experience.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 118-19.

evangelism and social responsibility. Because a detailed discussion of Stott's involvement with the Lausanne movement will be addressed in chapter 4, only highlights of Stott's roles within the Lausanne meetings will be presented here. In the first World Congress on Evangelism at Lausanne in 1974, Stott served as the chairman of the drafting committee for the Lausanne Covenant. In his exposition and commentary on the covenant, Stott quoted Bishop Jack Dain, chairman of the planning committee, referencing Lausanne as "a process, not just an event."¹¹⁰ Dain was certainly accurate in his assessment. Lausanne was the beginning of a movement, and the beginning of a unique leadership role for John Stott.

Following the initial Lausanne Congress, Stott served on the Lausanne Continuation Committee in Mexico City. After Mexico City, Stott became chairman for the Lausanne Theology and Education Group. As chair, he moderated three conferences under this group: Pasadena in 1977, which addressed the homogeneous unit principle, Willowbank in 1978, which addressed gospel and culture, and Hoddesdon, England in 1980, which addressed the Consultation on a Simple Lifestyle.¹¹¹ He also accepted the chair of the drafting committee and conducted the mini-consultations for the Consultation on World Evangelism in Pattaya, Thailand in 1980.¹¹² Stott then chaired the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility at Grand Rapids in 1982. This report is the most important for the purposes of this dissertation and will be explored thoroughly in chapter 4. Following Grand Rapids, Stott served again at the

¹¹⁰John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 2.

¹¹¹Statement on Theology and Education Group, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹¹²Saphir Athyal to Stott September 19, 1979, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College; Stott to Saphir Athyal October 3, 1979, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

second World Congress on Evangelism in Manila, Philippines. Although he would finally accept the role, he requested the committee to prayerfully reconsider asking him to chair the drafting committee at Manila, citing the desire for someone younger to step into the role.¹¹³ Manila was Stott's final significant involvement in the Lausanne movement.

Stott's later years continued to be marked by significant international travel and a personal focus on the Third World church. He had confessed that staggering growth statistics from the Third World church were encouraging, but believed much of the growth to have little spiritual depth.¹¹⁴ As Stott continued his international travels, he was able to examine this issue first-hand, logging countless miles encouraging and ministering in the Third World. Stott also started ministry organizations designed to positively influence the church. He initiated the Langham Trust which supplied Stott's financial needs after his official ministry ended at All Souls, but would additionally fund the education of Third World leaders traveling to England to study.¹¹⁵ Another organization Stott began was the Evangelical Literature Trust, "which provided evangelical books for pastors in poorer countries."¹¹⁶ He founded the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, which provided forums to help Christian students think through cultural issues biblically.¹¹⁷ Stott believed in these enterprises because he believed that the theological development of Christian leaders would foster spiritual growth in their countries of origin. The final years of his life were marked by continued writing, speaking and international travels.

¹¹³John Stott to Paul McKaughan March 13, 1989, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹¹⁴Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 150.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Christopher Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1994), 29.

Stott not only had an international reputation, but character to match.

Chapman noted the humility of his interactions with the international community which provided him credibility when traveling and speaking abroad.¹¹⁸ Frances Whitehead, Stott's secretary for more than fifty years, called him a "truly humble man and servant of others."¹¹⁹ That is certainly not an insignificant compliment coming from one who had worked closely with him for fifty years.

Stott was not only a gifted preacher and synthesizer of ideas, but was a prolific writer. Frank Entwistle, who worked for InterVarsity Press for thirty years while Stott wrote for them, commented on Stott's research and writing:

The gestation of John's books was not to be hurried. Indeed, much of the pressure arose from his own high standards. He was always concerned to do justice to other influential books, especially those that he felt were mistaken. No doubt his study assistants helped him greatly in sifting material, but John would grapple with the issues themselves until he was satisfied that he had understood all important points of view and come to his own conclusions. Even then he often had misgivings about what he had written on a particular topic, and he would be anxious to know what we and our advisers made of his work.¹²⁰

Entwistle's recognition of the quality and thoughtfulness in Stott's writing is consequential. Stott's precise writing style provides his readers with clarity concerning his theological positions. He is not difficult to understand and his works generally express quality research. Furthermore, the vast majority of Stott's interaction with the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility derives from his written works.

¹¹⁸Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 152.

¹¹⁹Frances Whitehead, "I Would Not Wish to Have Had Any Other Calling," in *Portraits of a Radical Disciple*, ed. Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 63.

¹²⁰Frank Entwistle, "The Prolific Author and His Midwife," in *Portraits of a Radical Disciple*, 103.

John Stott was an influential evangelical leader and theologian for more than sixty years. He died on July 27, 2011, at the age of ninety. His legacy will continue through his published works and the countless believers who have either been converted or disciplined through his preaching and writing. Unique for an evangelical Christian leader, John R. W. Stott was even named one of *Time Magazine's* one hundred most influential people in the world in 2005. Influencers such as Stott do not live on spiritual islands. On the contrary, Stott was always seeking to engage others. Yet he displayed an unpretentious willingness to listen and learn. The next section of this chapter will highlight some of the influences on Stott's life and theology.

Cultural Influences on Stott's Life and Ministry

While a full reconstruction of the cultural and theological influences on Stott's life and ministry is beyond the scope of this dissertation, some shaping influences should be noted in order to discuss Stott's views on the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Stott grew up in a well-to-do British family which offered him the best opportunities for education. Not only did he have a privileged home, but it was a fundamental to his developing worldview. His father was a doctor and a naturalist while his mother came from Lutheran piety.¹²¹ His parents afforded him both a modern secularist perspective as well as a religious one. It appears likely that Stott's recognition of the need to be in touch with the world of revelation and the world of culture finds roots in his home life. Furthermore, the tension apparent after his decision to be ordained and not join the army during World War II helped forge his ideals and discipline.

His privileged heritage also played a role in his ministry. While Stott emphasized that All Souls should welcome people of all socio-economic stations in life,

¹²¹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 21-22.

he could not entirely separate his predispositions from his use of language. Chapman pointed out that his language of “simple” services was moderately condescending toward those who did not come from privilege as did Stott and much of the congregation at All Souls.¹²² Nevertheless, Stott viewed the church’s mission as one that must not discriminate by socio-economic or cultural status.

Another shaping point for Stott came in the form of cultural exploration, particularly related to preaching. One of his assistants during the 1960s, Ted Schroder, encouraged Stott to think about preaching with social issues in mind.¹²³ In other words, Schroder suggested to Stott that the culture should help drive the direction of preaching. Stott fully developed this idea in his book *Between Two Worlds*, where he emphasized the need for preachers to allow scriptural truth to speak to contemporary culture. This experience, along with his research and leadership within Lausanne, contributed to Stott’s broader perspective on the world. As he traveled internationally, met with believers and non-believers on various continents, and researched ideas driven by different contexts, he became a student of culture itself. Stott’s humble willingness to learn from others’ cultures and perspectives facilitated the shaping his own.

Theological Influences on Stott’s Life and Ministry

Ascertaining with certainty the influences on another’s life is not an infallible task. Nevertheless, a few theological streams represented by certain individuals deserve mention in this section. As brilliant as Stott was, his theological gifting rested in synthesizing and clarifying ideas rather than developing original ones. Furthermore, because Stott interacted with many Christians, theologians, and thinkers through the

¹²²Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 67.

¹²³Ibid., 74.

years, a full reconstruction of his influences is not possible. The influences mentioned below form a foundation for Stott's theological positions and will prove fruitful in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Eric Nash, "Bash," was Stott's spiritual father and is chronologically the first major inspiration to his theology. Bash gave Stott spiritual attention and his first opportunities to engage in real ministry experiences.¹²⁴ Bash also had a grand spiritual vision for England—the conversion of the nation through young leaders like Stott. Bash, though more in the fundamentalist stream of evangelicalism than Stott would become, impacted Stott both personally and methodologically. Not only did Stott draw guidance and support from Bash, but Stott adopted Bash's evangelistic vision for England and the world.

Another theological influence on Stott's views of evangelism was the English Puritan, Richard Baxter.¹²⁵ While at Cambridge Stott read Baxter's classic, *The Reformed Pastor*. Baxter pleaded with the pastors of his day to pursue evangelism: "The work of God must needs be done! Souls must not perish, while you mind your worldly business or worldly pleasure, and take your ease, or quarrel with your brethren!"¹²⁶ Stott's lifestyle of hard work and tireless drive can at least in part be attributed to Baxter's example.¹²⁷

William Temple was a more contemporary influence on Stott's theology. As referenced from chapter 1, Temple believed stridently in evangelism. However, he adopted the perspective that a Christian pursuit of social ministry should not compete

¹²⁴Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader*, 107.

¹²⁵Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 55.

¹²⁶Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 40.

¹²⁷Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 55.

with evangelism, but rather motivate it.¹²⁸ Stott quoted extensively from both Baxter and Temple throughout his writings. Both writers shaped Stott's conservative views on evangelism and the gospel. Furthermore, they provided an essential framework for Stott to develop his theology of Christian social involvement.

The final set of influences pertinent for this dissertation represents contrasting theological positions. These are Stott's contemporaries, Billy Graham, Samuel Escobar, and René Padilla. Stott worked with each of these men during his leadership within Lausanne. Though all three signed the Lausanne Covenant that Stott primarily authored, their theological positions concerning evangelism and social responsibility form a contrast. Graham believed strongly in the primacy of evangelism. Escobar and Padilla held to the necessity of social action as a part of Christian mission. Stott believed in evangelism with nearly the same fervor as Graham, yet he had a sensitive ear to theologians and church leaders from other parts of the world. Stott was an effective evangelical leader, in part, because of his ability to articulate a position to the satisfaction of those on opposite sides of a theological issue. Lausanne would be the vehicle for Stott to display his delicate, impeccable sense of balance between theological positions.¹²⁹

Stott's Development of Balance as a Value

As with the cultural and theological influences on Stott's life, the scope of this dissertation is much too narrow to cover the full range of factors that made theological balance a value for John Stott. He was willing to examine an issue thoroughly rather than immediately accept a simple declaration of a non-controversial position. His pursuit of balance has been a gift to evangelicalism. Stott pursued balance in light of the issue of evangelism and social responsibility. However, as I will show in chapter 6, Stott's

¹²⁸William Temple, *Social Witness and Evangelism* (London: Epworth, 1943), 9.

¹²⁹Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 214.

pursuit of balance on this topic led him to what could be considered a careless interpretation of Scripture. Often he discussed opposing theological issues in order to advance a position which balanced the two extremes.¹³⁰ Factors that may have participated in Stott's developing value of balance are noted below.

Perhaps Stott's family played a role in his "balanced" views. He learned to respect his father and mother equally, but in different ways. Arnold drove him to excellence, instilled in him a love for nature, and forced him to develop substantial convictions in light of their disagreements. Lily, on the other hand, insisted John and his sisters go to church, learn the Scriptures, and even played the role of reconciler in John and Arnold's disagreements concerning ordination and the ministry. It appears as if Stott learned to examine competing viewpoints in tension early in his life.

Another factor that certainly solidified Stott's sense of theological balance was his education at Cambridge. Chapman noted that Stott's evangelical positions could not be held in isolation, as he was confronted with liberal views on the Bible and theology.¹³¹ Furthermore, in Cambridge's predominately liberal theological setting, Stott did not merely pass, but he excelled in his studies.¹³² Even as a student, Stott was able to integrate theological positions in tension. The seeds of discipline and articulation that developed during Stott's formative educational years would bear fruit in the years to come.

Stott's value of balance is apparent in his ministry practices as well. He appeared equally successful in a variety of ministry endeavors. He exhibited discipline in

¹³⁰For example, in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Stott discusses the extreme alternatives of conservative evangelicalism that rejects the necessity of social involvement in Christian mission and the liberal position that equates service with evangelism and fails to proclaim the gospel at all. Stott attempted to present a "balanced" position in his book.

¹³¹Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 24.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 26.

the study, powerful expository preaching, skills at developing evangelistic strategies, a prolific writing career, and effectiveness as an international leader. Stott's secretary, Frances Whitehead, noted his keen sense of discipline and concentration, which allowed him to accomplish a great many things and sustain the tension of his productive ministry career.¹³³

Furthermore, Stott's travels and humble spirit allowed him to learn from others with different cultural backgrounds and theological perspectives. One example of Stott's teachable nature is particularly important to this dissertation. Stott confessed that the poverty he had seen in his international travels, as well as studying the world circumstances in light of Scripture caused a change of mind in his views of social responsibility as a partner to evangelism.¹³⁴

Stott declared his emphasis on balance in his appropriately titled, *Balanced Christianity*. He wrote, "In at least these four areas (and they are not the only ones) we have good biblical warrant to replace a rather naïve *either-or* with a mature *both-and*. Let us place our feet confidently and simultaneously on both poles. Don't let us polarize!"¹³⁵ Stott would deftly avoid polarization as his views on evangelism and social responsibility morphed. The ensuing chapters of this dissertation will explore Stott's ability to hold evangelism and social responsibility in a balanced tension.

¹³³Whitehead, "I Would Not Wish to Have Had Any Other Calling," 63.

¹³⁴Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, 127.

¹³⁵John R. W. Stott, *Balanced Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 43. The four areas Stott mentioned that the Christian should keep in balance were the intellect and the emotion, conservative and radical, form and freedom, and evangelism and social action. His focus here was calling believers from extreme positions to a position in between or a position that held the extremes in tension. The first edition of the book was in 1958 and in many ways it has formulated the framework by which he considered theological issues. In other words, Stott's penchant for balance was more than just a quirk or cultural imprint. Rather, he pursued it in thoughtful study and penned it with articulate precision.

CHAPTER 3

STOTT AND THE TENSION IN A PASTORAL CONTEXT

John Stott went by many titles throughout his estimable career – student, curate, Rev., Dr., “Uncle John,” rector. One of his final books, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* gives a glimpse of how he wished to be remembered. The bulk of Stott’s international acclaim and influence flowed from his best-selling books and gifted expository preaching. However, Stott never moved beyond being a pastor. Even in his rector emeritus role, with limited responsibilities at All Souls, he visited the elderly and delivered communion on Christmas.¹ Although the day to day roles for Stott changed considerably after 1975, his theological values and perspectives were largely forged inside his pastoral role. Moreover, he continued thinking, preaching, and leading from a definitively pastoral perspective.

The next two chapters will be devoted to analyzing Stott’s understanding of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Although these chapters divide primarily by theme, they roughly divide chronologically with some essential overlap. Thematically and chronologically, both chapters slant toward a particular emphasis on this tension within Stott’s ministry. In examining his pastoral ministry, the focus will be slanted toward Stott’s understanding of evangelism. It is helpful to note that Stott’s understanding of evangelism remained essentially unchanged for the duration of his ministry. While his understanding of social responsibility would adapt over time, evangelism, as articulated in the Lausanne Covenant, is a basic

¹Timothy Dudley-Smith, *A Global Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 437.

definition used by Stott. Part of this definition is, “But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.”² As a pastor, he was able to lead All Souls to adopt novel and effective evangelistic strategies. This chapter will explore the tension between evangelism and social responsibility from Stott’s ministry experience as a pastor. Because his pastoral ministry was set chronologically when Stott emphasized evangelism and his ministry was practically driven toward evangelism, evangelism will be the major emphasis of this chapter.

In chapter 4, the examination of Stott’s international leadership will be slanted toward his understanding of social responsibility. His cultural and theological influences moved Stott’s attention to develop a theological foundation for Christian social responsibility. Stott’s pastoral experience provided him an evangelical and evangelistic foundation for this shift within his theology. However, it was primarily his writing and international ministry opportunities after 1975 which offered him the ministry framework to advance his theological understanding of Christianity and social issues.

Stott and Evangelism in a Pastoral Context

As noted in chapter 2, Stott was shaped as an evangelist early in his Christian life. Eric Nash, “Bash,” helped mold Stott’s theology and practice of evangelism as a spiritual mentor and gave Stott early preaching opportunities in the Christian camp

²John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 20. In his dissertation on Stott’s theology and practice of evangelism, Sung Eun Choi expounds on Stott’s definition on evangelism concerning the issue of persuasion. Choi notes that Stott understood persuasion as the goal of evangelism, but not inherently included in one’s definition of evangelism. Furthermore, “According to Stott, the nature of evangelism and the goal of evangelism have distinct meanings.” Sung Eun Choi, “An Analysis of John R. W. Stott’s Theology of Evangelism and Practice of Evangelism” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 17-20. Choi’s analysis is helpful for discussing the issue of persuasion in Stott’s understanding of evangelism. Stott’s theology of evangelism will be explored below. Simply stated however, Stott’s evangelism is primarily the proclamation of the historical gospel. This emphasis would not change throughout his ministry.

ministry.³ When Stott accepted the role of curate at All Souls, evangelism was already ingrained into his ministry practice. Upon being made rector, Stott was afforded the leadership responsibility to determine the evangelistic strategies for the entire congregation. With Stott as rector, All Souls had an evangelistically-minded pastor along with a particularly visible setting in central London. All Souls' location reflects the confluence of ecclesiastical demand and creativity. All Souls had to be built within a certain parish boundary, but Sir James Langham, who owned much of the land within the parish, blocked the initial plans for the church construction.⁴ Due to the fortuitous conflict, John Nash, the architect selected to construct All Souls, Langham Place, decided to build the church on a corner, providing it with an impressive view from Oxford Circus.⁵ The church was constructed in the 1820s and was uniquely designed "to attract attention."⁶

All Souls, Langham Place, had already become an influential central London congregation. Stott, however, was not merely content with a prominent location. He dreamt of an evangelistic church. He did not simply dream, but he worked to make his dream a reality. His evangelistic efforts at All Souls can be effectively understood under two major headings. First, Stott emphasized the proclaimed gospel. In other words, his theology of evangelism centered on declaring the message of the gospel. Second, Stott believed in the responsibility of the laity to participate in evangelism. The importance of the task required total church involvement.

³Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 137-40.

⁴Mark Meynell, *An Historical Guide to All Souls Church, Langham Place* (London: All Souls, 2009), 6-7.

⁵Ibid., 7.

⁶Ibid., 12.

Emphasis on the Proclaimed Gospel

Stott understood evangelism as essentially a message to be proclaimed, and he contended that believers should actively proclaim the gospel. In his book, *Our Guilty Silence*, Stott declared the gospel message in terms of Christ, sin, and the response of faith.⁷ He suggested that “the three major constituents of the gospel of God are Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the plight and peril of man in sin and under judgment, and the necessary response called ‘obedience of faith’.”⁸ In a later work *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, he restated that evangelism is preaching the gospel, and fundamentally it is an announcement.⁹ He further acknowledged that the New Testament *kerygma* was primarily a message about Jesus Christ.¹⁰ He is the gospel. Also, in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Stott elucidated the gospel according to the New Testament apostles. He divided the gospel into five elements: gospel events, gospel witnesses, gospel affirmations, gospel promises, and gospel demands.¹¹ Stott’s developing theology of these elements will provide an important framework for understanding his emphasis on evangelism as a proclaimed message.

The first element, gospel events, focused on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as historical and saving acts.¹² He believed, “The central truth of the good news, then, is Christ Himself.”¹³ He later argued that the uniqueness of Jesus is a foundation

⁷John Stott, *Our Guilty Silence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), 35-50.

⁸Ibid., 54.

⁹John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 61, 63.

¹⁰Ibid., 68.

¹¹Ibid., 68-83.

¹²Ibid., 69-70.

¹³Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 35.

for evangelism.¹⁴ Moreover, Stott declared, “If the church goes wrong on Christ, it goes wrong on everything. To deny that he is God as well as man is to depart from the very foundation of historic Christianity. To deny the uniqueness of Jesus is to undermine the mission of the church.”¹⁵ The message concerning Christ must come from the Scriptures and highlight his death and resurrection, becoming a message of the “crucified Christ.”¹⁶ In *The Cross of Christ* Stott wrote, “It was by his death that he wished above all else to be remembered. There is then, it is safe to say, not Christianity without the cross.”¹⁷ Therefore, evangelism without the historical and saving work on the cross is not evangelism. Stott’s gospel events emphasized the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Stott’s second element of the New Testament gospel was the gospel witnesses, which he understood to be the evidences that the apostles used to authenticate the gospel message.¹⁸ These witnesses were the Old Testament and eyewitness accounts of the apostles themselves.¹⁹ Because Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament teaching and prophecies, the Old Testament provided the context and foundation for the gospel message to be preached.²⁰ Indeed, the apostles’ content of biblical preaching was the Old Testament. Stott also grounded his insistence on evangelism from the authority of the Bible as God’s revealed Word.²¹ Evangelism proceeds from the foundation of Scripture.

¹⁴John Stott, *The Authentic Jesus: The Certainty of Christ in a Skeptical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 83.

¹⁵Ibid., 92.

¹⁶Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 37-38.

¹⁷John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 71.

¹⁸Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 71.

¹⁹Ibid., 71-72.

²⁰Ibid., 72.

²¹John Stott, *The Authority of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974), 32-33.

Stott affirmed a second witness as the eyewitness accounts of the apostles.²² They are the primary witnesses of the life and ministry of Jesus and form the basis for contemporary gospel proclamation. Stott expressed,

Our responsibility in evangelism is neither to create a Christ of our own who is not in Scripture, nor to embroider or manipulate the Christ who is in Scripture, but to bear faithful witness to the one and only Christ there is as God has presented him to the world in the remarkably unified testimony of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.²³

Stott underscored the central figure of the gospel—Jesus Christ.

A third element Stott related in New Testament evangelism was the gospel affirmations. The New Testament witnesses preached that Jesus must be affirmed as both Savior and Lord. Stott illustrated this emphasis by pointing to Peter’s sermon in Acts 2. In his message, Peter proclaimed Jesus as “both Lord and Christ,” crucified and now seated at “God’s right hand.”²⁴ Stott contended, “Thus the symbolic statement that Jesus is ‘at the right hand of God’ comprises the two great gospel affirmations that he is Savior (with authority to bestow salvation) and that he is Lord (with authority to demand submission).”²⁵ Stott also drew from Paul’s defense of his gospel. Stott noted that Paul’s claim of gospel authority came from revelation by Jesus himself.²⁶ Paul’s gospel was authoritative because of its grounding in God’s authority. In other words, Paul’s gospel was first “God’s message” and “God’s gospel.”²⁷ As with the previous elements, Stott’s theology of gospel proclamation concerned Jesus, particularly his lordship and saving

²²Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 73.

²³Ibid., 74.

²⁴Ibid, 76-77.

²⁵Ibid., 77.

²⁶John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 30.

²⁷Ibid.

work. Appropriately, Stott reiterated this point by quoting from Richard Baxter, “If we can but teach Christ to our people we teach them all.”²⁸

Stott’s next element, gospel promises, points to Christ’s offer of forgiveness and eternity in heaven.²⁹ These promises emphasize the reason Christ was crucified – human sin. Stott believed sin and its need for forgiveness was the connecting point between the gospel and humanity. Christ died for sinners, reiterating the biblical view of man as a sinner separated from God.³⁰ Indeed it was man’s sin, his moral responsibility for his sin, and subsequent guilt before God that necessitated Christ’s death on the cross.³¹ Stott clarified that human sin could not coexist with a holy God.³² Stott also suggested that “Christianity is the only religion in the world which takes sin seriously and offers a satisfactory remedy for it.”³³ Sin’s remedy in Christianity is the crucified Christ. Stott articulated this truth rather poignantly when he wrote,

When, on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge that we are, namely, “hell-deserving sinners,” then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished that we never saw it before.³⁴

Evangelism that fails to address the issue of human sin largely fails because it neglects to reveal the seriousness of the problem for which Christ died.³⁵ In essence, evangelism is

²⁸John Stott, *Focus on Christ: An Enquiry into the Theology of Propositions* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1979), 156.

²⁹Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 79.

³⁰Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 41.

³¹Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 102.

³²*Ibid.*, 107.

³³John Stott, *Confess Your Sins: The Way of Reconciliation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 9.

³⁴Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 111.

³⁵Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 41.

good news because the gospel offers the promise of forgiveness, as well as an inheritance with God in heaven.³⁶

Finally, Stott argued that the gospel included the demands of repentance and faith.³⁷ Evangelism meant summoning men to faith in the crucified Christ.³⁸ In his commentary on the book of Romans, Stott affirmed, “For the proper response to the gospel is faith, indeed faith alone.”³⁹ In the context of Paul’s phrase “obedience of faith,” he further argued that faith in Christ as Lord included surrender to him and should lead to an obedient life.⁴⁰ Stating it another way, Stott wrote, “Saving faith is a total, penitent and submissive commitment to Christ, and it would have been inconceivable to the apostles that anybody could believe in Jesus as Savior without submitting to him as Lord.”⁴¹ Thus, the gospel demands repentance for sin and faith in the crucified Lord Jesus Christ.

Stott’s theology of evangelism emphasized gospel proclamation. His gospel centered on the person of Jesus Christ. Each element Stott drew from the New Testament witnesses focused in some way on the person or work of Christ. For Stott, evangelism required the proclamation of Christ who had been crucified for sinners. Stott’s theology of evangelism supported his views that the gospel should be preached in public as well as in personal conversations. While he preached the gospel with clarity, he did not believe the pulpit was the only place or even the most effective place for evangelism.

³⁶Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 79.

³⁷Ibid., 80-82.

³⁸Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 54.

³⁹John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 52.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 82-83.

Emphasis on Laity Involvement in Evangelism

In addition to a strong theology of evangelism, Stott believed evangelism was a church-wide responsibility. Early in his pastoral ministry, Stott was given the privilege of preaching at the London Diocesan Conference. He contended that the proclamation of the gospel could not remain solely the responsibility of the professional clergy.⁴² Stott strongly advocated the training of the laity for evangelism. He stated, “I cannot imagine a more important task to which to put our hands. We shall be following the example of our Blessed Lord, who gathered twelve men around Him for training.”⁴³ Stott not only preached that the laity should be involved in evangelism but designed methods to train and employ them in evangelism. Some of Stott’s methods in his early years at All Souls included lunch hour services, evangelistic films, gospel training for laypersons, and partnering with the Billy Graham crusade of 1954.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Stott led All Souls to renovate Trinity Clubhouse, creating a recreational meeting space which would primarily be used to share the gospel with children and youth.⁴⁵

Stott instilled a passion for evangelism into his congregation and created ministry tools that enabled All Souls to spread the gospel in its community. Although Stott led All Souls to participate in a variety of evangelistic strategies, the centerpiece of his strategy was equipping and training the laity to evangelize. In reference to the laity and evangelism Stott suggested,

And the greatest ministry to which the laity are called is to witness to Jesus Christ, evangelism, which means spreading the good news about Him. Indeed, in many respects the laity are in a position to engage in this work far more effectively

⁴²John Stott, *Parochial Evangelism by the Laity* (London: London Diocesan Conference, 1952), 3.

⁴³Ibid., 5.

⁴⁴Dudley-Smith, *The Making of a Leader*, 269.

⁴⁵Ibid., 271.

than the clergy, because ‘the laity is the dispersion [sic] of the church’, ‘immersed in the world’, penetrating more deeply into secular society than the average clergyman will ever get.⁴⁶

Because he valued the participation of the laity so highly, he adapted training methods and tools to equip them in evangelism. He authored training pamphlets *Continuous Congregational Evangelism* (1961) and *Motives and Methods in Evangelism* (1962), published by All Souls and Inter-Varsity Fellowship respectively. These pamphlets provided the basis for his church training strategy. His principles for local church evangelism included prayer and training but also involved visitation, guest services, and targeted follow-up of those who had made decisions.⁴⁷ Stott led All Souls in evangelism with rigid discipline similar to his own study habits. The church was prepared with a plethora of pamphlets, letters, courses, booklets, and training materials all designed for lay evangelists to use in their efforts to evangelize and disciple converts.⁴⁸

Stott’s meticulous plan to train evangelists included lectures and lessons concerning the theory and practice of evangelism.⁴⁹ Lessons focused on the priority and practice of evangelism from a biblical perspective. For example, Stott argued that “a living contact with men” and “a living contact with God” were the two “essential prerequisites with regard to method in evangelism.”⁵⁰ He taught that effective evangelism required both a real relationship with God and a genuine relationship with people. For All Souls, evangelism meant interacting with the individuals who surrounded the church. Stott furthered with a hint of frustration,

⁴⁶John Stott, *One People: Clergy and Laity in God’s Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1969), 44.

⁴⁷John Stott, *Continuous Congregational Evangelism* (London: All Souls Church, 1961).

⁴⁸Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 95-96.

⁴⁹Stott, *One People*, 56.

⁵⁰John Stott, *Motives and Methods in Evangelism* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962), 13-19.

God's purpose is that we penetrate into the world as the light filters into the darkness, as the salt is rubbed into the meat and as the yeast spreads into the dough. But that is just what we are not doing. What is your Christian community like? A little self-regarding, inward-looking coterie? Or is it penetrating into the non-Christian world round about?⁵¹

One of the reasons Stott so adamantly sought lay evangelism was the potential relationship the laity had with lost individuals in society. However, Stott knew that neither building relationships with lost people nor doing evangelism occurred without intentionality. He admitted,

It is comparatively easy to distribute cards or handbills advertising a meeting or a mission; it is not all that difficult to organize the mission or meeting itself. It is much more costly to get alongside someone, and to stay alongside him over the years, in a friendship involving give and take, time, patience, sympathy and sacrifice.⁵²

Stott knew evangelism was not an easy task for a lay person, but it was commanded by Jesus. He believed it hypocritical to call Jesus, "Lord," if a person was not actively involved in sharing the gospel.⁵³ Therefore, as the spiritual leader of the congregation, he made evangelism a priority for the church.

He also recognized that converts must not be left alone. He began a "nursery class" in order to teach new believers about how to grow in their new faith in Christ.⁵⁴ He specified that an invitation letter to meet with the rector should be sent to every new believer as well as a new believer's booklet.⁵⁵ Stott did not merely seek converts into his congregation. He planned for their spiritual growth as disciples. He created and adopted practical methods for leading All Souls to engage in evangelism and discipleship.

⁵¹Ibid., 15.

⁵²Ibid., 16.

⁵³Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴John Stott, *Mobilizing the Church for Evangelism* (London: All Souls Church, Langham Place, 1961), 11.

⁵⁵Ibid., 10.

Stott also argued for incarnational evangelism. Hinting at what would become one of his most influential interpretations of Scripture related to Christian mission, Stott asserted:

In this again Jesus Christ is our supreme example. 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you', He twice asserted (John 17:18; 20:21). Of course, the purpose of our being sent into the world is different from the purpose of His coming. He was sent to redeem; we to proclaim His finished redemption. But is not the mode of our being sent into the world the same in principle as His? 'Jesus was in all things made like unto His brethren' (cf. Hebrews 2:17). For Him it meant becoming flesh at His birth, and becoming sin and a curse at His death. Down, down, down, He came, in order to make Himself one with us in our need. If this is so, we cannot stand aloof from men. We are called to go into the world as He came into the world, to enter freely and fully into people's lives, into their sorrows and doubts, their sins and fears. It is costly to our selfishness.⁵⁶

Stott used the Johannine form of the Great Commission to remind his readers that as Jesus incarnated into human flesh, so believers must engage unbelievers. Evangelism cannot occur unless believers are around unbelievers.

Stott later adapted a form of the above argument to suggest that Christian mission is service in the same way that Jesus served humanity.⁵⁷ In particular, this argument allowed Stott to state that evangelism and social responsibility were stand-alone parts of the church's mission.⁵⁸ However, when Stott wrote *Motives and Methods in Evangelism* in 1962, he had not moved so far as to equalize evangelism and social responsibility.

Two important assertions concerning Stott's understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility can be made at this stage of exploration. First, Stott's views on evangelism remained practically unchanged throughout his ministry. His writings early in ministry and late in life equally value the centrality of

⁵⁶Stott, *Motives and Methods in Evangelism*, 16.

⁵⁷Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 37.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 39.

Jesus in the gospel, the definition of evangelism as proclamation, and the necessity of church involvement in witness. Second, Stott's views on social responsibility were more dynamic. He admitted to adapting his understanding of social responsibility within Christian mission and in relationship to evangelism.⁵⁹ Before exploring Stott's adapting views on this issue in chapter 4, an examination of his pastoral social conscience is necessary.

Stott and Social Responsibility in a Pastoral Context

It can be argued that Stott's twenty five years as rector of All Souls emphasized evangelism while the balance of his international ministry more plainly emphasized social responsibility. Evangelism certainly overshadowed social responsibility in Stott's writing and focus while rector at All Souls. He was motivated by a desire to train his congregation as witnesses and see individuals come to faith in Christ. Although evangelism was his main focus, he did not entirely neglect issues of social action during his pastoral ministry. Illustrations below indicate that social responsibility, while not fully developed within Stott's theology at the time, was nevertheless still present.

Stott did lead All Souls in attempts to engage the various socio-economic and culturally diverse people surrounding the church.⁶⁰ Even so, the heart of his outreach strategies primarily focused on evangelism.⁶¹ Under his ministry, the renovated Trinity Clubhouse became an outreach to children and youth and also served to address community needs such as serving meals to the homeless and childcare for working

⁵⁹Ibid., 37.

⁶⁰Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 66-67.

⁶¹Ibid., 116.

mothers.⁶² He developed a Social Action Committee in 1957, designed to address the social needs of those around them.⁶³ The committee was not particularly effective, however, because national welfare already alleviated much of the need targeted by the church.⁶⁴ Simply stated, the wealthy culture of the membership differed greatly from the other socio-economic classes of people within the parish.⁶⁵ The church had difficulty adopting Stott's grand vision to include diverse social classes into its congregation.

Stott consistently displayed a conscience for social issues. His consideration of social issues can be seen in his "ABC Society" as a teenager and his adventure into homelessness not long after becoming curate at All Souls. During his leadership as rector, he continued leading the congregation toward social engagement. While his theology of social responsibility was not entirely formed as a rector, his conscience was compelled toward social engagement.

At All Souls Stott began connecting evangelism and social responsibility in terms of how he believed evangelism should be carried out within his congregation. Concerning church visitation he wrote,

House-to-house visitors are not merely witnesses. They are also Christians! So because Christians are called to love and by love to serve, and because the visitors enter homes as Christian people, they must keep their eyes open for social as well as spiritual need, and they must have liberty to seek to meet whatever they find.⁶⁶

Stott recognized that believers should include social ministry within their evangelistic endeavors. Evangelism, for Stott, could not be disconnected from the Christian life of love and service.

⁶²Ibid., 67, 116.

⁶³Ibid., 67.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Stott, *One People*, 60.

He addressed evangelism and social responsibility in *Our Guilty Silence* in 1967. Primarily written to challenge believers to evangelize, Stott showed that he had been thinking on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. He offered,

Yet others seem, if I may put it thus, to escape from the call to evangelize by plunging into good works of healing, education and social reform. These are right and necessary. Yet the final and universal commission of Christ, recorded at the end of the gospels, was neither to heal the sick (as it had been when He sent out the twelve and the seventy), nor to reform society, but to preach the gospel. What then is the place of social action? And what is its relation to evangelism? Social action is not to be equated with evangelism, nor is it a constituent part of evangelism, nor is it primarily a means to evangelism (hospital patients and school pupils being a conveniently captive audience for the gospel). Like evangelism, social action must stand on its own feet and in its own right: both are the services of love, part of the diakonia of Christ and of Christians, as He calls them to follow in His footsteps. Nevertheless, although they must not be identified with one another, they should not be isolated from one another either. The two walk together hand in hand, neither pretending to be the other, nor using the other as its cloak or prop.⁶⁷

Stott articulated a position on evangelism and social responsibility that foreshadowed his final position. His argument that Christ's commission was "to preach the gospel" was consistent through the first twenty years of his pastoral ministry. While Stott would change his understanding of social responsibility and Christian mission within a few years of writing *Our Guilty Silence*, one can begin to see the practical shaping of his new position. He considered evangelism and social action separate activities that functioned "hand in hand."

Because Stott served as rector of an influential church in an international city, he had great opportunities for ministry. Stott matched the greatness of his opportunities with the grandness of his vision for reaching England and the world with the gospel. Things began to change for Stott in the 1960s. Stott's popularity as an evangelical expository preacher was increasing. His opportunities for international travel, growing

⁶⁷Stott, *Our Guilty Silence*, 34.

awareness of social issues, and the cultural upheaval taking place in the decade provided Stott a vision of the world that allowed for him to consider social responsibility more carefully. On a practical level, Stott's preaching became the framework for displaying his developing theology of the interconnectedness of evangelism and social responsibility.

Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Preaching

Stott's preaching can be characterized as expository.⁶⁸ As a preacher, Stott was articulate and focused on communicating biblical truth. Chapman described Stott with an authoritative "message and manner."⁶⁹ He preached with an evangelical assurance in the reliability of Scripture as God's Word. His personal confidence in the Bible provided the foundation for articulate and authoritative preaching. He argued for the influence of Scripture in the life of the believer:

Thus, in the Bible God gives us revelations of himself which lead us to worship, promises of salvation which stimulate our faith, and commandments expressing his will which demand our obedience. This is the meaning of Christian discipleship. Its three essential ingredients are worship, faith and obedience. And all three are called forth by the Word of God.⁷⁰

Stott's sermons demonstrate his belief in the authority and effectiveness of Scripture for the Christian life. He derived his evangelistic focus from the testimony of Scripture. Illustrating the preacher as a herald of good news, Stott declared that preacher "has good news to proclaim the whole world."⁷¹ He also developed his understanding of Christian social responsibility from his interpretation of Scripture passages. While Stott did not

⁶⁸Dudley-Smith, *The Making of a Leader*, 266.

⁶⁹Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 62.

⁷⁰John Stott, *God's Book for God's People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 86.

⁷¹John Stott, *The Preachers Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 33.

reject tradition from influencing the church, nor discard Christian history as a tool for teaching the church, he accepted only the Bible as the authority for the Christian life.

In his classic work on the subject of preaching, *Between Two Worlds*, Stott contended that “preaching is unique and irreplaceable.”⁷² He believed preaching was the ordained means by which God’s Word should be expounded in God’s power for the purpose of motivating hearers to worship God.⁷³ After acknowledging the biblical metaphors of the preacher as herald, sower, ambassador, steward, shepherd, and workman, Stott suggested the metaphor of bridge-building to assist preachers in developing a biblical and contemporary understanding of preaching.⁷⁴ He declared, “It is impressive that in all these New Testament metaphors the preacher is a servant under someone else’s authority, and the communicator of somebody else’s word.”⁷⁵ He further offered his reasoning for suggesting the metaphor of bridge-building:

It is because preaching is not exposition only but communication, not just the exegesis of a text but the conveying of a God-given message to living people who need to hear it, that I am going to develop a different metaphor to illustrate the essential nature of preaching. It is non-biblical in the sense that it is not explicitly used in Scripture, but I hope to show that what it lays upon us is a fundamentally biblical task. The metaphor is that of bridge-building.⁷⁶

Stott argued that preaching must be equally biblical and contemporary. He contrasted conservatives who tended to expound the biblical content without contemporary significance against liberals who tended to address contemporary issues using little biblical foundation.⁷⁷

⁷²John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*, 1st American ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 83.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 135-36.

⁷⁵Ibid., 137.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., 140-43.

Stott always believed that preaching needed to find its foundation in the biblical text.⁷⁸ But he came to believe that preaching grounded in the biblical message should be directed to contemporary issues. In 1967, Ted Schroder arrived as an assistant pastor at All Souls and helped Stott recognize this lacking contemporary application in his preaching.⁷⁹ Schroder served as a journalist in New Zealand prior to his appointment at All Souls and recognized the challenge of social issues such as the sexual revolution and political turmoil of the era.⁸⁰ He challenged Stott to add contemporary applications and address the prevailing social challenges in his preaching.⁸¹ Stott's interactions with Schroder formed the foundations for *Between Two Worlds* which is Stott's argument for preaching biblical truth into a contemporary situation. He adopted Schroder's advice and added social issues to his preaching content in hopes of attracting more people to hear the gospel at All Souls.⁸² This development in Stott's preaching methodology provided a theological and practical framework to address the ethical implications of the gospel in light of contemporary events.⁸³

Stott's interactions with Schroder that helped shape Stott's views on preaching occurred in the late 1960s. This was also a time period where Stott's views on Christian social responsibility were changing. Preaching provided Stott the opportunity to emphasize the Bible's authoritative foundation and also address contemporary social situations. Similarly, Stott regarded evangelism as a biblical mandate and social responsibility as one way to make a contemporary connection to the biblical commission.

⁷⁸Steer, *Basic Christian*, 142.

⁷⁹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 142; Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 74.

⁸⁰Steer, *Basic Christian*, 142; Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 74.

⁸¹Steer, *Basic Christian*, 142; Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 74.

⁸²Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 74.

⁸³Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 155.

While consistently keeping his focus on the gospel throughout his preaching, Stott began addressing social issues and contemporary topics from Scripture. He described preaching and ethics as a set of concentric circles moving from personal ethics toward political issues.⁸⁴ He acknowledged that preaching biblical truths to personal and church ethics was less controversial than addressing issues of international or political concern.⁸⁵ The concentric circles addressing the personal, church, and domestic spheres are clearly defined from Scripture.⁸⁶ Stott elaborated on the social and political spheres because they represented issues with significant diversity of Christian thought.⁸⁷

Stott believed the Bible speaks to larger social issues. He grounded his argument by using the Sermon on the Mount as well as Paul's teaching concerning governmental responsibility.⁸⁸ In this section, Stott addressed the scriptural topic of money in Scripture as a theme to preach social responsibility in the church. He argued that the biblical authors taught "the obligation of well-to-do Christians (people who possess 'the world's goods') so to share with the poor as to ensure that they have the necessities of life."⁸⁹ Stott then pointed to the command in Galatians 6:10 to "do good to all men." Here, he made the case that believers cannot adopt the mindset of caring for believers and without seeking to meet the needs of the world's impoverished poor.⁹⁰ Additionally, he suggested Christians should seek to alleviate economic inequality.⁹¹

⁸⁴Ibid., 155.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., 155-59.

⁸⁷Ibid., 159-68.

⁸⁸Ibid., 159-60.

⁸⁹Ibid., 161.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., 161-62.

Stott grounded this suggestion in the subsequent themes: “the biblical doctrines of the human race, the stewardship of the earth’s resources and the injustice which is inherent in inequalities of privilege.”⁹² Stott’s preaching methodology became a practical outlet for his developing views on Christian social responsibility.

The final circle of ethics and preaching that Stott addressed was the political sphere. He defined this sphere as “situations of social injustice which may be ameliorated but cannot be remedied without political action.”⁹³ In this section, Stott argued that preaching should concern both secular and spiritual topics because separating the spheres implies God is only interested in spiritual things.⁹⁴ To the criticism that Jesus and the New Testament authors did not address politics and preaching, Stott claimed that God was interested in the political sphere because of various biblical themes.⁹⁵ Firstly, Stott pointed to God as sovereign Creator, which should direct believers to seek his rule in all areas of life, including the politics of secular society.⁹⁶ Secondly, Stott noted the Old Testament prophets who preached God’s judgment against the wickedness and injustice in nations other than Israel.⁹⁷ Thirdly, the doctrine of the image of God in man denotes a universal respect that should be placed on mankind and pursued through Christian social responsibility.⁹⁸ Fourthly, Stott argued that Jesus’ teaching contained “political implications.”⁹⁹ He referred to Jesus’ condemnation as the “King of the Jews”

⁹²Ibid., 162.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., 163.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid., 164.

and how this accusation was seen as a political subversion of Caesar's authority.¹⁰⁰

Although Stott believed preaching alone could not offer specific biblical solutions to a wide political program, he did believe the biblical content spoke with clarity to certain issues and provided a solid foundation for developing a plan of Christian social action.¹⁰¹

What are the implications from Stott's view of preaching concerning evangelism and social responsibility? Certainly Stott's preaching methodology recognized the primacy of the gospel in preaching. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Stott believed the foundational necessity that the gospel must be proclaimed in preaching and in personal conversations. However, the transition in Stott's position on social responsibility is also evident in his preaching and writing over time. He presented arguments from *Between Two Worlds* in response to the cultural transitions his London parish experienced. He also developed these perspectives in light of his international travels. Even in the context of presenting his arguments for Christian social responsibility, he grounded them on the gospel. He wrote,

Wherever the Christian gospel has gone and triumphed, it has brought in its wake a new concern for education, a new willingness to listen to dissidents, new standards of impartiality in the administration of justice, a new stewardship of the natural environment, new attitudes to marriage and sex, a new respect for women and children, and a new compassionate resolve to relieve the poor, heal the sick, rehabilitate prisoners and care for the aged and dying. Moreover, these new values become expressed, as Christian influence grows, not only in philanthropic enterprise but also in humane legislation.¹⁰²

For Stott, evangelism and social responsibility were equally valid Christian responses to society. Yet the gospel maintained the primary place in his practical process of Christian mission.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 167.

¹⁰²Ibid.

The Practical Nature of Stott's Theological Position

Stott was distinctively gifted for his role as pastor. As a skilled expositor, he flourished in his preaching role at All Souls. During his tenure, Stott transitioned from merely expounding the Bible to clearly articulating its content with contemporary applications. A burdened evangelist, he pursued the conversion of his parish. He planned, trained, and coordinated evangelistic strategies to engage his congregation in effective evangelism. A conscientious believer, he cultivated his mind through a broad spectrum of reading. And he cultivated his understanding of the world through his growing international ministry. His giftedness, along with his willingness to learn from others, afforded him a successful ministry at All Souls and significant opportunities outside his pastoral role.

Furthermore, Stott was uniquely gifted for his role as an international spiritual leader. He excelled at preaching and was consequently a popular speaker at international conferences, college events, and evangelistic rallies. He was arguably a more exceptional writer than speaker. He had the ability to illuminate challenging subjects concisely and clearly. He could address in depth theological issues without resorting to academic or theological jargon. His works would become equally helpful for a general readership as well as theologically trained and critical readers.¹⁰³ In part, Stott's skillful writing provided him the leadership opportunity at Lausanne. His leadership at Lausanne afforded him a growing international audience which further spread the popularity of his writing.

¹⁰³Note the manner in which Stott shifts easily between in depth theological thinking and clear biblical application in *The Cross of Christ*, *Between Two Worlds*, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, as well as his commentaries. Chapman argued that Stott's primary emphasis was for the church and not the academy. Chapman writes, "He did see himself as a theologian – not in the academy (where few took his work seriously), but for the church." Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 144. Stott was well read many of the subjects he engaged. Stott's writings can inform and benefit both the layperson and the theologically astute reader. His clarity and conciseness made his arguments accessible, giving him a large readership even if, as Chapman suggested, it was not primarily an academic audience.

Stott's preaching displays his practical understanding of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. In one of his sermons, he grounded the Christian's mission in the overall mission and purpose of God.¹⁰⁴ Believers are to be missionaries because the Bible displays God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and heaven in missionary terms.¹⁰⁵ He argued that believers must be dedicated to the cause of world evangelization because God in all three persons of the Trinity is a missionary God.¹⁰⁶ In essence, Stott drew his applications for Christian living directly from biblical prescriptions. He believed the message of Scripture to be practical.

In other words, the believer should not only know or understand Scripture, but he must submit to its authority and obey its commands.¹⁰⁷ He noted that the Lord's statement of authority preceded his commission to the disciples.¹⁰⁸ Stott believed in the authoritative nature of Scripture. He made a case for the primacy of the Bible in churches when he wrote, "First, I exhort Christian pastors (including myself) to take our preaching more seriously. Our calling is to study and expound the Word of God and relate it to the modern world. The health of every congregation depends more than anything else on the quality of its preaching ministry."¹⁰⁹ For Stott, preaching the Bible was the primary means for the church to understand and apply God's expectations.

The tension between evangelism and social responsibility is one of Stott's more practical theological emphases. Evangelism was not a task relegated to the

¹⁰⁴John Stott, "Biblical Basis for World Evangelization," Santa Barbara, CA, Westmont College, October 15, 1979.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷John Stott, *The Authority of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974), 38.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁹Stott, *God's Book for God's People*, 72.

professional behind the pulpit. Rather, it was a mandate for every believer to submit to the authority of Jesus and make disciples of all nations. Likewise, Stott's understanding of social responsibility was not merely academic. He addressed social topics in preaching primarily because he wanted to find ways to engage contemporary culture with biblical truth. But he also expected practical Christian living to act as a support and even foundation for evangelism. Many examples of Stott's practical connection between evangelism and social responsibility could be presented. At this point one example will suffice. Stott declared,

It is certainly essential to verbalize the gospel, and, since God has himself chosen to speak, Christians should not share the widespread disenchantment with words. Nevertheless, God's Word also became flesh so that his glory was seen. Just so, we cannot announce the good news of God's love if we do not also exhibit it in concrete actions of love. This is a major rationale for combining social action with evangelism. When our light truly shines before men, Jesus said, it is our 'good deeds' that they will see and so give glory to our heavenly Father (Mt 5:16).¹¹⁰

Stott connected Christian living, social responsibility, and evangelism. As will be explored in the next chapter, Stott's transitioning theology which elevated social responsibility had a practical nature.

When Stott became rector emeritus at All Souls in 1975, he continued in some pastoral functions. The focus of this chapter has emphasized the twenty five years he spent as rector of All Souls. Stott's years leading All Souls in a metropolitan city gave him credibility for his growing international ministry. He devised methods of evangelism, recognized that the church needed to address social issues, and attempted to balance the poles of evangelism and social responsibility. The beginnings of Stott's transition on the subject of social responsibility began in his pastoral ministry. During his international ministry Stott fully displayed his understanding of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

¹¹⁰Stott, *The Authentic Jesus*, 84.

CHAPTER 4

STOTT AND THE TENSION IN A LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Stott developed as a theologian and leader in a pastoral context. However, his opportunities in a context of international ministry advanced his most influential theological positions. His participation within the worldwide evangelical movement afforded occasions for travel, ministry, speaking, and writing which shaped his perspectives and furthered his influence. In one sense, Lausanne extended the boundaries of Stott's parish to include the world. Although he remained rector emeritus at All Souls until his death in 2011, he clearly began seeing his ministry as international in scope. His books shifted from the perspective of a pastor to the perspective of a Christian leader speaking to believers across the world.

While Lausanne launched Stott forward into an international ministry of speaking and writing, another international gathering of believers forms the introductory foundation for this chapter. The World Congress of Evangelism at Berlin was a precursor meeting to the Lausanne movement. More than 1,200 participants from one hundred countries attended the conference.¹ The congress was convened by Carl F. H. Henry to recognize the unique importance of gospel proclamation as the transformative force within the world.² The program primarily concerned evangelism and consisted of Bible studies, inspirational addresses, position papers, and discussions of international

¹W. Stanley Mooneyham, "Introduction," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: The World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin, 1966*, vol. 1, ed. Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1967), 3.

²Billy Graham, "Opening Remarks," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, 9.

evangelism.³ John Stott was assigned the responsibility of preaching the congress Bible studies on the topic of the Great Commission. Stott contended that evangelism was the central focus of the Great Commission in his address on Luke 24:44-49. In this message he asserted,

Christ's will and purpose are "that there should be preached" a certain message throughout the world. He made his Church the herald of his Gospel, to publish it abroad to the ends of the earth. The commission of the Church, therefore, is not to reform society, but to preach the Gospel. Certainly, Christ's disciples who have embraced the Gospel, and who themselves are being transformed by the Gospel, are intended to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13, 14). That is, they are to influence the society in which they live and work by helping to arrest its corruption and illumine its darkness. They are to love and serve their generation, and play their part in the community as responsible Christian citizens. But the primary task of the members of Christ's Church is to be Gospel heralds, not social reformers.⁴

At this stage of Stott's developing theological views, evangelism was the primary emphasis within the church's mission. At Berlin Stott viewed evangelism and mission as virtually the same thing. He argued for a narrow definition of mission, and there is little doubt that Stott focused on the evangelistic imperative given in the Great Commission. Between Berlin and Lausanne, Stott shifted his views on the nature of social responsibility in relation to Christian mission and evangelism. This chapter will chronologically explore Stott's participation in the Lausanne movement and the stabilization of his views on the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Participation at Lausanne encouraged Stott to rethink his views on the subject. His post-Lausanne writing further solidified his view that evangelism and social responsibility were intrinsically connected.

³Carl F. H. Henry, "Facing a New Day in Evangelism," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, 13.

⁴John Stott, "The Great Commission, Luke 24:44-49," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, 50-51.

Stott and the Lausanne Movement

Lausanne, more than any other single opportunity in Stott's life, thrust him into the forefront of evangelicalism worldwide. In a Lausanne review after the event, Stott's influence in authoring the covenant is described:

It was this performance, perhaps even more than his opening paper, which clearly established him as the key figure in contemporary world evangelicalism. He displayed complete mastery of the complex document in his hand (not surprisingly in view of the fact that he was up 'til 4:00 am one morning revising it) and expounded it in a way which brought to life the passion beneath the cold print.⁵

As the primary author of the Lausanne Covenant, Stott's influence shines through its pages. The covenant revealed Stott to be a gifted synthesizer of ideas and established him as an important leader within the greater Lausanne movement. Indeed, for the next fifteen years through Lausanne's second World Congress of Evangelism at Manila, Stott participated in prominent leadership roles within the movement.

These leadership opportunities provided Stott two important privileges. First, within Lausanne, Stott was able to consider, integrate, evaluate, and consolidate theological ideas from evangelical leaders across the world. As a result, his theological views were widened by an international perspective. Secondly, Lausanne offered Stott an international audience. His work with evangelicals across the globe gave him an audience of admirers, readers, and listeners that would read his books and consider his ideas. Thus, Lausanne provided Stott the opportunity and credibility for a considerable international ministry. Concordantly, leadership within Lausanne coincided with his move to rector emeritus at All Souls, Langham Place in 1975. As a result, Stott was afforded ample time over the next fifteen years to fulfill a broad and influential leadership role within the movement. The following sections of this chapter will trace a portion of

⁵"Lausanne '74: Let The Earth Hear Whose Voice? A Crusade Reprint," Lausanne Documents, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 11.

Stott's leadership in Lausanne, but will concentrate on how the movement shaped his developing views on evangelism and social responsibility.

History of Lausanne

The Lausanne Congress emphasized the biblical value of world evangelization following the pattern of the missionary conferences of late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁶ The World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin (1966) represented an evangelical perspective on world missions under the combined leadership of Billy Graham and Carl Henry.⁷ Billy Graham dreamed of a larger, more international, and more influential meeting than Berlin's congress.⁸ The result was the Lausanne Congress, where more than 2,700 representatives from 150 nations attended.⁹ Graham amplified five biblical concepts related to evangelism:

- (a) commitment to the authority of Scripture,
- (b) the lostness of human beings apart from Christ,
- (c) salvation in Jesus Christ alone,
- (d) Christian witness "by both word and deed" (neither denying Christian social responsibility, nor making it "our all-consuming mission"), and
- (e) the necessity of evangelism for the salvation of souls.¹⁰

Stott affirmed that the Lausanne Covenant was "a conscientious attempt to encapsulate its

⁶John R. W. Stott, "An Historical Introduction," in *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), xi. Stott made reference to "smaller missionary conferences" as well as "World Missionary Conferences" that took place "in Liverpool (1860), London (1888) and New York (1900)." These events led to Edinburgh (1910) which became a foundation for what is now recognized as the World Council of Churches. Stott then followed Edinburgh's history through to other World Council of Churches meetings in Amsterdam (1948) and New Delhi (1961) where "mission became marginalized by being largely reinterpreted in socio political terms." Ibid., xii.

⁷Ibid., xiii.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., xi.

¹⁰Ibid., xiv.

main concerns.”¹¹ Thus, as primary author of the covenant, Stott sought to affirm Graham’s direction for Lausanne.

At the close of the congress, the Lausanne Continuation Committee was convened to address further necessary work in the field of world evangelism.¹² After its first meeting in Mexico City in 1975, the committee continued to encourage work on functional topics related to evangelism such as “intercession, theology, strategy, and communication.”¹³ Stott participated directly in the formation of the Lausanne Theology and Education group (LTEG) which “organized a series of consultations between 1977 and 1982” that addressed particular topics related to Lausanne’s purpose.¹⁴ The first of these consultations focused on the Homogeneous Unit Principle and met in Pasadena, California.¹⁵ Gospel and culture formed the content for the second consultation and was held in 1978 in Willowbank in Bermuda.¹⁶ The third consultation addressed Muslim evangelization in Colorado Springs in 1978.¹⁷ Next, the LTEG sponsored the consultation on a simple lifestyle in 1980, highlighting generosity to others and the importance of Christian simplicity in living.¹⁸ The largest of the consultations was held in 1980 in Pattaya, Thailand, addressing the topic of world evangelization.¹⁹ The sixth, and final, LTEG sponsored meeting was the Consultation on the Relationship Between

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., xvi.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., xvii.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., xviii.

¹⁹Ibid.

Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR).²⁰ It met in 1982 in Grand Rapids and attempted to address one of the more controversial topics noted in the Lausanne Covenant.²¹

After CRESR, other Lausanne meetings focused on the following topics as they related to world evangelization: prayer (Seoul, 1984), the work of the Holy Spirit (Oslo, 1985), young leaders (Singapore, 1987), and conversion (Hong Kong, 1988).²² The Second International Congress on World Evangelization took place in Manila in 1989.²³ Stott's final major Lausanne contribution came at Manila in 1989 when he helped author the Manila Manifesto.²⁴ Although Manila was a global congress, it elaborated rather than reinvented the Lausanne Covenant in addressing issues in world evangelization.²⁵ Stott argued that the movement continued through younger evangelicals with the AD 2000 movement and other committee meetings throughout the 1990s.²⁶ A third global congress on world evangelism was held in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010.

The primary focus of this chapter will examine Stott's leadership in the consultations sponsored by Lausanne as an evaluation of the Lausanne movement as a whole is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Special attention will be given to the documents he penned, particularly as they relate to the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility within Christian mission.

²⁰Ibid., xix.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., xx.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Debate

Billy Graham's central focus in initiating Lausanne was to emphasize global evangelism. As an evangelist, Graham wanted to encourage and motivate evangelical leaders from across the world to work together in pursuing worldwide evangelization.²⁷ However, one major implication from the Lausanne Covenant concerned the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Stott's influence was a significant reason that social responsibility became an issue at Lausanne. As the primary author of the covenant, he made the topic a part of the conversation. In fact, the inclusion of social responsibility and the ensuing debate that coursed through the Lausanne movement not only shaped Stott's views on the subject. It also affected greater evangelicalism.

Debate at Lausanne. Chapter 1 of this dissertation explored definitions of evangelism and social responsibility in order to form a framework for working through Stott's understanding of the issues. Chapter 3 directly addressed Stott's understanding of evangelism as it affected pastoral ministry. To address the debate that ensued at Lausanne concerning the topic of social responsibility, two original Lausanne Covenant paragraphs can be found below. The first paragraph concerns Christian social responsibility and the second, the church and evangelism:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour [sic], culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political

²⁷William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 444.

action are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and humankind, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.²⁸

Commenting on this paragraph, Stott noted that Christian social responsibility is grounded in the doctrines of God, man, salvation, and the kingdom.²⁹ Concerning God, the covenant focused on his role as Creator and Judge who desires justice.³⁰ Humanity should be treated uniquely because no other creature has been created in the image of God.³¹ Under salvation, the covenant connected social action to the love of God and love of neighbor.³² Finally, social responsibility is seen as an aspect of kingdom righteousness to be displayed by the follower of Jesus.³³ The paragraph on Christian social responsibility argued that social involvement was a “Christian duty.”

Appearing to anticipate hesitancy about the addition of social responsibility in a document predominately concerned with evangelism, Stott and his fellow writers included paragraph 6. In this paragraph they attempted to clarify how evangelism and social responsibility should work together. Paragraph 6 of the Lausanne Covenant reads,

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian

²⁸John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 28.

²⁹Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant*, 29-31; Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 25-26.

³⁰Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 25.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 26.

³³Ibid., 26-27.

society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The Church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology.³⁴

Commenting on this paragraph, Stott suggested that "the church's mission of sacrificial service . . . includes both evangelism and social action so that normally the church will not have to choose between them."³⁵ Two important points must be taken from this paragraph. First, the covenant clearly stated that evangelism is the primary task of the church because the church is a God-made society and the task of world evangelization is simply enormous in scope.³⁶ Thus, Stott, and by implication, Lausanne as a whole, held to the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church. However, the second important point is that Stott identified social responsibility as a duty within Christian mission.

Stott also emphasized this point in his message at Lausanne. He preached from the Great Commission out of the Gospel of John, "Our mission, like his, is to be one of service."³⁷ He suggested a wider view of Christian mission than proclamation evangelism and considered the right synthesis between evangelism and social responsibility to be found in the idea of mission as service to the world.³⁸ He further stated in his message at Lausanne,

³⁴Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant*, 32.

³⁵Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 29.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 29.

³⁷John Stott, "The Biblical Basis for Evangelism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland, 1974*, ed. James Dixon Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 66.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 66-67.

Humanization, development, wholeness, liberation, justice: let me say at once that all these are not only desirable goals, but that Christians should be actively involved in pursuing them, and that we evangelicals have often been guilty of opting out of such social and political responsibilities.³⁹

And then, anticipating potential disagreement with his broadened perspective on Christian mission, Stott affirmed,

But these things do not constitute the ‘salvation’ which God is offering the world in and through Christ. They could be included in ‘the mission of God,’ insofar as Christians are giving themselves to serve in these fields. But to call socio-political liberation ‘salvation’ is to be guilty of a gross theological confusion.⁴⁰

Thus, in spoken and written word at Lausanne, Stott affirmed his belief that Christian mission included evangelism and social responsibility.

More than 2,000 of the 2,400 participants committed themselves to the Lausanne Covenant.⁴¹ Billy Graham and Jack Dain, the two chairmen of the congress, both signed the document at the closing ceremony.⁴² Many of those who did not sign the covenant were interestingly hesitant regarding the simple lifestyle topic.⁴³ The controversial statement is from paragraph 9 and reads,

All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple lifestyle in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.⁴⁴

The Lausanne emphasis on a simple lifestyle would eventually become a consultation

³⁹Ibid., 74.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 162.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 162-63. Steer noted here that Ruth Graham did not sign because the statement was “simple lifestyle,” rather than “simpler.”

⁴⁴Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant*, 38.

designed to flesh out the details and implications of a simple Christian lifestyle. Eventually, Stott chaired the International Consultation on Simple Lifestyle in 1980, which addressed the statement above.⁴⁵

While the statement on a simple lifestyle represented the initial hesitation regarding the covenant, the more significant issue arising from Lausanne was the addition of social responsibility as a duty within Christian mission. Stott was the primary figure in this doctrinal shift affecting evangelicalism.⁴⁶ The significance of Lausanne's shift concerning Christian social responsibility was noticeable because the voice for this move was a British, Western rector and not a Third World church leader.⁴⁷ Alister Chapman summarized Stott's move as "reinterpreting the Great Commission."⁴⁸ Stott, himself recognized the shift in his own theological perspective regarding this contentious issue. In an article following Lausanne, Stott acknowledged, "Certainly, evangelicals have only begun to theologize their newly recovered awareness of socio-political obligation. There is need for a deeper and clearer understanding ourselves, and for theological debate with the liberation school."⁴⁹ He was also aware of the fact that others within the Lausanne leadership had expressed reservation concerning the inclusion of social responsibility within Christian mission. In a letter to his friend Jack Dain, Stott clarified with the following explanation:

Paragraph 7 deliberately refers to 'the church's mission' and not just the church's evangelism. Further, our social responsibility under the heading of 'mission' cannot

⁴⁵Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 143.

⁴⁶Steer, *Basic Christian*, 163.

⁴⁷Lausanne '74: Let The Earth Hear Whose Voice? A Crusade Reprint," 5.

⁴⁸Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 120.

⁴⁹John R. W. Stott, "Significance of Lausanne," *International Review of Mission* 64 (1975): 290.

be restricted to relief, but must include our concern for the life of our nation, how to make it more acceptable to God, and what our contribution is to society as salt as well as light.⁵⁰

Other leaders within the Lausanne movement were aware of the contention surrounding the theological relationship between social responsibility and evangelism. The tension would rise particularly with the Lausanne Continuation Committee (LCC) meeting at Mexico City in 1975.

Debate at Mexico City. The LCC met in Mexico City to review the Lausanne event and determine the future direction for the movement. The meeting concerned leadership within the congress and was imbalanced in favor of the American delegation.⁵¹ Billy Graham's opening remarks emphasized the need to refocus Lausanne on world evangelization.⁵² Graham argued, "We should concentrate on mission and world evangelism. Evangelism is the main thing. If we do evangelism, everything changes."⁵³ Paul Little, who was responsible for organizing the LCC, echoed Graham's insistence on narrowing the focus of Lausanne to world evangelism.⁵⁴ Stott was troubled by what he perceived as a "betrayal" of the Lausanne Covenant and stayed up much of the night preparing a response to Graham and the rest of the committee.⁵⁵ Stott answered, "If we go back now, and concentrate exclusively on evangelism, it will not be an implementation of the Covenant but a betrayal of it."⁵⁶ The minutes of the meeting

⁵⁰John Stott to Jack Dain, December 2, 1974, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁵¹John Stott Travel Diary, 1975, "Mexico City, Jan. 20-24, 1975," John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

⁵²Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 142.

⁵³"Minutes of the Continuation Committee Meeting," January 20, 1975, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 2.

⁵⁴John Stott Travel Diary, 1975, "Mexico City, Jan. 20-24, 1975."

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

indicate that disagreement and discord that followed from Stott's rebuttal of Graham and those who wanted to refocus Lausanne solely on world evangelism:

It was obvious from the initial discussion that two different emphases had clearly emerged. While all present were committed to the Lausanne Covenant, some favored a narrow focus on evangelism while others felt a commitment to evangelism within the wider context of the mission of the church.⁵⁷

A specific committee was convened at the meeting to address the issue and eventually, they moved to emphasize a narrow view of world evangelism.⁵⁸ At this recommendation, Stott believed his only recourse was to resign from the LCC, and "felt his move was the only way to show the depth of his concern."⁵⁹ Jack Dain supported Stott's position and publicly stated his intention to resign should the committee adopt the narrower concept of evangelism.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the Americans on the committee took Stott's move as a power play rather than an example of Stott's deep investment in the issue.⁶¹ Stott later noted his move might have been misinterpreted due to cultural differences between the Americans and British.⁶²

Stott's disagreement was not well accepted. Apparently in response, some of the American delegation moved to make Billy Graham the Supreme President of the Lausanne World Congress.⁶³ Stott believed if he did not speak out, no one else would.⁶⁴ After effusively praising Graham, Stott suggested that Billy be named one of several

⁵⁷"Minutes of the Continuation Committee Meeting," January 20, 1975.

⁵⁸John Stott Travel Diary, 1975, "Mexico City, Jan. 20-24, 1975."

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Steer, *Basic Christian*, 165-66.

⁶¹John Stott Travel Diary, 1975, "Mexico City, Jan. 20-24, 1975."

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

presidents instead of the only one.⁶⁵ The night following the discord, Graham spent in thoughtful prayer, and the next morning he confessed to Stott that he had been influenced too much by the ideas of others.⁶⁶ He also acknowledged his agreement with Stott in principle concerning the nature of the Lausanne Covenant.⁶⁷ Graham's humility as well as the genuine desire of both men to advance the cause of Christ became the centerpiece for personal and public reconciliation.

The discord and subsequent resolution revealed inner character traits of both Graham and Stott. Graham displayed a genuine humility that made him a capable and godly international evangelical leader.⁶⁸ Stott showed a willingness to speak his convictions in spite of the controversy it might cause. Stott wrote in his journal concerning the event,

I think I was too quick on the draw. Although I do not regret anything I said, or even the way I said it, for I think I kept my 'cool' and remained courteous, yet I was too quick to cast myself in the role of defending Lausanne and its covenant against the American traitors (!) and of acting as a protagonist for the Third World. I much regret this now and wish I could learn to listen longer before speaking.⁶⁹

Furthermore, in letters between himself and Jack Dain, both men confessed uneasy consciences concerning the sharp disagreement that occurred between themselves and the American contingent.⁷⁰ Both also acknowledged that they were justified in their opposition as spokesmen for Third World evangelicals who either would not speak up or

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 143.

⁶⁹John Stott Travel Diary, 1975, "Mexico City, Jan. 20-24, 1975."

⁷⁰John Stott to Jack Dain, March 21, 1975 and Jack Dain to John Stott, April 16, 1975, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

were not present at the LCC.⁷¹ While Stott and Dain had justifiable motivation to stand on their principles and speak for Third World evangelicals, it is at least plausible to suggest Stott had greater ambitions. In *Godly Ambition*, Chapman explored Stott's inner motivations for seeking to influence global evangelicalism. Chapman posited this statement concerning Stott's tension at Mexico City with Graham:

His desire to stand up for his fellow evangelicals in places like Latin America and Asia was genuine, but that does not mean his actions were entirely disinterested. Evangelical leadership had been plural and fluid ever since evangelicalism became a recognizable movement in the eighteenth century. So whilst Stott was not trying to usurp Graham and establish himself as the best-known public face of global evangelicalism, he did see himself as the leading thinker and statesman in the movement – especially after his triumph at Lausanne. This was a role he wanted to play and believed he should play, for the sake of Christ's kingdom. But the line between godly and selfish ambition was sometimes hard to tell, hence, the uneasy conscience.⁷²

While this dissertation is not intricately concerned with Stott's motivations, Chapman does clearly recognize Stott's boldness to speak out for Christian social action in opposition to the world's leading crusade evangelist, Billy Graham.

What is important at this stage of Stott's evangelical career is that he was willing to defend his theological position of a broad view of Christian mission. Not only did Stott pen his ideas in the Lausanne Covenant and preach them to the thousands at the congress, but he also spoke up for them to the one man whose influence within evangelicalism dwarfed his own. Lausanne and Mexico City solidified Stott's views on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility as partner duties within Christian mission. Future writing and leadership shaped the balance of his theological development on this subject. In the years following Mexico City, Stott led multiple Lausanne consultations demonstrating his broadening views on Christian mission.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 143-44.

Debates in Lausanne consultations. Stott accepted the role as chairman of the Lausanne Theology and Education Group, which focused on the goals of theological reflection and worldwide theological education.⁷³ His new leadership role involved administering consultations on a number of evangelistic topics. He moderated the Pasadena Statement on the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP), chaired the Willowbank Report on Gospel and Culture, participated significantly in the Consultation on Simple Lifestyle, and authored the Thailand Statement on World Evangelization.⁷⁴ In minimal ways, these consultations noted the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, and highlights of their contributions will be related below. These meetings paved the way for the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, which will be explored in the next section.

Stott felt that these mini-consultations did not need prominent public attention. He suggested, concerning the Pasadena event, “When Christian thinkers meet to pray and debate an issue, they should be free to do so without inhibition, and without all the time looking over their shoulders as to which reporter is watching and listening.”⁷⁵ Concluding their study on the HUP, the group underscored their commitment to evangelism, noting that Donald McGavran’s statement on the HUP was more of a sociological observation than a theological statement.⁷⁶ The group also recognized potential problems with homogeneous churches “which seem to ignore the social problems and even tolerate them in the church.”⁷⁷ The statement also acknowledged that

⁷³“Statement on Theology and Education Group,” Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁷⁴Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 70, 112, 151, and 164.

⁷⁵John Stott to Arthur F. Glasser, November 24, 1976, John R. W. Stott Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁷⁶Stott *Making Christ Known*, 61.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 65.

the synthesis between pursuing evangelism and social justice “still eludes us.”⁷⁸ Clearly, Lausanne leadership faced more debate on this issue.

Stott’s next consultation concerned the Gospel and Culture. The report considered the affect that a person’s culture had on his response to the gospel. The section on incarnational missionary humility intersected the topic of gospel and culture with evangelism and social responsibility.⁷⁹ This report highlighted John 20:21 and 17:18, where Jesus sent his disciples into the world as he was sent.⁸⁰ This application is one of Stott’s most common exegetical arguments for emphasizing the manner of Christian mission as service. The report further recognized the need for missionaries to identify as Jesus did with the suffering, the poor, and the sick.⁸¹ Addressing the church and political structures, the report observed,

We confess that in complex economic situations it is not easy to identify oppressors in or to denounce them without resorting to a shrill rhetoric which neither costs nor accomplishes anything. Nevertheless, we accept that there will be occasions when it is our Christian duty to speak out against injustice in the name of the Lord who is the God of justice as well as of justification.⁸²

As with the Pasadena Statement, the Willowbank Report noted the intersection between issues of Christian social action and gospel witness.

The goal of the Consultation on Simple Lifestyle “was to study simple living in relation to evangelism, relief and justice, since all three are mentioned in the Lausanne Covenant’s sentences on simple lifestyle.”⁸³ The group focused on highlighting the

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., 91.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., 92.

⁸²Ibid., 102.

⁸³Ibid., 142.

circumstances of the poor and underprivileged in light of much of the wealth evident in Western Christianity. They contended that generosity and sharing were biblical mandates for the contemporary church.⁸⁴ Under justice and politics, the report stated,

We are also convinced that the present situation of social injustice is so abhorrent to God that a large measure of change is necessary. Not that we believe in an earthly utopia. But neither are we pessimists. Change can come, although not through commitment to simple lifestyle or human development projects alone.

Poverty and excessive wealth, militarism and the arms industry, and the unjust distribution of capital, land and resources are issue of power and powerlessness. Without a shift of power through structural change these problems cannot be solved.

The Christian church, along with the rest of society, is inevitably involved in politics, which is ‘the art of living in a community’. Servants of Christ must express his lordship in their political, social and economic commitments and their love for their neighbors by taking part in the political process.⁸⁵

The commitment also called for Christians to pursue peace and justice.⁸⁶ Moreover, it connected Christian lifestyle to “responsible witness,” reminding the readers that pursuit of justice cannot replace the mandate for evangelism.⁸⁷ Rather, when believers model their lives after the care and compassion of Jesus, they make their gospel message more attractive.⁸⁸ The statement offers a final clarification, “So by our commitment to a simple lifestyle we recommit ourselves wholeheartedly to world evangelization.”⁸⁹ This consultation addressed the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility more adequately than previous consultations. Still, instead of clearly articulating the theological nature of the relationship, this consultation merely affirmed the duty of both.

⁸⁴Ibid., 145.

⁸⁵Ibid., 147

⁸⁶Ibid., 148.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

More than eight hundred Christian leaders gathered at Pattaya, Thailand, for what would be the largest Lausanne consultation outside the major congress meetings.⁹⁰ Stott was asked and agreed to oversee the numerous mini-consultations, their respective chairmen, and serve as chairman of the drafting committee.⁹¹ The focus of the conference was world evangelization, and Stott defended the basis for world evangelization from the word of God in the plenary session of the conference.⁹² He further affirmed at the conference his view on preaching the gospel:

Since the light which the devil wants to prevent people from seeing and which God shines into them is the gospel, we had better preach it! Preaching the gospel, far from being unnecessary, is indispensable. It is the God-appointed means by which the prince of darkness is defeated and the light comes streaming into people's hearts.⁹³

While the conference statement reaffirmed the Lausanne language concerning the primacy of evangelism because of the urgency of the task of world evangelization, issues of social concern were still present.⁹⁴ In a preliminary draft of the conference statement, Stott wrote,

We ourselves agree that the gospel has inescapable social and political implications, but we greatly fear a return to the old 'social gospel' of 19 [sic] century liberalism, which confused the kingdom of God with social progress, had little understanding of the radical nature of human sin in individuals and structures, and promised utopia by human achievement.⁹⁵

⁹⁰Ibid., 158.

⁹¹Saphir Athyal to John Stott, September 19, 1979 and John Stott to Saphir Athyal, October 3, 1979, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁹²John R. W. Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," April 14, 1980, Paper for the Plenary Session in Pattaya, Thailand June 16-27, 1980, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁹³Ibid., Stott drew on the truth of 2 Cor. 4 and the light of the gospel from the glory of Christ.

⁹⁴Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 159.

⁹⁵John Stott, "Preliminary Draft"—Melbourne, 1980, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

Nevertheless, the major emphasis of the conference was world evangelization. The final statement suggested, “If therefore we do not commit ourselves with urgency to the task of evangelization, we are guilty of an inexcusable lack of human compassion.”⁹⁶ Little had changed between the first Lausanne meeting and the affirmations made at Pattaya six years later. Lausanne was still attempting to hold evangelism and social action as partner tensions within Christian mission. Revealing some of the unanswered questions raised by the tension, a group of Third World evangelical leaders even questioned the willingness of the Lausanne leaders to adequately address issues of justice and world refugee situations.⁹⁷ Momentum had been building since the first Lausanne meeting to focus on the issues of evangelism and social responsibility. That momentum led to the controversial Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR).

Debate at CRESR. The Lausanne consultations arose out of the Lausanne Theology and Education Group (LTEG), which Stott chaired since the first world congress. The group met and planned theological discussions surrounding controversial issues connected to world evangelism. No issue had been marinating as long as the debate between evangelism and social responsibility. The conflict at Mexico City less than a year following Lausanne demonstrated the contentious nature of the issue. Stott himself recognized years before CRESR that a consultation was needed. Concerning the issue of evangelism and social responsibility he wrote in his LTEG chairman’s report in 1979,

It is very important that we should complete this task. I am personally convinced that the issue has become unnecessarily divisive. I refuse to believe that evangelical

⁹⁶Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 159.

⁹⁷Vinay Samuel, et al., “A Statement of Concerns on the Future of the Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization,” Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

Christians, humbly submissive to God's Word and Spirit, cannot reach a substantially common mind and policy. Certainly an agreed statement on this topic could glorify God, serve the Church and advance the gospel.⁹⁸

Stott was not alone in recognizing the need for a consultation addressing the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. He and other leaders initiated the plans for the consultation to meet in Grand Rapids, Michigan.⁹⁹

One of the driving forces leading to CRESR was the divisive nature of the issue. Arthur Johnston had critiqued Lausanne and specifically Stott's inclusion of social responsibility within Christian mission,¹⁰⁰ and Stott replied with an open letter in *Christianity Today*.¹⁰¹ Stott believed the consultation could ease the divisiveness and invited Arthur Johnston to participate as one of the consultation speakers.¹⁰² Nearly everyone involved recognized the contentious and possibly momentous nature of the event. Leighton Ford wanted an open press policy, while Stott favored issuing a press release following the event with completely closed sessions.¹⁰³ Stott also suggested a specific selection criteria regarding the committee participating in the consultation. He proposed the following items:

- (1) each person must have a personal contribution to the discussion
- (2) the regional group should express a balance of theological viewpoints

⁹⁸John Stott's LTEG Chairman's Report to the Lausanne Congress of World Evangelism Executive Committee, November 1979, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

⁹⁹Bruce Nichols to John Stott, January 25, 1980 and John Stott to Bruce Nichols, February 21, 1980, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁰⁰Arthur P. Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1978), 301-03.

¹⁰¹John Stott Travel Diary, 1982, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁰²John Stott, "Proposed Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility John Stott's Response to Ron Sider's Memo," Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁰³Leighton Ford to John Stott, August 4, 1980 and John Stott to Leighton Ford, August 22, 1980, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

- (3) there should be a balance between theoreticians and practitioners
- (4) different political contexts should be represented, if possible
- (5) balance of denomination, age, sex and clergy-laity should also be secured, if possible.¹⁰⁴

Stott believed effective treatment of the issue demanded a wide range of participation.

The consultation was eventually comprised of a diverse contingent of “fifty evangelical leaders from 27 different countries.”¹⁰⁵

The consultation consisted of a week of biblical study and prayerful interaction around several topics related to evangelism and social responsibility.¹⁰⁶ Preliminary papers that had been written, circulated, and evaluated formed the content of the consultation.¹⁰⁷ Stott admitted in his diary that he approached the consultation with trepidation. He wrote,

I arrived with a mixture of confidence and apprehension. On the one hand, I was convinced that evangelical believers who derive to live under the lordship of Christ, to respect the authority of Scripture and to receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit, must reach substantial agreement on an issue as important as this one. On the other hand, some of the papers circulated in advance not only adopted strongly partisan positions but were somewhat shrill in their tone. Harold Lindsell’s written response to Vinay Samuel, and Gordon Moyes’ to Peter Bayerhouse, were both outspoken almost to the point of rudeness. How could agreement be reached?¹⁰⁸

Stott quoted with near exactness from his diary in the foreword to the consultation statement in *Making Christ Known*. However, in the foreword Stott cleaned up the statement and generalized the pre-consultation discord rather than include specific names of individuals.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴John Stott to Dick Van Halsema, November 25, 1980, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁰⁵Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 171.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁸John Stott Travel Diary, 1982. In the published foreword Stott did comment as critically concerning the pre-consultation division.

¹⁰⁹Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 170.

The consultation affirmed both Lausanne definitions of evangelism and social responsibility and expounded on their application for contemporary Christianity.¹¹⁰ The group declared the overarching emphasis on the gospel connected with Christian action:

Only the Gospel can change human hearts, and no influence makes people more human than the Gospel does. Yet we cannot stop with verbal proclamation. In addition to worldwide evangelization, the people of God should become deeply involved in relief, aid, development and quest for justice and peace.¹¹¹

CRESR attempted to inform the nature of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility as well as discuss the manner in which the church should seek to engage in both mandated activities.

As noted previously, the Lausanne consultations highlighted various aspects related to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. CRESR was unique in expressing the tension in three primary areas. First, CRESR identified three kinds of relationships used to describe the link between evangelism and social responsibility. Second, CRESR connected evangelism and social responsibility to the gospel as they related to the kingdom of God. Third, CRESR offered guidelines to Christians and the church in their practice of evangelism and social responsibility. These areas explored by CRESR revealed Stott's developing understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

CRESR suggested that evangelism and social responsibility are related in three particular ways, "First, social activity is a *consequence* of evangelism."¹¹² In this relationship, social responsibility follows evangelism as an aspect of spiritual growth from the life of the disciple. It is a good work that expresses itself as an "evidence of

¹¹⁰Ibid., 175-78.

¹¹¹Ibid., 177.

¹¹²Ibid., 181. Italics are in original.

salvation.”¹¹³ Second, social responsibility can serve as a “*bridge* to evangelism.”¹¹⁴ In this way, meeting a need, serving an individual, or working toward some greater activity of compassion or justice breaks down barriers or creates opportunities for sharing the gospel.¹¹⁵ Third, social activity relates to evangelism as a “*partner*.”¹¹⁶ The statement here emphasized Jesus as the illustration for this aspect of relationship. Accompanying Jesus’ ministry of proclamation, *kerygma*, was his ministry of service, *diakonia*.¹¹⁷ Explaining the partnership of evangelism and social action is a unique addition from CRESR. An extended quotation from the document is warranted:

If we proclaim the good news of God’s love, we must manifest his love in caring for the needy. Indeed, so close is this link between proclaiming and serving, that they actually overlap. This is not to say that they should be identified with each other, for evangelism is not social responsibility, nor is social responsibility evangelism. Yet, each involves the other. To proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior (evangelism) has social implications, since it summons people to repent of social as well as personal sins, and to live a new life of righteousness and peace in the new society which challenges the old. To give food to the hungry (social responsibility) has evangelistic implications, since good works of love, if done in the name of Christ, are a demonstration and commendation of the Gospel. It has been said, therefore, that evangelism even when it does not have a primarily social intention, nevertheless has a social dimension, while social responsibility, even when it does not have a primarily evangelistic intention, nevertheless has an evangelistic dimension. Thus, evangelism and social responsibility, while distinct from one another, are integrally related in our proclamation of and obedience to the Gospel. The partnership is, in reality, a marriage.¹¹⁸

The extended paragraph above attempted to make the case that evangelism and social responsibility are best related as partners. While the partnership analogy is not perfect, it

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., Italics are in original.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 182. Italics are in original.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

is helpful at least to underscore the reality of a social dimension within evangelism and an evangelistic dimension within social action. Some in the consultation were troubled by the next section of the statement concerning the issue of primacy.

Advancing the idea of a partnership suggested equality between evangelism and social responsibility. This concept bothered some of the participants at Lausanne, hence the need for the phrase, “in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.”¹¹⁹ Setting apart evangelism as primary made others at Grand Rapids uncomfortable because the statement appeared to indicate a rejection of the partnership concept.¹²⁰ CRESR argued for the primacy of evangelism for two reasons. First, evangelism has a “certain priority” because “The very fact of Christian social responsibility presupposes socially responsible Christians, and it can only be by evangelism and discipling that they have become such.”¹²¹ Second, evangelism is uniquely Christian relating to one’s eternal destiny, and the infinite importance of the next life highlights the priority of evangelism.¹²² The statement also confessed that a choice between meeting a physical need and a spiritual one will rarely occur.¹²³ A choice between the two would be “conceptual” rather than actual and, “In practice, as in the public ministry of Jesus, the two are inseparable, at least in open societies. Rather than competing with each other, they mutually support and strengthen each other in an upward spiral of increased concern for both.”¹²⁴ CRESR advanced and nuanced Stott’s position

¹¹⁹John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 30.

¹²⁰Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 183.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

that evangelism and social responsibility are partners within Christian mission. Indeed, in one of Stott's draft versions of the document he wrote, "Thus, 'partnership' and 'primacy' were seen to be complimentary rather than irreconcilable concepts."¹²⁵ Though many voices were heard and multiple influences affected CRESR, Stott's views underscored and completed the consultations efforts.

Connecting the topics of evangelism and social responsibility to the good news of the kingdom of God was a second area where CRESR contributed to the larger discussion. Within the consultation there was not widespread agreement concerning all the implications of the kingdom of God, the church, and salvation.¹²⁶ In this section, the statement linked social responsibility and evangelism as the fruits of the gospel, which is the root.¹²⁷ In particular, CRESR recognized the gospel as one's personal entrance into the kingdom of God, or more precisely, underneath God's reign in his or her life.¹²⁸ One understanding of the kingdom acknowledges that God reigns through Jesus over his believers and will come to reign in the world in the future. God's kingdom is then expressed in some fashion through believers when they pursue the characteristics of evangelism and salvation, as well as justice and peace.¹²⁹ By way of summary, the statement concluded the section, "So, Jesus intends his followers neither to withdraw from the world in order to preserve their holiness, nor to lose their holiness by conforming to the world, but simultaneously to permeate the world and to retain their

¹²⁵John Stott, Draft version of CRESR statement, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹²⁶Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 186-87. Indeed, the statement noted the disagreement within participants concerning the use of salvation language for anything other than personal conversion. Also recognized was the debate as to whether or not the church and the kingdom should be identified together.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 185.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 186.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 189.

kingdom distinctives.”¹³⁰ In essence, believers can express the kingdom of God by pursuing kingdom qualities related to salvation and justice in the world.

CRESR also contributed to the evangelical understanding of evangelism and social responsibility by its proposed guidelines for action. The consultation divided social responsibility under two headings: social service and social action.¹³¹ Descriptions of each heading follow:

Social service

Relieving human need
Philanthropic activity
Seeking to minister to individuals
and families
Works of mercy

Social action

Removing the causes of human need
Political and economic activity
Seeking to transform the structures of
society
The quest for justice¹³²

Acts of social service are not controversial and have been “universally accepted as a Christian obligation.”¹³³ Social action pursues justice and engages in political and economic issues in order to affect peace and justice.¹³⁴ Connecting evangelism with this greater aspect of social action stems from a person’s interpretation of the kingdom of God.¹³⁵

The statement affirms the various church roles within free and repressive societies, as they will apply differently their mandate toward social responsibility.

¹³⁰Ibid., 189-90.

¹³¹Ibid., 196.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., 197.

¹³⁴Ibid., 197-98.

¹³⁵Ibid., 199. Three particular streams of understanding concerning the kingdom of God were present at CRESR. They each affirmed “that the kingdom of God is distinct from the political realm.” One believed the kingdom should oppose the political sphere and speak independently of politics altogether. Another believed the kingdom to be separate but parallel to politics where believers participate “as citizens (not as church members) guided by moral principles.” A third believed the kingdom should penetrate and influence the political sphere individually and as churches.

Churches in free societies were encouraged to engage through intercession, love, teaching, power, vocations, groups, and resources.¹³⁶ Fundamentally, these churches were to use their opportunities and resources to inform believers concerning issues of social responsibility and generously focus their resources to situations requiring social action. Churches in repressed societies were encouraged to respond with consistency, love, witness, solidarity, and suffering.¹³⁷ Believers and churches in these settings would not have political influence or leverage, and as a result, their work in social responsibility could only be incidental. Overall, CRESR argued that churches and individuals had a responsibility to social service and social action, but they avoided prescribing specific applications to specific issues. Rather, the statement used vague terminology. “Removing the causes of human need, political and economic activity, seeking to transform the structures of society, and the quest for justice” betray at best a nebulous understanding of what is then expected from the Christian. In this way, CRESR left it up to individuals and churches to decide how to apply what they deemed to be Christian social responsibility.

CRESR appeared to have been a successful consultation. Stott wrote in his diary that “the tone of the debate was friendly, even loving, and nobody lost their cool.”¹³⁸ He further noted that Arthur Johnston, who he expressly desired as a presenter at the consultation because of his concerns about the Lausanne statements, was satisfied with the conclusion the meeting.¹³⁹ Stott and Johnston were not alone in their positive assessments of CRESR. C. Peter Wagner offered, “As I evaluate the statement, I believe it will stretch the evangelical community toward becoming significantly more involved in

¹³⁶Ibid., 200-05.

¹³⁷Ibid., 206-07.

¹³⁸John Stott Travel Diary, 1982.

¹³⁹Ibid.

fulfilling God’s cultural mandate while not backing off the evangelistic mandate.”¹⁴⁰ Wagner also commented approvingly that CRESR reiterated the primacy of evangelism and “advocated Christian social ministry without using the paradigm or language of liberation theology.”¹⁴¹ Ronald Sider observed, “In short it seems to me that it represents precisely the kind of courageous, balanced, biblical leadership that I have been hoping Evangelicals would offer.”¹⁴² CRESR gave Stott his consultation on the tension-filled issue that had haunted Lausanne ever since the first meeting. He again displayed his brilliance in formulating a plethora of theological positions into one cohesive document.¹⁴³ CRESR was a success on multiple fronts. For Lausanne, the consultation addressed a nagging tension. For Stott, CRESR solidified his personal views on the subject. Indeed, it was his clearest assessment on the particular topic of evangelism and social responsibility. And it would become a reference point in future works for explaining the balance between evangelism and social responsibility.¹⁴⁴

Debate at Manila. The meeting at Manila was not so much a debate on the subject of evangelism and social responsibility as it was a reiteration of what Lausanne already stated. Manila was the second global Lausanne meeting, hosting more than three thousand participants from roughly one hundred seventy countries.¹⁴⁵ Manila is important because of its size, not primarily its content. The Manila Manifesto restated

¹⁴⁰C. Peter Wagner to John Stott, June 29, 1982, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ron Sider to John Stott, October 2, 1982, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴See for example John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, UK: Marshalls, 1984), 11. Stott referenced the CRESR description of social service and social action.

¹⁴⁵Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 230.

Lausanne's emphasis on evangelism, on social responsibility, and on the primary nature of evangelism in their relationship.¹⁴⁶

Stott accepted the same drafting role at Manila as Lausanne although he wanted other and younger leaders to step into these roles.¹⁴⁷ One issue raised in both CRESR and the Manila Manifesto is the connection between Christian social responsibility and the kingdom. Considering the topic, Stott wrote, "A crucial question is the theology of the Kingdom, and whether evangelicals can agree about it. The Grand Rapids Consultation was not able to agree."¹⁴⁸ Little more concerning Manila was controversial as it related to evangelism and social responsibility. Those tensions had been released through the previous consultations.

The statement concerning evangelical disagreement on the kingdom relates to one of Stott's innate skills. He could take a divisive issue and consolidate and massage it into a position to which a wide spectrum of evangelicals would agree. His concision and clarity would shine through his writing for the rest of his life. While Stott's involvement in the Lausanne movement and its documents did not determine his theological positions, they certainly affected them. The consultations provided him ample opportunities to read, evaluate, question, and critique the positions of others. They also afforded him the privilege of sharpening his own views as well as his writing skills. After CRESR, Stott's views concerning evangelism and social responsibility stabilized. The next section of this chapter will explore samples from Stott's books which reveal how he came to understand and apply evangelism and social responsibility in a variety of contexts.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 236.

¹⁴⁷John Stott to Paul McKaughan, March 13, 1989, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁴⁸John Stott to Graham Kings, September 21, 1989, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

Stott and the Tension as Author and Leader

Although Lausanne helped shape Stott's views and writings concerning evangelism and social responsibility, Lausanne did not exhaust Stott's interrogation of the subject. Many of Stott's books and booklets state his case that evangelism and social responsibility were partner duties within the mission of the church. In order to explore Stott's prevailing legacy in evangelical leadership, an examination of Stott's arguments surrounding the topic becomes necessary. A chronological study of Stott's writing is not necessary because Stott's position shifted to his final position during the Lausanne debates. Rather, this section will present a topical discussion of Stott's understanding of how Christian mission and issues of justice relate to evangelism and social responsibility.

Stott's View of Christian Mission

Chapter 1 of this dissertation briefly noted Stott's understanding of Christian mission. At this point, a more detailed examination of Stott and Christian mission is necessary because his view of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility flows out of his theological understanding of Christian mission. In his clearest written treatment of the topic, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Stott rejected what he considers the extreme positions where "mission" and "evangelism" are interchangeable terms and where "mission" essentially relates to God's peace, or "shalom," in the world.¹⁴⁹ Rather, "'Mission' concerns his redeemed people and what he sends *them* into the world to do."¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Stott grounded Christian mission in very nature of God.¹⁵¹ He wrote,

¹⁴⁹John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 25-34.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 31. Italics in original.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 34.

The primal mission is God's for it is he who sent his prophets, his Son, his Spirit. Of these missions the mission of the Son is central, for it was the culmination of the ministry of the prophets, and it embraced within itself as its climax the sending of the Spirit. And now the Son sends as he himself was sent. Already during his public ministry he sent out first the apostles and then the seventy as a kind of extension of his own preaching, teaching and healing ministry. Then after his death and resurrection he widened the scope of the mission to include all who call him Lord and themselves his disciples. For others were present with the Twelve when the Great Commission was given (e.g. Luke 24:33). We cannot restrict its application to the apostles.¹⁵²

Mission in Stott's theology developed from the person and purpose of God. Thus, the extension of mission to disciples flows from the centrality of the mission of Jesus in his redemptive work.

Stott then admitted to changing his views on the application of the Great Commission.¹⁵³ Though he recognized that the major versions of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) emphasized evangelism and disciple-making, Stott looked to the commission given in John's gospel to ground his view of Christian mission.¹⁵⁴ He applied Jesus' words from John 17:18 and 20:21 to underscore that Jesus was sending his followers as he had been sent by the Father.¹⁵⁵ By stressing the Johannine version of the Great Commission, Stott argued that social responsibility was not merely one of the aspects of Christian discipleship, but rather included as an expectation within the commission itself.¹⁵⁶ Stott arrived at this conclusion by locating

¹⁵²Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 36. Stott used this paradigm for his sermon "Biblical Basis for World Evangelization" where he grounded a biblical understanding of mission on the missionary God, the missionary Christ, the missionary Spirit, the missionary church, and even heaven which represented God's worldwide missionary work. Stott, "Biblical Basis for World Evangelization," Westmont College.

¹⁵³Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 37.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 36-37.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁶Ibid. Stott's interpretation and application of the Johannine version of the Great Commission will be one of the main passages of Scripture to undergo an exegetical analysis in chap. 6.

the Christian application of the Great Commission underneath the general principle of Christ coming as a servant and sending his followers as fellow-servants.¹⁵⁷ Stott clarified, “Yet it seems that it is in our servant role that we can find the right synthesis of evangelism and social action. For both should be for us, as they undoubtedly were for Christ, authentic expressions of the love that serves.”¹⁵⁸ So, Stott linked evangelism and social responsibility underneath service as the manner in which the Christian fulfills his mission.

He also connected the expectations of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment when explaining Christian duty. Stott wrote,

To be sure, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the great salvation achieved by these events, have added a new dimension to our love for our neighbor. They have put in our grasp a new and precious gift to share with our neighbor, namely the good news. But we must not imagine that to share the gospel with our neighbor exhausts our responsibility to him, and if we have done this, we have done enough.¹⁵⁹

One of Stott’s major arguments for a broadened view of Christian mission advances from his understanding of love in relation to witness. He suggested, “The Great Commission neither explains, nor exhausts, nor supersedes the Great Commandment.”¹⁶⁰ Stott implied that Christian service as mission included both proclamation and acts of compassion. Using Jesus as his model of sacrificial love, Stott believed that Christians should emulate Jesus by loving others through acts of generosity and service.¹⁶¹ Indeed, Jesus’ death on the cross displayed true love for the world to see.¹⁶² And because the gospel is at its heart

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁹John R. W. Stott, *Walk in His Shoes: The Compassion of Jesus* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 18.

¹⁶⁰Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 46.

¹⁶¹Stott, *Walk in His Shoes*, 8-10.

¹⁶²Ibid., 8.

a message of love, a Christian community devoid of love will have difficulty evangelizing.¹⁶³

Drawing from John's account of the Great Commission, Stott understood Jesus as the model for Christian mission. He incarnated himself into human flesh, preferring the dangers of human life verses the immunity of heaven.¹⁶⁴ He identified with humanity by becoming human without giving up his deity.¹⁶⁵ Stott also highlighted the importance of Jesus' public ministry of interconnected proclamation and service where "His words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words."¹⁶⁶ As Jesus displayed the powerful combination of good deeds and gospel words, so must the follower of Jesus. Stott argued that walking in Jesus' shoes meant looking for opportunities to love and do good deeds which would add genuineness to Christian faith.¹⁶⁷ Stott displayed his broadened view of Christian mission in the interplay of the church following the model of Jesus in his incarnation. Stott noted,

In order to fulfill its mission, however, the church must preserve both parts of its identity at the same time. 'Mission' arises from the biblical doctrine of the church in the world. If Christians are not 'the church,' the holy people of God, distinct from secular society, they have nothing to say, because they will be compromised. If on the other hand, they are not 'in the world,' immersed in its life, they shall have no one to serve, because they will be insulated. Their calling is to be the church in the world, simultaneously 'holy' and 'worldly.' Without this balanced biblical ecclesiology, the church will never recover or fulfill its mission.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³Gary Barnes and John R. W. Stott, "Why Don't They Listen? John Stott on the Most Pernicious Obstacles to Effective World Evangelism," *Christianity Today* 47 (2003): 52.

¹⁶⁴John R. W. Stott, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century, pt. 2: The Church's Mission in the World," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988): 246.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 244.

¹⁶⁷Stott, *Walk in His Shoes*, 20.

¹⁶⁸Stott, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century, pt. 2," 246-7; John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 245.

As Jesus incarnated himself to serve humanity, so must the church engage the world to minister to it effectively. As Jesus existed in being fully God and fully man, so must the church remain distinctively holy and worldly. As Jesus loved and preached, served and taught, so must the church pursue both callings to act with love and compassion, as well as communicate truth through proclamation. Because Stott broadened his understanding of Christian mission, he was able to adopt a paradigm of Christian duty that included both evangelism and social responsibility.

Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Christian Mission

Stott broadened the Christian view of mission to include everything that the church was “sent into the world to do.”¹⁶⁹ This definition allowed Stott to contend that “Mission embraces the church’s double vocation of service to be ‘the salt of the earth’ and ‘the light of the world.’”¹⁷⁰ He identified the church as salt, penetrating society and the church as light, proclaiming truth to society.¹⁷¹ In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Stott wrote, “The church, on the other hand, is set in the world with a double role, as salt to arrest – or at least to hinder – the process of social decay, and as light to dispel the darkness.”¹⁷² Functionally, the church is to penetrate and affect society through its good works and to proclaim the gospel as the entry point into righteous living. Both aspects, preaching the gospel and living with a distinct social conscience, are necessary elements within Stott’s view of Christian mission.

¹⁶⁹Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 48.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 25.

¹⁷²John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 59. Stott’s interpretation of the church as salt and light will face an exegetical analysis in chap. 6.

Stott also connected evangelism and social responsibility at a more basic level than Christian mission. CRESR identified evangelism and social responsibility as the fruits of the same root, the gospel.¹⁷³ In answering a question on the topic, he affirmed:

I believe the church cannot ever give up its evangelistic responsibility and it is right for the Lausanne Covenant to put it first, primarily because the eternal welfare of men and women are at stake. The commission of Jesus to preach the Gospel is so very plain in His teaching. Nevertheless I want to qualify this by saying that Jesus calls us not only to preach good news but to do good works, and it is by our good works that people glorify our Father in Heaven. In other words, it is very artificial to separate evangelism from social action. They really do belong together. One is the verbal and the other is the visual proclamation of the Gospel.¹⁷⁴

Stott held that evangelism and social action were fundamentally connected as aspects of the gospel. In his mind, the consistent Christian was not only concerned with the proclamation of a gospel message, but the application of a gospel life. In Stott's understanding of the gospel and Christian mission, social responsibility and evangelism are inseparable partners.

Implications for Social Justice

Accenting issues of justice and peace were consequences of Stott's broad view of mission. Stott recognized the historical and theological developments of the early twentieth century which affected evangelical understanding of social issues. Stott pointed out how Rauschenbusch essentially redefined the biblical gospel with his "social gospel."¹⁷⁵ Evangelicals had understandably shifted away from issues of social concern because of the faulty and liberal theological implications of the "social gospel" movement. Stott explored the divide between evangelicals, concerned primarily with

¹⁷³Stott, *Making Christ Known*, 185.

¹⁷⁴John R. W. Stott, *The Lordship of Christ in South Africa: A Challenge to Christians to Think and Act Biblically* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Africa Enterprise, 1990), 1, appendix.

¹⁷⁵Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 7.

evangelism, and the World Council of Churches, which appeared to focus on issues of justice and peace.¹⁷⁶ His proposal of a biblical balance between evangelism and social action reignited the discussion within evangelicalism concerning issues of justice, peace, and political engagement. Samples from Stott's argument along with implications for the contemporary topic of social justice follow below.

Stott argued that fuller doctrines concerning God, humanity, Christ, salvation, and the church provided the biblical foundation for Christian social involvement.¹⁷⁷ Stott believed that "God is the God of justice as well as of justification."¹⁷⁸ Evidenced by Amos' prophecies against the nations as well as Judah, Stott held that God was not only concerned with justice for his people, but also for the nations.¹⁷⁹ Stott linked intrinsic human worth, and thereby social involvement, to man being created in the image of God.¹⁸⁰ Stott adapted his arguments concerning Christ to suggest that his incarnation and his mission provide a framework for social engagement.¹⁸¹ Addressing the doctrine of salvation, Stott stressed salvation as entry into the Kingdom of God, surrender to Christ as Lord, and the connection of faith and love.¹⁸² He understood salvation to have broad spiritual implications, particularly related to how one should live after salvation. When

¹⁷⁶Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 25-32.

¹⁷⁷Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 14-25; John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 49-59.

¹⁷⁸Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 16; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 51.

¹⁷⁹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 17; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 51.

¹⁸⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 18; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 53.

¹⁸¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 21; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 55.

¹⁸²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 22-23; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 56-57.

focusing on the doctrine of the church, Stott noted the responsibility of the church to penetrate and illuminate the world, serving as God's instrument for reforming the world.¹⁸³

Stott considered it shameful when Marxist philosophy appeared to care more for the cause of the exploited than Christianity.¹⁸⁴ He believed Christians should not only be concerned with the immediate well-being of the poor and exploited, but that the church should seek to abolish material poverty.¹⁸⁵ Thus, Christian compassion included more than evangelism and meeting of immediate needs. Stott detailed explicitly his connection of love and justice with Christian mission:

We believe that the most effective Christian outreach is the kind which is committed to the holistic vision of mission. Whenever evangelistic, educational, medical, agricultural and developmental concerns are brought together in a comprehensive care for whole persons and whole communities the love and justice of God shine brightly.¹⁸⁶

Not only does Christian social responsibility flow out of love for God and neighbor, but it flows from God's expectation of justice.

Stott grounded social action in a theological paradigm where Christian pursuit of justice was important because it displayed a recognition of God's nature and character.

¹⁸³Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 24-25; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 58-59.

¹⁸⁴John R. W. Stott and James Robertson, "Mission Agenda for the People of God," in *Stepping Stones*, ed. Christina Baxter (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 190. In this article Stott directly critiqued the appearance of Marxism being more concerned for the exploited than Christians. In another work Stott more generally critiqued the apparent reality where non-Christians showed more compassion than Christians. John R. W. Stott, *Following Christ in the Seventies* (Singapore: James Wong, 1971), 14. Stott did not address here the overarching philosophical detriment which stems from Marxist political philosophy. He was merely acknowledging appearances. For the purposes of argument in this section, Stott was opening the door to larger gospel implications when he entered the realm of politics and justice.

¹⁸⁵Stott and Robertson, "Mission Agenda for the People of God," 190.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 191.

In *The Cross of Christ*, Stott pinpointed the connection between justice and love. He wrote,

Yet, as we have repeatedly noted throughout this book, the cross is a revelation of God's justice as well as of his love. That is why the community of the cross should concern itself with social justice as well as loving philanthropy. It is never enough to have pity on the victims of injustice, if we do nothing to change the unjust situation itself. Good Samaritans will always be needed to succor those who are assaulted and robbed; yet it would be even better to rid the Jerusalem-Jericho road of brigands. Just so Christian philanthropy in terms of relief and aid is necessary, but long-term development is better and we cannot evade our political responsibility to share in changing the structures that inhibit development. Christians cannot regard with equanimity the injustices that spoil God's world and demean his creatures. Injustice must bring pain to the God whose justice flared brightly on the cross; it should bring pain to God's people to.¹⁸⁷

Thus, Stott believed social activity should flow from both the pursuit of love and justice.

Although Stott was comfortable with changing the term "social justice" to "justice" in the final draft of the CRESR report, he adopted the term in many of his later works.¹⁸⁸ He appeared to use "social justice" and "justice" interchangeably. His addition of the adjective "social" in later writing does not seem to indicate a theological shift toward a more liberal emphasis on salvation as in liberation theology. Rather, he admitted, "We are not likely to mistake justice for salvation, but we have often talked and behaved as if we thought our only Christian responsibility toward non-Christian society was evangelism, the proclamation of the good news of salvation."¹⁸⁹ In Stott's theology of social engagement, justice represented God's standard for societal living.¹⁹⁰ The implication is that because God desires justice, Christians should pursue it. Stott would

¹⁸⁷John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 285.

¹⁸⁸Harold Lindsell to John Stott, August 7, 1982 and John Stott to Harold Lindsell, August 24, 1982, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹⁸⁹John R. W. Stott, *Balanced Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 39.

¹⁹⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 16-17; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 50-51.

affirm that the realm in which Christians pursue justice is the realm of society. Thus, Stott's comfortable use of "social justice" is descriptive of the place where justice is pursued. It would seem that Stott did not intend "social justice" to indicate more than a simple description. Nevertheless, he did employ a term which became loaded with excess theological and political implications.

Stott's Paradigm in Application

Stott's broad view of Christian mission was controversial, but not necessarily antithetical to evangelicalism. As an evangelical, he sought to ground his theology on the authority of Scripture. Indeed, it is the affirmation of Christ's authority which precedes the commission he gave to the church.¹⁹¹ He also believed that submission to Christ's authority "is fundamental to Christian witness."¹⁹² Indeed, Stott's opportunities to visit Third World countries and interact with theologians from different spectrums influenced Stott's broad view of mission, and by necessity his views on social responsibility and evangelism. However, Stott was careful not to ground his positions on those particular influences. He sought biblical foundations for his views on evangelism, social responsibility, and Christian mission. In this way, Stott remained evangelical. However, the correctness of Stott's biblical interpretation which grounded his theological positions on the preceding topics can be debated. This discussion will form the basis for chapter 6. At this point, some examples are necessary to relate how Stott applied his paradigm as a manner of practical theology.

Two unpublished statements illustrate Stott's commitment to biblical authority. The first related to the Stuttgart Consultation in 1987. He commended Stuttgart's connection of evangelism and social responsibility underneath the gospel as "integral

¹⁹¹John R. W. Stott, *The Authority of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1974), 39.

¹⁹²Ibid., 38.

evangelism.”¹⁹³ While commending this aspect of the statement, Stott shared disappointedly,

At the same time, I confess having been disappointed that the Stuttgart report did not spell out the gospel with greater biblical clarity. It does not seem to me sufficient to speak either of ‘an invitation to recognize and accept . . . the saving lordship of Christ’ or of ‘the announcement of a personal encounter . . . with the living Christ’.¹⁹⁴

He also lamented the failure to reference the cross, resurrection, or emphasis on the crucified Christ.¹⁹⁵

A second illustration involved Stott’s refusal to write a foreword for the book *Mission from Three Perspectives*, citing its incongruity.¹⁹⁶ Particularly, Stott did not approve of “salvation” and “life” being “given in entirely socio-economic terms.”¹⁹⁷ He was disappointed that the book appeared to promote “mission without evangelism.”¹⁹⁸ He was also dismayed at the lack of emphasis on sin, guilt, judgment, and an invitation to Christ without the cross.¹⁹⁹ His popularity and openness to other theological views made him the ideal candidate to write the foreword to a book that concerned more holistic views of mission and evangelism. However, Stott’s commitment lay with the Bible as his authority, not with unique interpretations of mission. Stott critiqued these mission documents, which fell at the fringes of evangelicalism, at a time after his own positions had been solidified. His responses above display his willingness to push back against the

¹⁹³John R. W. Stott, “A Note about Stuttgart,” John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶John Stott to Vinay Samuel, April 12, 1989, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁹⁷Ibid.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

pendulum swinging further than he was willing to go. Ironically, Stott and his broadened mission view had helped provide credibility to holistic mission theologies.

Stott's broad view of Christian mission demanded a broad approach to the contemporary issues of the world. Some of Stott's applied theology is both obvious and relatively non-controversial. For example the following paragraph emphasizes social service and Christian compassion stemming from the biblical mandate of love. Stott argued,

If, then, we are not concerned to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit and nurse the sick, and care for refugees and prisoners; if we have not social conscience and no compassion for the deprived and dispossessed; if we are inactive in face of the acute agonies of the world—then clearly there is no love in our hearts for the needy. But if there is no love for the needy, there is no love for Christ who identifies with the needy; if there is no love for Christ, there is no faith in Christ, since faith without love is spurious; and if there is not faith in Christ, there is no salvation.

Conversely, if we have truly turned to Jesus Christ and put our trust in him for salvation, we shall love him; and if we love him we shall spontaneously love his 'brothers'—the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, with whom he identifies himself; and if we love them we shall show our love by serving them; and in serving them we shall be serving him.²⁰⁰

Christian social service undergirded by love for Christ and others is a widely accepted mandate for Christian living.

As previously noted from CRESR, Stott added social action as a dimension of Christian mission. As such, Stott addressed a variety of hotly-debated, political topics such as abortion, poverty, justice, war, gender, peace, sexuality, human rights, and the environment.²⁰¹ Because Stott believed that political action was a requirement for pursuing justice in the world, he felt the need to write with biblical authority on these controversial issues. He made the case for Christian political involvement when he

²⁰⁰John R. W. Stott, *Life in Christ* (London: Monarch, 2003), 92-93.

²⁰¹See Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, and Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*.

wrote, “The broader definition of ‘politics’, however, refers to the life of the *polis*, the city, and to the art of living together in community.”²⁰² Therefore, Christians living in secular society are in the political sphere already.²⁰³ Stott admitted no explicitly biblical mandate existed for the practical actions of building hospitals, ridding society of thieves, creating an economic environment devoid of poverty, or abolishing slavery.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, he inferred these types of justice and compassion practices from the biblical emphasis on neighbor love.²⁰⁵ Stott believed that Christian social action necessitated political involvement.

A comprehensive evaluation of Stott’s practical mandates concerning political involvement is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Moreover, the detail in which Stott addressed social responsibility and political engagement is a peripheral issue to the topic at hand. What is essential at the conclusion of this chapter is to recognize that Stott intended his broad definition of Christian mission to be applied. He desired Christian social engagement, not because it replaced salvation in any theological sense, but because he believed it supplemented and even partnered with the gospel. He envisioned Christian social responsibility as a practical outworking of theological principles. Just as he had applied evangelism in a pastoral setting, he began to apply compassion and political action in a leadership setting. The larger question which looms at the conclusion of this chapter concerns the practicability of Stott’s applied theology. Can the Christian or the church adopt his prescriptions with success or without overshadowing their mandate to evangelize? The answer to this question must wait until chapter 6. Chapter 5 will

²⁰²Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 350.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

²⁰⁵Ibid.

explore Stott's influence on his contemporaries related to the topic of evangelism and social responsibility.

CHAPTER 5

STOTT'S INFLUENCE ON THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

While Stott's career as a writer was significant, his influence on the subject of evangelism and social responsibility is primarily due to his leadership within Lausanne. Stott alone should not receive credit for the Lausanne documents and their articulation of a broad view of Christian mission. However, because he adopted, explained, and explored those selfsame positions in further writing, we can accurately underscore the Lausanne position on the topic as Stott's position. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the implications of Stott's views on the subject through his contemporaries. Scouring every book that addressed evangelism and social responsibility to discover whether Stott's views are either credited or critiqued is a nearly impossible task. As a result, this chapter limits itself to a sampling of Stott's contemporaries that he either interacted with or clearly influenced. Interactions with Lausanne documents form the basis for much of the discussion of this chapter. Exploring the implications of Stott's position and his influence on the contemporary debate will form the basis for a critical analysis of Stott's views on evangelism and social responsibility in chapter 6.

Implications of Stott's Position

As shown in the previous chapter, Stott developed a broad view of Christian mission. He believed that Christian duty included both a mandate for evangelism and social responsibility. He described their relationship with each other as a partnership. He also contended that Christians are not only responsible to serve their neighbors out of love, but that they are to be involved in social action ministries and politics. Thus, in his

understanding of social responsibility, he expected believers to engage in both social service and social action.

Stott's views raise a number of implications which petition explanation. First, implied in Stott's view of evangelism and social responsibility as partners is the concept that the two mandates have similar or equal status. Equal status between evangelism and social responsibility is one of the areas which incited reactions from his contemporaries. This particular implication will be explored through the arguments of some of his contemporaries in this chapter and analyzed critically in chapter 6.

Second, Stott's mandate for Christian social responsibility implies a certain level of Christian maturity and spiritual growth. He stated, "No one Christian could, or should try to, get involved in every kind of ministry. But each local church (at least of any size) can and should get involved in as many areas as possible, through its groups."¹ In essence, Christians need to discern the social ministries in which they are to involve themselves. This suggestion requires a level of Christian discipleship. Stott additionally argued, "We cannot divorce social action or social service from prayer."² He illustrated the principle by acknowledging the combination of spiritual, service, and relief efforts of Mother Teresa.³ Stott's argument concerning the spiritual nature of social responsibility is fruitful and introduces the concept of how Christian discipleship provides the proper framework for understanding social engagement as a Christian duty. The theme of social responsibility flowing out of discipleship will be examined in the concluding chapter.

Third, Stott's expectation for political involvement implies that Christians can actually affect change through political means. Included in this implication are the

¹John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, UK: Marshalls, 1984), 26; John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 45.

²Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 36-37.

³Ibid., 37.

factors related to various political paradigms and situations. For example, social action in a democratic United States would look different and have different results than social action in Communist China or even a free Third World nation. Some of Stott's contemporaries came from very diverse political, theological, and economic backgrounds. Their cultural contexts shaped their views on Christian social action, which Stott believed to be a valid Christian responsibility in spite of the contextual challenges faced. He wrote,

Therefore, if we truly love our neighbors, and because of their worth desire to serve them, we shall be concerned with their total welfare, the well-being of their soul, their body, their community. Our concern will lead to practical programmes of evangelism, relief and development.⁴

The concepts of relief and development extend beyond merely giving water to the thirsty or food to the hungry. Rather, they may require significant financial, political, and personal investment into an issue or problem in order to provide a solution. The connection between this implication and Stott's contemporaries will be seen in this chapter.

Survey of Stott's Contemporary Influence

The debates surrounding the Lausanne documents concerning evangelism and social responsibility were addressed in chapter 4 and will not be repeated here. What will be discussed are the particular interactions and influences with some of his contemporaries coming from Stott's views on evangelism and social responsibility. Underscored in Stott's influence on the topic is the contentious nature of the issue. His contemporaries can be divided into two groups along the lines of a broad or narrow view of Christian mission. The first group will be those who began their interaction with Stott holding a narrow view of mission. Arthur Johnston and C. Peter Wagner make up this

⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 19; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 53.

group. The second group will be those with a broad view of Christian mission and will include Orlando Costas, Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, and Ronald Sider. The purpose of exploring these particular individuals is not to trace the development of their views to its fullest extent. Rather, each of these men interacted with and were influenced or incited by Stott's views on Christian mission, evangelism, and social responsibility. While it is certain that others were influenced by Stott on the subject, this sample clearly establishes Stott's influence within evangelicalism which is an important premise necessitating the critical analysis of his position in chapter 6.

Stott's Influence on a Narrow View of Mission

Stott's broadened view of mission, particularly as expressed through the Lausanne Covenant, precipitated much discussion from a variety of viewpoints. Lausanne declared the primacy of evangelism but broadened the view of mission to include social responsibility as a duty within Christian mission. The contentiousness of the events of the LCC at Mexico City in 1975 were not isolated in their illustration of discord over Lausanne's broadened view of mission. One such critic responding to Lausanne was Arthur P. Johnston.

Arthur P. Johnston. Johnston's book *The Battle for World Evangelism* was an historical and theological evaluation of evangelism within the evangelical movement. He represents evangelicals who emphasized evangelism as the major emphasis within Christian mission, believing "The mission of the Church is evangelism."⁵ He questioned Stott's view of Christian mission and argued that the primacy of evangelism had not in itself hindered social or philanthropic activity by the church.⁶ Johnston identified the

⁵Arthur P. Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1978), 303.

⁶Ibid.

tension between Stott's partnership concept of evangelism and social responsibility and the covenant statement on the primacy of evangelism in mission.⁷ For his part, Johnston assumed that the statement concerning the primacy of evangelism was at odds somehow with Stott's view of mission, "Several Congress speakers followed Stott in his redefinition of mission, but the Covenant in this case clearly held to the historic position of the primacy in time and in rank of evangelism."⁸ Johnston believed sociopolitical action had always been understood as a Christian activity underneath the teaching mandate of the Great Commission.⁹ Responding to Johnston, Stott affirmed that he held both to the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church as well as its partnership with social responsibility in Christian mission.¹⁰ It appeared as if Johnston distinguished too sharply between Stott's views on Christian mission and his high view on evangelism. Stott recognized the need for further clarification among evangelicals on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.¹¹ He invited Johnston to attend CRESR, where they both affirmed the consultation's statement on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.¹² Johnston not only participated, but he appeared to be as satisfied as Stott with the resulting statement.¹³ Johnston's minimal shift on his

⁷Ibid., 324.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 360.

¹⁰John R. W. Stott, "Battle for World Evangelism: An Open Response to Arthur Johnston," *Christianity Today* 23 (1979): 34-35.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²John Stott, "Proposed Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility John Stott's Response to Ron Sider's Memo," Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

¹³John Stott Travel Diary, 1982, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library. CRESR was not a signed document and consensus on every topic was not reached, but a major result was the convergence of ideas reached by a wide spectrum of various approaches to the topic of evangelism and social responsibility. It was a major victory that Johnston and Stott both could be pleased with the finished product at CRESR.

views of evangelism and social responsibility following CRESR illustrates Stott's leadership and influence.

C. Peter Wagner. Another evangelical thinker who was affected by Stott's articulation of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility was C. Peter Wagner. Wagner had participated with Stott in various Lausanne meetings, particularly at the LCC meeting in Mexico City in 1975. The tension of that meeting resulted in Stott and Wagner working together on an agreement committing Lausanne to the total mission of the church.¹⁴ Wagner had worked with Donald McGavran and was a part of the church growth movement. Wagner also emphasized the great need for world evangelization. While Wagner recognized the need for Christian involvement in political and social issues, he promoted a narrow view of mission.¹⁵ His time at Lausanne, and particularly his time with Stott, swayed his position to a more holistic view of mission.

Wagner admitted that prior to Lausanne he understood mission and evangelism to be essentially the same thing.¹⁶ Wagner changed his mind concerning the definitions of mission and evangelism, and he specifically credited this change of mind to his introduction to a Third World perspective and Stott's views on the subject.¹⁷ Wagner began arguing for what he called holistic mission, using the terminology of the cultural mandate from Genesis 1:28 and the evangelistic mandate from the Great Commission passages.¹⁸ He believed, like Stott, that mission included evangelistic and social

¹⁴Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143.

¹⁵C Peter Wagner, "Evangelical Missions and Revolution Today," *Missiology* 1 (1973): 94.

¹⁶C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 91.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

implications. He stated, “The central concept of holistic mission embraces what God sends his redeemed people out from their own congregations to do: principally implement the cultural mandate and the evangelistic mandate.”¹⁹ Although he adopted a broadened view of mission, Wagner carefully avoided holistic evangelism which included social action as a part of evangelism.²⁰ Wagner noted several proponents of holistic evangelism such as René Padilla, Orlando Costas, and even Carl Henry.²¹ Holistic evangelism is a concept that integrates social responsibility and evangelism within the gospel itself.²² While Wagner was willing to move into a position of holistic mission, he did not argue that evangelism included social action. He was also willing to critique Arthur P. Johnston for falsely associating Lausanne’s understanding of holistic mission as holistic evangelism.²³

Stott’s broadened view of mission, adopted by Wagner and critiqued by Johnston, carried influence. Stott defended his position adroitly, as displayed by Johnston’s acceptance of the CRESR statement. Johnston and Wagner represent a sampling of evangelicals who believed in evangelism as the primary emphasis within Christian mission. Stott’s ability to influence both Johnston and Wagner was an accomplishment. But not everyone agreed with Stott. The LCC event at Mexico City showed that some evangelicals were uncomfortable with a view of mission that essentially equalized evangelism and social responsibility. On the other hand, a different group of theologians, those with a broad view of mission, were concerned that Lausanne had not moved far enough concerning issues of social justice.

¹⁹Ibid., 93.

²⁰Ibid., 95.

²¹Ibid., 95-96.

²²Ibid., 96.

²³Ibid., 97.

Stott's Influence on a Broad View of Mission

As noted in chapter 4, Stott developed a broadened view of Christian mission from his interpretation of the service implication from the Johannine version of the Great Commission. Furthermore, his international ministry offered him the opportunity to engage with a host of theological perspectives. While serving with Third World evangelicals, Stott grew to appreciate and even adopt some of their perspectives. Furthermore, he took up the role of spokesperson for Third World evangelicals such as when he stood his ground for the holistic mission emphasis of the Lausanne Covenant at Mexico City. A few of these international leaders interacted with Stott during his leadership within the Lausanne movement. Orlando Costas, Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, and Ronald Sider represent a sample of self-defined evangelicals who were unafraid to address the issue of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. They believed Stott and Lausanne's broadened understanding of mission did not sufficiently address the circumstances which demanded Christian social action.

Orlando Costas. Orlando Costas served as a pastor, missionary, and theologian in various parts of the United States, Latin America, and Europe.²⁴ In an early pastoral context, Costas experienced ministry in a minority and poverty setting, which encouraged him to perceive ministry from a community and political perspective.²⁵ Costas' interactions with the concerns of the oppressed and circumstances of injustice shaped his interpretation of Scripture. He moved beyond a position of holistic mission to holistic evangelism where evangelism itself included demonstrating the proclamation of

²⁴Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), xii-xiii.

²⁵Samuel Escobar, "The Legacy of Orlando Costas," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25 (2001): 51.

the gospel.²⁶ Costas argued,

Bearing a personal witness, however, does not mean giving an isolated, private testimony to individuals from an abstract and ahistorical situation. On the contrary, bearing witness involves a joyful *public* declaration by one who has experienced abundant life in Jesus Christ and participates in his passionate commitment to the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed.²⁷

Costas connected Jesus' work of salvation to both justification and liberation.²⁸ He believed evangelism and mission required Christians to engage in social ministry.

His views on the issues of evangelism and social responsibility challenged the Lausanne Covenant from the opposite spectrum as Johnston. In a letter to Stott following Lausanne, Costas wrote,

Most recently (in a series of lectures on evangelism) I have questioned the paragraph on Christian Social Responsibility (5) not for what it says as for what it does not say. I agree that 'reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation' But if, as the following phrase states, 'evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty,' what is the difference and relationship between them, or how do they link with one another in the one mission of God. The Covenant, in my opinion, explains what evangelism is and makes reference to the fact that it must not be confused with social action; it links the latter to creation and underscores its place in the church's mission and in the divine economy. But it does not state in positive terms the interrelatedness between evangelism and social action. This leaves the impression that the dichotomy which the previous sentence has refuted ('we express penitence . . . for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive') has not really been overcome. While I am certain that the intention was to underscore the integrality of the Christian mission without confusing or amalgamating its evangelistic and socio-ethical dimension, the failure to state positively the missiological interrelatedness of these functions inhibits the Covenant from fully achieving, at this one point, its objective.²⁹

Stott replied with an attempt at concession, "I fully respect your hesitation about the use

²⁶Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 184.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 29.

²⁹Orlando Costas to John Stott, September 22, 1976, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

of the word ‘priority’ and maybe ‘fundamental’ would have been a better word to use. I hope for a chance to discuss this with you sometime. I know that my good friend René Padilla feels the same way.”³⁰ Stott also confessed the need to Costas for continuing discussion on the “precise relationship between evangelism and social action.”³¹ If Stott ever pressed to change the Lausanne wording from “primacy” to “fundamental,” it did not show in the Lausanne documents. While Costas was comfortable with holistic evangelism, Stott affirmed the need for evangelism and social responsibility to be distinct within mission, while evangelism remained primary.

René Padilla. Stott mentioned to Costas that René Padilla had similar theological views to Costas. Padilla lived and served in Argentina, writing and contributing as an international voice for Third World evangelicals. He participated in Lausanne and gave an address at the congress concerning “Evangelism and the World.” Padilla’s address created a stir:

His address was something of a collective broadside against an expression of Christianity with which he had little sympathy. He had scathing words to say about the evangelical sub-culture, obsession with numerical success and technology, the dangers of a truncated or incomplete gospel which played down the radical demands of Christianity with a particular (usually North American) culture, and - inevitably - the social implications of the gospel.³²

Padilla believed in the integral nature of evangelism and social responsibility. He commended the Lausanne Covenant for what he viewed as an elimination of “the dichotomy between evangelism and social responsibility.”³³ He further implied the

³⁰John Stott to Orlando Costas, October 25, 1976, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

³¹Ibid.

³²“Lausanne ‘74: Let The Earth Hear Whose Voice? A Crusade Reprint,” Lausanne Documents, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 6.

³³C. René, Padilla, “Introduction,” in *The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 11.

results of Lausanne,

With the Lausanne Covenant, Evangelicalism has taken a stand against the mutilated Gospel and the narrow view of the Church's mission that were defacing it, and has definitely claimed for itself a number of biblical features that it had tended to minimise or even destroy. Thus it has not only enhanced its appearance but has also given evidence of its intention to be a faithful reflection of its Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.³⁴

Like Costas, Padilla identified evangelism and social responsibility with the person and example of Jesus Christ. He also contended for the complementary functions of ecumenical and evangelical Christians. As Padilla defined one, an ecumenical Christian sought "the construction of a world of justice, peace and integrity of creation."³⁵ He defined an evangelical Christian as "a Christian who conceives of the gospel as good news of the love of God in Jesus Christ, the living Word witnessed to by the Bible, the written word of God," and who proclaims the gospel "to all the peoples of the earth."³⁶ Padilla believed that an adequate mission response to the challenges of the Third World from the affluent West meant "a redistribution of wealth which would meet the demands of social justice."³⁷ He also suggested that Western missionary structural models needed to change to fit the paradigms of the impoverished and oppressed in order to address situations of injustice.³⁸

Although Padilla originally praised the shift concerning mission established with the Lausanne Covenant, he later bemoaned what he perceived as a failure of the Lausanne movement. Critiquing the lack of continued movement to identify together

³⁴Ibid., 15.

³⁵C. René, Padilla, "Wholistic Mission: Evangelical and Ecumenical," *International Review of Mission* 81 (1992): 381.

³⁶Ibid., 382.

³⁷C. René, Padilla, "The Fullness of Mission," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3 (1979): 10.

³⁸Ibid.

evangelism and social responsibility, he wrote,

Several consultations organized during the late 1970s and early '80s by the theological commission of the Lausanne Movement—a commission chaired by John Stott—explored in depth the implications of these and similar statements made in the covenant. The various statements that emerged from these consultations provide both a solid basis and a rich agenda for Christian action in the world. Unfortunately, Lausanne II, held in Manila in 1989, failed to follow up on Lausanne I's holistic understanding of the Christian mission. To a large extent it reaffirmed the traditional separation between evangelism and social action that has so deeply affected Western Christendom, especially in its evangelical expression, for the last couple of centuries.³⁹

Although Stott led evangelicals to interact with a broadened view of Christian mission, that view was not sufficient for Padilla. Given his Third World heritage, he desired evangelicals to more consistently address issues of social concern.

Samuel Escobar. Samuel Escobar was a third international leader with whom Stott interacted concerning the holistic view of Christian mission. Escobar served with Stott on the original drafting committee for the Lausanne Covenant. Escobar lived and ministered in Spain where he had seen “the disintegration of Christendom.”⁴⁰ He addressed the situation of missions from an international and, particularly Third World perspective, by exploring the conditions of poverty and injustice.⁴¹ As with Costas and Padilla, Escobar did not reject evangelism, but rather understood it holistically. He argued,

Whatever the urgency and importance of church renewal, we cannot forget the call to go to make disciples among all nations in the world. That evangelistic responsibility is at the core of the mission of the Church, today as always Maybe the poverty and the simplicity of life in Third World Christians are better vehicles to carry the good news than the entanglements of the consumer society

³⁹C. René, Padilla, “Return to First Principles,” *Christianity Today* 54 (2010): 33.

⁴⁰Samuel Escobar, “Thirty Books that Most Influenced my Understanding of Christian Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34 (2010): 113.

⁴¹Escobar and Driver, *Christian Mission and Social Justice*, 38-39.

Third World Christians are actively engaged in trying to respond to the reality of poverty, injustice, and exploitation that characterize many of their societies.⁴²

By particularly relating the mission task to Third World Christians, Escobar connected the gospel to works of justice and issues of poverty. He further challenged evangelicals with “a new sense of history and mission in which the Church refuses to be a passive subculture dominated by salesmen of a truncated gospel.”⁴³

While Escobar certainly held a holistic understanding of evangelism, he did not adopt a liberation theology perspective on missions. He distinguished between liberation theology as a Roman Catholic phenomenon in Latin America and the liberating power of the gospel brought by evangelicals.⁴⁴ Roman Catholic liberation theology derived its influence as South American colonies sought independence from Spain in the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ Escobar recognized how Marxism, warfare, coups, and repression in many Latin American countries in the twentieth century shifted the hopeful liberation theological themes into pessimistic political outcomes.⁴⁶ Against this historical backdrop, Escobar challenged evangelicals,

Evangelical missiology needs to understand this historical moment. It must also recapture the dynamism of the gospel that brought holistic liberation to Latin Americans in the earlier days of evangelical missions

Our evangelical missiology is learning to approach missionary history with a less naïve and more mature attitude. We can no longer afford a missiology that refuses to take seriously the social and political realities. From an evangelical perspective that stresses God’s initiative and the Spirit’s dynamic in mission as well as the authority of God’s Word, we need to evaluate missions today.⁴⁷

⁴²Samuel Escobar, *Liberation Themes in Reformational Perspective* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1989), 52.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁴Samuel Escobar, “Beyond Liberation Theology: Evangelical Missiology in Latin America,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6 (1982): 108, 110.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Escobar believed that evangelicalism in Latin America needed to retain its heritage of gospel proclamation in light of the historical realities of liberation theology and the conditions of injustice and poverty.

Escobar revered Stott's attempts at adopting a more holistic mission strategy, and yet he also distinguished himself from Stott's less radical position. Escobar acknowledged that Stott's *Basic Christianity* was a foundational book in his own theological journey.⁴⁸ He further admitted to frequent reading of Stott's *Christian Mission in the Modern World* as a description of missiological debates.⁴⁹ He acknowledged an influential interpretation of the Great Commission from Stott in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task* when he stated,

Here we can find the biblical expositions by John Stott on the Great Commission, especially his exposition of John 20:21 in which Jesus commissions us, but also provides a model: his own way of doing mission. That, in my opinion, was the basis for a decisive shift in evangelical missiology.⁵⁰

While giving Stott credit for the shift in missiology, he also noted differences between their positions. Escobar placed Stott in the position of "post-imperial missiology" that was "characterized by a self-critical and historically-aware stance, in which there is evangelistic passion dynamized and tempered by deep theological and biblical roots."⁵¹ Escobar placed himself as well as Costas and Padilla in "a critical missiology from the periphery" which could be "characterized by a strong hermeneutical bias that insists on the importance of reading the world and reading the Word, even if that reading means a serious and uncomfortable probing into the evangelical heritage."⁵²

⁴⁸Escobar, "Thirty Books that Most Influenced my Understanding of Christian Mission," 112.

⁴⁹Ibid., 113.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Samuel Escobar, "Evangelical Theology in Latin America: The Development of a Missiological Christology," *Missiology* 19 (1991): 328.

⁵²Ibid.

Escobar commended the self-critical views of evangelical missions that had followed Stott's lead. However, he recommended more dialogue between mission streams, with the apparent goal of expanding the influence of those in his own camp.⁵³ In summary, Escobar's understanding of Stott revealed one of Stott's important distinguishing marks—he had learned to listen to others from different theological perspectives.

Ronald Sider. Ronald Sider, like Costas, Padilla, and Escobar, is a fourth self-stated evangelical who warrants examination. He participated in some of the Lausanne meetings and served as professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. At points during his interpretation of the issues of evangelism and social responsibility, Sider appeared to borrow almost exactly from Stott's arguments,⁵⁴ although Sider did not always agree with Stott. The year after Lausanne, in his article "Evangelism, salvation and social justice: definitions and interrelationships," Sider characterized Stott's position as evangelism being part of the church's mission, but not the primary part of the mission of the church.⁵⁵ Sider wrote, "What makes Stott's position significantly different from Graham's, however, is that he refuses to describe evangelism as the primary mission of the church."⁵⁶ Sider misinterpreted Stott's views and may have done so because he was not afforded the benefit of hindsight, which readers today enjoy. Lausanne clearly indicated the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church.⁵⁷ Moreover, Stott

⁵³Ibid., 328-29.

⁵⁴Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993). For example, Sider agreed with Stott concerning his use of mission, 164. Also, Sider argued for vocational specialization as a way to discern how to properly be involved in evangelism and social action, 167. Stott made similar arguments. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 26; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 44-45.

⁵⁵Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships." *International Review of Mission* 64 (1975): 252.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷John R. W. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 32.

clarified his position multiple times in the years following Lausanne remaining comfortable with the language of the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church.

Sider presented a case that evangelism and social action are “equally important, but quite distinct aspects of the total mission of the church.”⁵⁸ Apart from the language of primacy, Sider’s argument is similar to Stott’s concerning the integrality of evangelism and social responsibility in the mission of the church. However, Sider also contended that when Jesus cared for the whole person, he did not distinguish or define a primary command between preaching the gospel and serving the needy.⁵⁹ Sider adopted Stott’s same strategy for connecting evangelism and social responsibility under the person of the Lord Jesus, but at this point of his exploration of the issue, Sider rejected the idea evangelism was primary in the mission of the church.⁶⁰

Sider continued to use Jesus’ ministry of service and compassion as the model for Christian social responsibility. He wrote, “Jesus, surely, is the best illustration of how to communicate the Good News. If anything is clear in Jesus it is that he announces the kingdom by word and deed.”⁶¹ He explained his point further,

Both Jesus’ actions and his words were central to his announcement of the kingdom. Paul explicitly says that he led the Gentiles to faith “by word and deed” (Rom. 15:18-20). A wealthy, uncaring church that shares only words with the starving will rightly fail because its very life denies its message.⁶²

In *Good News and Good Works*, Sider addressed the question of primacy in an extended section. He noted the use of the primary nature of evangelism from the Lausanne

⁵⁸Ibid., 264.

⁵⁹Ronald J. Sider, “Words and Deeds,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 29 (1979): 47.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 159.

⁶²Ibid., 163. Sider immediately followed this statement with an illustration from Stott’s plenary address at Lausanne. Sider regularly adopted and adapted Stott’s views in his own clarifications on these issues.

Covenant and CRESR.⁶³ Sider concluded his argument with a concession of the primacy of evangelism in the relationship with social action. He acknowledged,

Evangelism has a logical priority of Christian social action. Far more important, its outcome—eternal life—is so momentous that nothing in the world can compare with it. But that does not mean that everyone, regardless of vocation, should devote at least 51 percent of his or her time to direct evangelism. Nor does it mean that we must invite the starving to accept Christ before we feed them. But if we truly follow Jesus, then Christian congregations and denominations will enthusiastically devote large amounts of resources to both evangelism and social action.⁶⁴

In Sider's statement on the priority of evangelism, traces of Stott's practical argument exist. The consultation at Pattaya on world evangelization as well as CRESR previously contended that evangelism had a priority because of the eternal nature of its consequences. It appears, in light of Sider's use of Stott as a resource, that Stott's arguments influenced Sider quite significantly.

The preceding exploration of Costas, Padilla, Escobar, and Sider was not intended to show exact cause and effect relationships with Stott's views on the subject of evangelism and social responsibility. Rather, it was intended to underscore the conversation and mutual influence on this important topic. Stott was not immune to influence from other Christian thinkers, and he appreciated the interaction with various theological views, however contentious they could be. Indeed, he thrived in situations where theological concision and clarity were required. Stott was careful not to commit to either the group of Christian thinkers who believed evangelism was the only mandate of Christian mission or the group who believed evangelism included social action. His detailed attention to a broadened view of Christian mission allowed him to plow a central viewpoint. He believed social responsibility and evangelism partnered together within

⁶³Ibid., 165.

⁶⁴Ibid., 171.

Christian mission, but evangelism was primary. Stott's views shaped the conversation on this topic for his contemporary colleagues and those who would follow. Not only did these men continue to think, write, and speak on the topic of mission, but many others read, adopted, and interacted with Stott. His view continues to have contemporary significance. The Christian thinkers explored below display Stott's enduring theological influence.

Stott's Influence on Contemporary Evangelicalism

Stott's books have been widely read by an international audience. As a result, Stott's influence on contemporary evangelicalism cannot be determined with complete certainty.⁶⁵ The remainder of this chapter will explore a sample of contemporary evangelical perspectives directly related to Stott's understanding of the relationship of evangelism and social responsibility in Christian mission.

Christopher J. H. Wright. While Stott certainly influenced individuals impersonally through his fame and writing, he was a humble Christian leader who personally encouraged young leaders. One of Stott's more personal influential relationships was with Christopher J. H. Wright. Stott handpicked Wright to lead the Langham Partnership International, which was the finished product of the trusts Stott designed to extend his international ministry.⁶⁶ Wright's book *The Mission of God* is a theological exploration of God's mission through the pages of Scripture. In the preface

⁶⁵For instance in Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert acknowledge that Stott's reading of John 20:31 concerning the servant manner of Jesus sending his followers to accomplish their mission "has been very influential." Kevin DeYoung, and Gregory D. Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and Social Justice*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 53.

⁶⁶Alistair Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 151.

of the book, Wright noted Stott's personal encouragement and prayers in the project.⁶⁷ An examination of Stott's influence on Wright's *Mission of God* follows.

Wright believes the mission of the church is intricately connected to God's mission in the world. He argues,

Mission, then, in biblical terms, while it inescapably involves us in planning and action, is not *primarily* a matter of our activity and initiative. Mission, from the point of view of our human endeavor, means the committed *participation* of God's people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God's. The marvel is that God invites us to join in.⁶⁸

While the argument in the book is certainly Wright's, he acknowledged Stott's perspective throughout. Immediately following the preceding quotation, Wright cited Stott's own definition of the subject, "Mission arises from the heart of God himself and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God."⁶⁹

Wright grounds Christian mission in the person and character of God. He maintains that God desires "justice, integrity, compassion, care for his creation" in the world including these purposes in his definition of mission.⁷⁰ While Wright draws from Stott's arguments, he broadens his view of mission beyond Stott's position. With Lausanne, Stott argued for the primacy of evangelism within Christian mission. Wright prefers to speak of evangelism as "ultimate" rather than primary.⁷¹ In referencing the mission perspective of Stott and others at Lausanne, he commends their recognition of

⁶⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 18.

⁶⁸Ibid., 67. Italics in original.

⁶⁹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 67. Wright cited from John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 335.

⁷⁰Wright, *The Mission of God*, 319.

⁷¹Ibid.

“holistic mission.”⁷² However, he suggests that the language of priority implies that other things are secondary and less important in mission.⁷³ He further questions the language of priority,

The word *priority* suggests that something has to be your starting point. A priority is whatever is most important or urgent. It is the thing that must get done before anything else. However, a different way of thinking about mission would be to imagine a whole circle of all the needs and opportunities that God calls (or sends) us to address in the world. This is best done when thinking about a local specific context, of course, rather than attempting it globally. One can construct a spider chart in which presenting problems are traced to deeper causes, and they in turn are related to other underlying problems and factors. Eventually a complex web of interconnected factors is discerned, constituting the whole range of brokenness and need, of sin and evil, of suffering and loss that may be found in any given human situation, personal or social. The list of contributing factors will doubtless include those that are spiritual, moral, physical, familial, political, environmental, educational, economic, ethnic, cultural, religious and many more.⁷⁴

Wright broadens the scope of mission and application by rejecting the language of priority, which he connects to the requirement of evangelism as the starting point in mission. Rather, because many other factors may be present in a particular mission context, evangelism must not be termed the priority of mission.

Rather than adopting Stott’s terminology of priority, Wright discusses evangelism as the “ultimate” expression in Christian mission.⁷⁵ Wright would not agree that mission without evangelism is acceptable, but he does not believe evangelism is the priority in mission. He states,

The language of the “priority of evangelism” implies that the only proper starting point must always be evangelistic proclamation. *Priority* means it is the most important, most urgent, thing to be done first and everything else must take second, third or fourth place. But the difficulty with this is that (1) it is not always possible

⁷²Ibid., 316.

⁷³Ibid., 317.

⁷⁴Ibid., 317. Italics in original.

⁷⁵Ibid., 319.

or desirable in the immediate situation, and (2) it does not even reflect the actual practice of Jesus.⁷⁶

Wright appears to be adopting a rather natural conclusion from a broadened mission perspective. Stott was not uncomfortable with holding the language of “primacy” and “partnership” in tension.⁷⁷ However, Wright explained the difficult tension of retaining the language of priority within the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility. Wright’s position on the topic shifts to a logical argument flowing from a broadened perspective on mission. If the church’s mission is holistically understood to include evangelistic and social actions, then prioritizing between the two is difficult. This is one area in which Stott’s broadened definition of mission appears inconsistent and is difficult to maintain.

Wright argues that “*Priority* means it is the most important, most urgent, thing to be done first” and concludes that “priority” assumes that evangelism must happen first in order for it to remain the “priority.” Stott’s argument for primacy did not discuss whether or not evangelism preceded any form of social responsibility. Instead, it pointed to its nature as the most important of the two. Wright’s case for rejecting the “priority” language on the basis of which must happen first is not very strong. Even evangelicals who reject a holistic view of mission would not argue that the preaching of the gospel should precede social responsibility in every mission endeavor. While Wright’s argument is not strong on the point of priority, he naturally developed his broadened perspective of mission beyond Stott’s conception as a logical move from a mission partnership indicating equality rather than priority. Wright credited Stott for the practical point that not every Christian could or should spend every moment in evangelism while

⁷⁶Ibid., 318. Italics in original

⁷⁷John Stott, Draft version of CRESR statement, Lausanne Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College.

devoting no time to concerns of social action.⁷⁸ Wright maintains Stott's argument that the mission of God can only be fulfilled by the people of God as a whole, and not by each individual attempting to do everything.

Wright's work, *The Mission of God*, is clearly an attempt to ground the church's mission in God's redemptive work in the world. Wright expands on similar arguments Stott offered throughout his writing and preaching. While it seems that Wright misapplies the point of Stott's use of "priority" language, he does show the apparent inconsistency between the use of "priority" and "partnership" in relation to evangelism and social responsibility. Wright's work extends beyond Stott's position by creating a broader and less clear perspective on the tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Duane Litfin. Litfin attempts in his book, *Word Versus Deed*, to investigate exegetical data from the Bible regarding the tension between preaching the gospel and living a life of good works. His work is valuable to this dissertation for two reasons. First, although he does not particularly critique Stott's views on this subject, he quotes from Stott's writings parenthetically throughout his book.⁷⁹ Second, Litfin offers an exegetical and theological analysis for relating Christian social responsibility to the issue of evangelism. At the outset, Litfin underscores the truth that the gospel is "verbal" and cannot be "preached" with our lives.⁸⁰ In essence, while living one's life with a social conscience is a biblical necessity, living itself is not the gospel. The gospel must be

⁷⁸Wright, *The Mission of God*, 319. Wright appears to draw from Stott's practical suggestion that fulfilling the mission of God in the world is not only a personal expectation but one that is accomplished by the church as a whole. Stott suggested this idea in *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 26 and its revised version *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 45.

⁷⁹Duane Litfin, *Word Versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 47, 51, 76, 109, 112, 121, 179.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

proclaimed, and it is the vital, eternally significant news to which unbelievers must hear and respond.⁸¹

However, Litfin does argue that the gospel has “implications for our behavior” and should be “incarnated into the concrete details of our lives.”⁸² Litfin’s incarnation language bears resemblance to Stott’s use of John 20:21. Here, Litfin suggests that believers were sent to fulfill their commission and conduct their lives in a “gospel-worthy” manner.⁸³ Litfin takes his argument back to biblical evidence to make specific applications for living a gospel-worthy life in word and deed. He makes these applications by relating the believer’s life to the gospel using five concentric circles.⁸⁴ First, the believer’s personal life must conform to Christ’s commands concerning “the details of our private lives: how we pray, what we do with our money, the purity of our sexual lives, our integrity, our personal godliness, and so on.”⁸⁵ Second, the believer’s family obligations form the “first circle of social” conduct expectations.⁸⁶ Third, Litfin highlights the circle of God’s people as the largest arena of social obligation for the believer.⁸⁷ Indeed, both the Old and New Testament clearly stipulate the community of God’s people as the primary recipients of Scripture passages which highlight the believer’s social responsibility.⁸⁸ The fourth circle is society at large, where Litfin acknowledges the biblical evidence of God’s concern for justice and compassion in

⁸¹Ibid., 199-200.

⁸²Ibid., 83.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 85.

⁸⁶Ibid., 86.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., 87-89.

abstract terms.⁸⁹ However, he confesses, “There is surprisingly little in the Bible that addresses, in equally concrete terms, how believers are to live out these priorities beyond the believing community.”⁹⁰ Fifth, believers have an obligation in the broadest category of natural creation, although specific applications are not addressed with clarity in the Scripture.⁹¹

Litfin affirms that the church’s mission includes both word and deed.⁹² He sees the value in both good works and the verbal witness of the gospel.⁹³ However, Litfin critiques many contemporary advocates for social action, as they fail to observe the biblical mandates for social activity within their context, particularly when it relates to the people of God rather than society at large.⁹⁴ He notes that some argue for social action in the circles of society at large and natural creation when their texts operate in another circle altogether.⁹⁵ Litfin offers a biblical, discerning approach for believers to make a case for engaging in social activity. He writes,

A more legitimate strategy, by contrast, requires more care and hard work. The Bible can indeed be enlisted on the side of caring for human needs beyond the believing community and addressing the sinful structures of our day. But not via proof-texting. A more justifiable strategy requires careful extrapolation from what the Bible actually *does* say to the needs of our contemporary, globalized world. Such an approach requires thoughtful exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological reasoning to build its case, reasoning that must be made explicit rather than merely assumed. Only in this way can its linkages be tested and validated.⁹⁶

⁸⁹Ibid., 90.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., 98.

⁹²Ibid., 138.

⁹³Ibid., 139.

⁹⁴Ibid., 164-66.

⁹⁵Ibid., 164.

⁹⁶Ibid., 166. Italics in original.

Litfin's advice is necessary. One challenge of including social action in Christian mission is finding specific biblical warrants for particular political activities. Rather than make poor arguments by using Scripture out of context, Litfin encourages believers to think biblically and theologically about solutions and applications to contemporary social problems.

Two observations arise from exploring Litfin's discussion of words and deeds related to Stott's thoughts on the subject. First, Litfin, like Stott, comfortably held word and deed in tension. He offers,

Christ's call upon his church claims all of our lives, our *deeds* as well as our *words*. Part of our calling is to love our neighbors and do the works of Christ's kingdom. These good works will not and cannot, replace our verbal witness. Nor are they dispensable. They constitute the essential context in which our verbal witness is heard. They are the nonverbal message the world receives from us, which significantly shapes how they hear our verbal message.⁹⁷

Stott was unafraid to challenge a narrow view of mission by partnering evangelism and social responsibility as Christian duties. He was also unafraid to affirm the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church. Litfin appears equally willing to hold to broad view of Christian mission and accept the tension of word and deed in the life of the believer.

Second, Litfin's paradigm for investigating the biblical evidence for social action presents a helpful critique. Stott faced exegetical and theological complexities by adopting social action as a mandate of Christian mission. He realized if Christians were obligated under the Great Commission to engage sociopolitical issues, they must be prepared to address countless economic, social, political, and spiritual concerns. Some of his later books, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* in its three revisions and *The Contemporary Christian*, attempt to relate Christian theology to social and political

⁹⁷Ibid., 138-39.

issues. Stott himself shared his inadequacy concerning this complex task:

I confess that several times in the course of writing I have been tempted to give up. I have felt now foolish and now presumptuous to attempt such an undertaking. For I am in no sense a specialist in moral theology or social ethics, and I have no particular expertise or experience in some of the fields into which I trespass. Moreover, each topic is complex, has attracted an extensive literature, only some of which I have been able to read, and is potentially divisive, even in a few cases explosive. Yet I have persevered, mainly because what I am venturing to offer the public is not a polished professional piece but a rough-hewn amateur work of an ordinary Christian who is struggling to think Christianly, that is, to apply the biblical revelation to the pressing issues of the day.⁹⁸

Stott's admission and Litfin's paradigm form the foundation for analyzing Stott's theology of social action in the next chapter.

This examination of Stott's influence on contemporary evangelicalism has been far from exhaustive. Other individuals could have been chosen. Other books could have been explored. However, the preceding sample sufficiently displays John Stott's effect on evangelical theology. He was a futurist whose adoption of a broadened view of mission flowed as much from his examination of biblical evidence as it did from his discernment of "the direction in which the majority of global evangelical thinking was moving."⁹⁹ Stott realized that some of his younger evangelical contemporaries were shifting toward holistic views on mission and evangelism, particularly those in the vein of Padilla, Escobar, and Sider.¹⁰⁰ Stott was not a theologian who merely adopted a predominant position. Nor was he a theologian with an insignificant audience. He is recognized, along with Billy Graham, as one of the most influential evangelicals of the twentieth century. For many evangelicals, he legitimized a holistic view of mission. He gave voice to a wing of evangelicalism that was largely silent since the days of the social

⁹⁸Stott, "Preface to the First Edition," in *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, xi.

⁹⁹Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 173.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

gospel. His views on the subjects of mission, evangelism, and social responsibility offer much for contemporary Christian theology. However, his positions also warrant further examination.

CHAPTER 6

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STOTT'S POSITION

Stott's influence as an evangelical leader is formidable. His writings offer insights into controversial theological issues. The combination of his influence and incursion into controversial topics necessitate evaluation of his positions. In this chapter, I will analyze Stott's understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility from three particular angles and offer a summation of the strengths and weaknesses of Stott's position. First, I will evaluate two passages of Scripture Stott used to ground his understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility: John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16. Stott built his partnership understanding of evangelism and social responsibility from the example of Jesus in John 20:21, and used both texts to broaden his understanding of Christian mission. Second, I will analyze Stott's position from a theological standpoint. In doing so, I will explore Stott's theological framework for advancing his understanding of mission, evangelism, and social responsibility. Third, I will analyze the practicality of Stott's prescriptions for Christians engaging sociopolitical issues. Finally, I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Stott's position concerning holistic mission and the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

Exegetical Analysis

Stott's high view of Scripture is part of the reason his opinions are valuable to contemporary evangelicalism. He framed his understanding of preaching and witness on

the authority of Scripture.¹ He also believed that Christians should live in submissive obedience to the Bible as God's authoritative Word.² In a more specific sense, Stott held that the preacher's task was to present God's Word with clarity to contemporary culture. He averred, "With painstaking, meticulous, and conscientious care the Scriptures, the very words of the living God, must be studied and then opened up to others."³ As an evangelical, Stott believed "Christ rules his church through Scripture."⁴ The benefit of Stott's high view of Scripture is that he endeavored to ground his theological positions directly in the text. Stott's understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility illustrates his use of Scripture to expound his theological position on the topic.

Analysis of John 20:21

As explored in chapters 3 and 4, Stott's views on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility shifted significantly. Between his address at the World Congress on Evangelism at Berlin in 1966 and his leadership at Lausanne in 1974, Stott adopted a more holistic approach to Christian mission. This shift in his understanding of mission allowed him to argue for evangelism and social responsibility as partner duties within Christian mission. Stott contended for Christian social ministry from a variety of scriptural texts. He applied Jesus' commands to love God and love others as a basis for Christian social responsibility. However, his primary argument to

¹John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 30.

²John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 173.

³John R. W. Stott, "Christian Ministry in the 21st Century, pt. 3: Christian Preaching in the Contemporary World," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988): 367.

⁴John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity & Faithfulness*, rev. ed., *Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 56.

connect evangelism and social responsibility underneath Christian mission was the version of the Great Commission found in the Gospel of John. John 17:18 (ESV) reads, “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” John 20:21 (ESV) reads, “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’” Stott understood John’s version of the commission to indicate that Jesus had been sent as a servant, and he was sending his disciples out as servants in the world. Although I used this quote in chapter 4, Stott illuminated his point explicitly when he wrote, “Yet it seems that it is in our servant role that we can find the right synthesis of evangelism and social action. For both should be for us, as they undoubtedly were for Christ, authentic expressions of the love that serves.”⁵ He detailed his position further when he argued,

As for Jesus’ example, the most challenging biblical model for mission is the Incarnation. The Son of God did not stay in the safe immunity of His heaven. He emptied Himself of His status and entered into humanity in great humility. He made Himself one with mankind in their frailty and became vulnerable to their temptations and pain. He bore mankind’s sin and died their death. He could not have identified Himself with people more completely than He did.

And yet, in becoming human He never ceased to be divine. It was total identification with humanity but without any loss of identity of deity.

The church’s mission is to be modeled on the Son’s. “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,” Jesus said (John 20:21). So believers are to enter other people’s worlds (which is the implication of incarnation), as Christ entered theirs. That means entering their thought world and the world of their alienation and pain.⁶

Stott indicated that not only must the church follow Jesus in the servant manner of his mission, but also identify with those to whom the church is sent.⁷ Stott emphasized the

⁵John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 39.

⁶John R. W. Stott, “Christian Ministry in the 21st Century, pt. 2: The Church’s Mission in the World.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (1988): 246.

⁷John R. W. Stott, “Great Commission,” *Christianity Today* 12 (1968): 4.

Johannine version of the Great Commission precisely because it provided, at least in his own mind, a substantial biblical basis for elevating social responsibility into a partnership with evangelism in Christian mission. A question follows from Stott's interpretation of the passage. Did the Gospel writer intend 17:18 and 20:21 to articulate a commission that entails service as its manner of fulfillment?

One commentator who finds Stott's argument of identification to be compelling is James Montgomery Boice. Alluding to Stott's sermon on this text preached at the World Congress on Evangelism at Berlin in 1966, Boice agreed with Stott that this version of the commission indicates that Christians are to identify with those to whom they preach.⁸ Nevertheless, Boice did not reference Stott's further elucidation of synthesizing evangelism and social responsibility with mission. Boice emphasized the purpose of Christ's sending as the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of sinners.⁹

Lesslie Newbigin explored the commissioning from John's gospel in its textual setting by noting how Jesus connected their mission to the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ He further stated,

Central to the mission of Jesus was the forgiveness of sin (vs. 23). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was sent "not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (3:17)... As Jesus now sends his disciples, consecrated in the power of the Spirit who is the truth, he solemnly authorizes them to continue his mission as the one who takes away the sin of the world.¹¹

For Newbigin, the stress of the paragraph did not concern the manner in which the

⁸James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, vol. 5, *John 18:1-21:25* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 307.

⁹Ibid., 308.

¹⁰Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 268.

¹¹Ibid., 269.

disciples were sent, but rather the purpose of the sending—the redeeming work of Christ. Christ’s redeeming work is highlighted when reading his sending statement in light of the following verses, which include the gift of the Spirit (v. 22) and the statement on remission of sins (v. 23).

F. F. Bruce noted the connection between the Spirit’s work in Christ’s mission (John 1:32-34; 3:34) and the empowerment for the disciple’s mission by the Spirit from Christ.¹² Bruce also underscored the passage’s emphasis on the preaching of the gospel and the forgiveness of sins.¹³ Significantly, neither Newbigin nor Bruce adopted an interpretation of John 20:21 that featured service as the manner in which the commission is to be obeyed.

William Temple was a commentator with whom Stott was familiar. Temple noted, in his commentary on the passage, that the disciples shared Christ’s apostolic ministry, but would never be equal with Christ in his unique role as the Redeemer sent into the world.¹⁴ Temple summarized the importance of the Great Commission passages:

All accounts of the charge given to the disciples by the Risen Lord agree in its content; they were to go forth to be His witnesses (*St. Luke xxiv, 47, 48; Acts i, 8*), to proclaim the Gospel (*St. Mark xvi, 15*), to make disciples of all the nations (*St. Matthew xxviii, 19*), to continue the Mission of the Incarnation (*St. John xx, 21*). For this purpose they could rely on His presence (*St. Matthew xxviii, 20*) – the power of the Holy Spirit (*Acts i, 8; St. Luke xxiv, 49; St. John xx, 21*).¹⁵

Temple alluded to the idea of the disciples continuing the mission of the incarnation. Although he did not further expound the idea in this particular commentary, Temple’s basic formulation is evident in Stott’s incarnational mission interpretation of John’s version of the commission.

¹²F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 391-92.

¹³*Ibid.*, 392.

¹⁴William Temple, *Readings in St. John’s Gospel* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1952), 385.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 386.

An important facet of this text is the distinction of sending verbs Jesus used. Leon Morris noted that Jesus used the Greek word ἀπέστλχεν for the Father’s sending of the Son and the Greek word πέμπω for the Son’s sending of the disciples.¹⁶ He suggested that the different terms likely had little significance other than ἀπέστλχεν being in the perfect tense which could indicate the completion of Christ’s personal mission on earth.¹⁷ Morris also believed that little should be made of the different terms because in the parallel passage of John 17:18, Jesus used the aorist tense verb ἀποστέλλω for the Son being sent from the Father and the Son sending the disciples.¹⁸ In contrast, G. Campbell Morgan believed the distinction of words was important. He noted that Jesus used ἀποστέλλω concerning himself throughout the Gospel of John emphasizing the delegated authority he had from the Father.¹⁹ He also indicated that Jesus’ use of πέμπω for sending the disciples “stands for dispatch under authority” rather than possessing delegated authority.²⁰ Morgan stressed that the disciples were sent with the power of the Spirit to fulfill their commission.²¹ The lack of consensus concerning ἀπέστλχεν and πέμπω make it difficult to argue the significance of the verb change as a factor in either accepting or rejecting Stott’s interpretation of the commission as service.

In *The Bible Speaks Today* commentary series edited by Stott, Bruce Milne wrote on the Gospel of John. Milne noted the missionary nature of the Trinity with the

¹⁶Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 846.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 846; Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 709.

¹⁹G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell), 319.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 320.

statement of Jesus being sent as he was now sending the disciples.²² Milne stated,

What Jesus has in mind therefore is not a double mission, first Jesus' mission and then afterwards our mission. Rather it is one single action, the great movement of the missionary heart of God sending forth his Son into the world, initially through the incarnation, subsequently through his church. The one mission of God has two phases: the first, that of the Son in his incarnate life; the second, that of the Son in his risen life through his people.²³

The disciple's mission, accompanied by the authority of Jesus, who had fulfilled his own mission, is inherent in Milne's conception.²⁴ Moreover, as Jesus' fulfillment of his mission cost him his life on the cross, so his disciples must expect sacrifice to accomplish their mission.²⁵ Milne did not express Jesus' commission to his disciples in the same servant language Stott used. However, he did recognize that the disciple's mission could not possibly exist outside the nature of Jesus' own mission. Therefore, the mission of Jesus must in some clear fashion become the mission of his followers.

D. A. Carson, in his commentary on John's Gospel, dismissed the incarnational model of mission flowing from Jesus' mission when he wrote,

Use of the phrase *into the world* for the mission of the disciples shows that there is no *necessary* overtone of incarnation or of invasion from another world. Only the broader descriptions of the coming of the Son 'into the world' betray the ontological gap that forever distances the origins of Jesus' mission from the origins of the disciples' mission.²⁶

Carson rejected the overreaching incarnational model of Jesus' mission defining the primary task of the disciples.²⁷ Carson commended Jesus' model of obedience and

²²Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 298.

²³Ibid., 298-89.

²⁴Ibid., 299.

²⁵Ibid., 300.

²⁶D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 566. Italics in original.

²⁷Ibid., 648.

submission to the Father's will as an expectation for the disciples' mission, and even warned against defining the mission task too narrowly.²⁸ Carson emphasized the centrality of Jesus' redemptive work throughout the Gospel of John when he concluded that the main emphasis of the disciples' mission should revolve around the concepts of eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and freedom in Christ.²⁹ Carson's principal interpretation of John 20:21 stressed the eternal and gospel-oriented nature of the Johannine version of the Great Commission, and not its implications for Christian service.

The sampling of commentaries addressing John 20:21 is simply intended to illuminate the distinctiveness of Stott's interpretation of the Johannine version of the Great Commission. Granted, it is not the interpreter's job to merely assent to the majority view concerning a passage of Scripture. However, Stott's interpretation of mission as incarnational service appears rather unique. In its uniqueness, the burden of proof fell on Stott to make a clear case for his divergent viewpoint. Regarding John 20:21, Stott did not clearly establish his interpretation as the preferred or even most accurate one. Stott seemed to assume his interpretation rather than carefully exegete it. In one sense, Stott is to be commended for attempting to synthesize his view of evangelism and social responsibility with Scripture. In so doing, he acknowledged his submission to scriptural authority. When reviewing his interpretation of mission as service, he appeared to be more concerned with finding synthesis for his theological paradigm than finding the clear meaning of the text.

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, in their book *What is the Mission of the Church?*, somewhat conceded to Stott's understanding of incarnational mission when

²⁸Ibid., 648-49.

²⁹Ibid., 649. In making this claim, Carson referenced the following verses in the Gospel of John that particularly highlight the central themes of forgiveness and new life: John 1:12-13 (children of God); 3:16 (eternal life); 8:34-36 (freedom from the slavery of sin); 20:23 (forgiveness and retention of sins in the immediate context of the passage); and 20:30-31 (John's purpose statement for the Gospel).

they stated, “It is very popular to assume that missions is always incarnational. And of course on one level it is. We go and live among the people. We try to emulate the humility and sacrifice of Christ.”³⁰ While they commended Stott’s incarnational reading, they did not accept the conclusion of his argument that Jesus’ mission was meeting “human need, whether spiritual or physical.”³¹ They believed Jesus’ mission concerned redemption, not service. They argued, “The mission of Jesus is not service broadly conceived, but the *proclamation* of the gospel through teaching, the *corroboration* of the gospel through signs and wonders, and the *accomplishment* of the gospel in death and resurrection.”³² DeYoung and Gilbert correctly emphasized the disciples’ role as representative and witness bearing.³³

DeYoung and Gilbert relied on Andreas Köstenberger’s *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*.³⁴ Köstenberger explored in detail John’s understanding of the mission of Jesus and the disciples. He tied the disciple’s mission as given in John 17:18 and 20:21 to Jesus’ mission in light of the “sender/sent” relationship.³⁵ Köstenberger detailed four foundational principles that reflect Jesus’ mission:

(1) bringing glory and honor to the sender; (2) doing the sender’s will, working his works, and speaking his words; (3) witnessing to the sender and representing him accurately; and (4) knowing the sender intimately, living in close relationship with

³⁰Kevin DeYoung and Gregory D. Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and Social Justice*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 53.

³¹*Ibid.*, 54. In this claim, DeYoung and Gilbert cited Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 24.

³²DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 56. Italics in original.

³³*Ibid.*, 57.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 54-55.

³⁵Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 191.

the sender and following his example. All these aspects of what one sent is required to be and do, are applicable to the disciples as they are sent by Jesus.³⁶

Köstenberger noted the important shift between Jesus sending his disciples to follow his commission as he had been sent by and followed his heavenly Father.³⁷ He also connected the mission of the disciples directly to the death of Jesus by asserting, “Jesus’ mission is unique, irreplaceable, and fundamental for the church’s mission. His sacrifice makes the disciples’ mission possible. Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection form an integral part of the disciple’s mission.”³⁸ Thus, Köstenberger identified the disciples’ mission with the passion narrative rather than Jesus’ incarnation.³⁹ Köstenberger critiqued Stott’s incarnational interpretation of John 17:18 and 20:21.⁴⁰ He wrote,

Both 17:18 and 20:21-23 indicate that these dimensions of Jesus’ mission are to continue in the disciples’ mission. The disciples are to bear witness to Jesus in an evil, hostile world (cf. also 15:27) and to pronounce forgiveness or retain people’s sins in continuation of Jesus’ mission (cf. 20:23). The notion of the disciples’ mission as a “service to humanity” founded on the model of Jesus’ mission appears, contrary to Stott’s assertions, to be inconsistent with the Fourth Gospel’s teaching on mission. A focus on human service and on human need, though often characteristic of contemporary mission practice, is not presented in the Fourth Gospel as the primary purpose of either Jesus’ or the disciples’ mission.⁴¹

Köstenberger identified Jesus’ incarnation as a unique aspect of his mission not to be replicated by the disciples, and thereby he contradicted Stott’s interpretation.⁴² Rather than identify with Jesus in his incarnation, the disciples’ mission follows Jesus’ model of “obedience and utter dependence” in his relationship with his sender, the Father.⁴³

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 195.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 212-17.

⁴¹Ibid., 215.

⁴²Ibid., 216.

⁴³Ibid., 217.

Therefore, Jesus is the mission model for his disciples, but not in Stott's incarnational service interpretation. This exploration of Stott's interpretation of John 20:21 indicates that his argument concerning the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility fails to deal justly with the context and purpose of John's Gospel. This undermining of Stott's incarnational service model for Christian mission significantly deteriorates one of his foundational pillars for understanding the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility.

Analysis of Matthew 5:13-16

Stott used Matthew 5:13-16 and Jesus' command for his followers to be salt and light as a biblical foundation for exploring the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. The passage follows:

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (ESV)

In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Stott advocated the use of the salt and light metaphors as a means of explaining the relationship between evangelism and social action in Christian mission. He wrote,

Putting the two metaphors together, it seems legitimate to discern in them the proper relation between evangelism and social action in the total mission of Christ in the world—a relation which perplexes many believers today. We are called to be both salt and light to the secular community.⁴⁴

Stott described Christian responsibility to be salt in terms of penetrating the world for the

⁴⁴John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 65.

purpose of preventing decay.⁴⁵ He applied this illustration to Christians speaking out against sins and injustice.⁴⁶ He also believed the salt metaphor implied Christian engagement of social issues when he argued,

However small our part may be, we cannot opt out of seeking to create better social structures, which guarantee justice in legislation and law enforcement, the freedom and dignity of the individual, civil rights for minorities and the abolition of social and racial discrimination. We should neither despise these things nor avoid our responsibility for them. They are part of God's purpose for his people. Whenever Christians are conscientious citizens, they are acting like salt in the community.⁴⁷

After making the case for Christian social involvement with the illustration of salt, Stott interpreted the illustration of light as proclaiming the message of the gospel. He contended, "For the truth of the gospel is the light," albeit the space devoted to Christians being light in the world was a brief paragraph compared to the two pages he penned arguing for Christians to be salt.⁴⁸ He believed these two responsibilities of salt and light should be practiced together. He wrote,

So then, we should never put our two vocations to be salt and light, our Christian social and evangelistic responsibilities, over against each other as if we had to choose between them. We should not exaggerate either, nor disparage either, at the expense of the other. Neither can be a substitute for the other. The world needs both. It is bad and needs salt; it is dark and needs light. Our Christian vocation is to be both. Jesus Christ said so, and that should be enough.⁴⁹

Stott clearly identified these metaphors as a biblical solution to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. It appears though that Stott argued for more in this illustration than he could prove. A sampling of commentaries follows, which will help interpret the passage.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 65-66.

⁴⁷Ibid., 67.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his classic work *Discipleship*, explored and applied the Sermon on the Mount to the daily Christian life. He understood believers as the salt of the earth related to the character they were to display through the beatitudes.⁵⁰

Bonhoeffer poignantly declared,

Now they are described using the image of the most indispensable commodity on earth. They are the salt of the earth. They are the noblest asset, the highest value the world possesses. Without them the earth can no longer survive. The earth is preserved by salt; the world lives because of these poor, ignoble, and weak people, whom the world rejects It penetrates the entire earth. It is the earth's substance. Thus, the disciples are focused not only on heaven, but are reminded of their mission on earth. As those bound to Jesus alone are they sent to the earth, whose salt they are. When Jesus calls his disciples "the salt," instead of himself, this transfers his efficacy on the earth to them. He brings them into his work.⁵¹

Bonhoeffer did not relate the salt metaphor with political or social specificity.⁵² Rather, he viewed both metaphors of salt and light in view of Christian discipleship which embraces the visibility of Christ's cross.⁵³ He believed the disciples' good works were further evidence of the cross and the resurrection pointing people to God himself.⁵⁴

Bonhoeffer highlighted the community aspect of these metaphors because he believed the works of God's people influenced the world, and therefore displayed the very power of the cross.⁵⁵ In this sense, his understanding of the metaphors emphasized the gospel.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a contemporary of Stott, wrote the influential *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. Lloyd-Jones thought the salt metaphor related to the character

⁵⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 110.

⁵¹Ibid., 111.

⁵²Ibid., 111-12.

⁵³Ibid., 113-14.

⁵⁴Ibid., 114.

⁵⁵Ibid.

of the believer in contrast to the rotten nature of the world.⁵⁶ Lloyd-Jones contended that one of the believer's fundamental functions in the world was "to prevent putrefaction."⁵⁷ In an important sense, Lloyd-Jones understood the salt metaphor differently than Stott. Rather than linking the salt metaphor to the church as a whole, Lloyd-Jones argued that Christians were to act individually as the salt of the earth.⁵⁸ Lloyd-Jones believed the church's primary function was evangelism and not pronouncing judgments on particular issues within culture, society, or politics.⁵⁹ While the individual Christian should actively participate in these pronouncements and tasks, the church should remain focused on evangelism. He summarized,

That is the way in which we can act as salt in the earth at a time like this. It is not something to be done by the Church in general; it is something to be done by the individual Christian. It is the principle of cellular infiltration. Just a little salt can affect the great mass. Because of its essential quality it somehow or another permeates everything.⁶⁰

Lloyd-Jones understood the light metaphor to imply the utter darkness in the world and Christians existing as the illuminating cure.⁶¹ Lloyd-Jones believed Jesus was the light of the world and that the Lord taught in this metaphor that Christians must illuminate the world by preaching the gospel.⁶² Referring to Matthew's statement in 4:16 that people living in darkness saw a great light, Lloyd-Jones wrote, "The coming of Christ and the gospel is so fundamental that it can be put in that way; and the first effect of His coming

⁵⁶D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 150-51.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 154-55.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 158.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 162-63.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 164-65.

into the world is that He has exposed the darkness of the life of the world.”⁶³ For Lloyd-Jones, Christians are the salt of the earth before they act as the light of the gospel among unbelievers in the world.⁶⁴

In his commentary on Matthew, Craig Blomberg discussed the idea of preservation in the salt metaphor and the idea of spiritual illumination in the light metaphor.⁶⁵ Blomberg did not expound on the specific applications of the metaphors for the Christian life with the same certainty employed by Stott. He wrote,

Both metaphors of salt and light raise important questions about Christian involvement in society regarding all forms of separation and withdrawal. We are not called to control secular power structures; neither are we promised that we can Christianize the legislation and values of the world. But we must remain active preservative agents, indeed irritants, in calling the world to heed God’s standards. We dare not form isolated Christian enclaves to which the world pays no attention.⁶⁶

Blomberg’s statement recognized that believers may participate in the political process, but must not expect the complete legislation of Christian principles in a secular society. While believers may have some influence in the sociopolitical arena, attempting to create a political kingdom of God on earth is beyond the scope of Christian mission.

When referencing the salt metaphor, Craig Keener addressed the “valueless” nature of the believer who fails to have genuine commitment.⁶⁷ Keener considered the metaphors indicative of the Christian’s genuine nature in the world as opposed to their activities in the world.⁶⁸ Rather than emphasize the social implications of believers as

⁶³Ibid., 165.

⁶⁴Ibid., 164-65.

⁶⁵Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 102-03.

⁶⁶Ibid., 103.

⁶⁷Craig Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 109.

⁶⁸Ibid.

salt, Keener highlighted the significance of the light metaphor when he writes, “Jesus depicts his disciples’ mission in stark biblical terms for the mission of Israel. God called his people to be lights to the nations (for example, Is 42:6; 49:6) – that is, the whole world (compare Mt 18:7).”⁶⁹ Keener emphasized the believer’s responsibility to illuminate with the gospel “in their various neighborhoods and occupations.”⁷⁰ For Keener, the believer is responsible in the world, but his main influence is the spread of the gospel in his activities.⁷¹

John MacArthur noted the preserving influence of Christians as salt where they are to “retard moral and spiritual spoilage.”⁷² MacArthur believed the church is one of God’s restraining influences, hindering unabated evil.⁷³ He also explored the connection of the two metaphors as they relate to Christian responsibility. MacArthur wrote,

Whereas salt is hidden, light is obvious. Salt works secretly, while light works openly. Salt works from within, light from without. Salt is more the indirect influence of the gospel, while light is more direct communication. Salt works primarily through our living while light works primarily through what we teach and preach. Salt is largely negative. It can retard corruption, but it cannot change corruption into incorruption. Light is more positive. It not only reveals what is wrong and false but helps produce what is righteous and true.⁷⁴

MacArthur’s explanation of the salt and light metaphor stresses the believer’s direct and indirect roles of engagement in the world. MacArthur does not apply the metaphors as specifically as Stott.⁷⁵

⁶⁹Ibid., 109-10.

⁷⁰Ibid., 110.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 243.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 244.

⁷⁵Ibid.

What is to be gained after exploring this commentary sample? First, Stott's understanding of Christian preventative influence in the world is not unique. Other commentators have understood the salt of the earth metaphor in this fashion. Second, the common interpretation for believers being the light of the world is their role as gospel communicators. Again, Stott's views are not unique. In a foundational sense, Stott's interpretation of Matthew 5:13-16 is more exegetically solid than his interpretation of John 20:21. However, Stott's applications from the passage merit examination.

Lloyd-Jones distinguished between the church and the individual in the salt metaphor.⁷⁶ This difference between Lloyd-Jones' view and Stott's interpretation warrants further consideration. Stott might find this distinction artificial by arguing that the metaphor indicates both the individual and the church that have social responsibilities. While neither author makes this reference, the original Greek pronoun for "you" is ὑμεῖς, which is plural. It is difficult then to accept Lloyd-Jones' explanation that believers, in an individual rather than corporate sense, are to be the salt of the earth.

However, difficulty remains with Stott's application of the salt of the earth reference. Certainly, Christians are to be a preventative influence in the world. Nevertheless, it is not clear that when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, he intended it to be applied in the sociopolitical arena in mind the same way Stott suggested. It is possible that Lloyd-Jones distinguished between the particular function of the church and the individual because sociopolitical implications are not clear from the text.⁷⁷ His interpretation would be a helpful corrective to Stott if the second person pronoun were not plural. Stott's interpretation of Matthew 5:13-16 is partially shaded by his motivation to find evangelism and social action in a particular text. While the basis of Stott's

⁷⁶Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 154-55.

⁷⁷Ibid.

interpretation of the metaphors is accurate, his applications appear to extend beyond the clearly indicated thrust of the text. Stott should have hedged the applications for Christians as salt of the earth. One major reason is that the first disciples did not understand social action a specific part of their Christian mission.⁷⁸ One might wonder whether Stott found a text that on its surface appeared to provide a solution to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility and interpreted it to solve the dilemma.⁷⁹

What is to be made of this exegetical analysis? Stott sought out Scriptures to ground his understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. In his interpretation of John 20:21 and the Johannine version of the Great Commission, Stott argued for more than the text teaches. Jesus' modeled mission in the Gospel of John underscored the disciples' responsibility to obey and depend on God, not to become incarnational servants and broaden the implications of Christian mission.⁸⁰ In his interpretation of Matthew 5:13-16, Stott interpreted the passage accurately, but applied it with greater sociopolitical implications than the salt metaphor itself suggests. On this basis, it appears that Stott allowed the desire to reconcile a theological tension to shape his interpretation of the Scripture. Specifically, Stott's interpretations of John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16 were based upon a theological framework rather than in depth exegetical analysis. Because of his evangelical commitment, he attempted to keep

⁷⁸Ibid., Lloyd-Jones notes that Paul did not engage in political commentary or seek to address social issues. He states that social action is not found in the activity of the church in the New Testament.

⁷⁹Another possible influence concerning Stott's application of Matt 5:13-16 might be his desire to interpret the Bible in its historical context and apply it in a contemporary context. He presented this approach to Scripture in his text on preaching, *Between Two Worlds*. Stott's basic interpretation of Matt 5:13-16 is clearly more established than his views on John 20:21. However, Stott chose to apply Jesus' metaphor of salt and light with specific implications for socio-political action. The problem, it appears, is that Stott stretched the application further than the original text warranted. This might simply be his attempt at practicing the interpretive and communicative approach to Scripture he had argued for in *Between Two Worlds*.

⁸⁰Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*, 217; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 648-49.

his theological views biblical. However, because Stott was personally vested in balancing the tension between evangelism and social responsibility, he interpreted the previous passages through the lens of holistic Christian mission. Approaching Scripture with a theological lens can create a biased interpretation of a passage. As a result, Stott's biblical basis for resolving the tension between evangelism and social responsibility underneath Christian mission is marginalized. This conclusion leads directly to a critical analysis of Stott's theological paradigm for understanding the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

Theological Analysis

Stott's understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility is an exercise in balancing a theological tension. Although the above passages of Scripture did not state the case for Stott's position as strongly as he had hoped, Stott's arguments were based on more than specific Scripture passages. In his work, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, Stott presented a theological framework drawn from Scripture to which he fastened his belief in Christian social responsibility.

Broad Doctrinal Themes

As Stott considered social responsibility, he believed the overarching themes of Scripture made a case for Christian involvement in the world. The themes Stott used to build this framework were the doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, and the church.⁸¹ By applying these five biblical doctrines, Stott drew out implications for Christian social action. For example, he reminded his readers that God ruled “nature as well as religion,” that he “is the God of the nations as well as of his covenant people,”

⁸¹John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, UK: Marshalls, 1984), 14-25; John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 49-59.

and that he “is the God of justice as well as justification.”⁸² Because Stott believed God’s interests in the world were all encompassing, he held that Christian concern should be “as broad as his.”⁸³

Concerning humanity, Stott noted that man being created in God’s image gave him intrinsic worth.⁸⁴ Scripture understands humanity as a whole with spiritual, physical, and social qualities.⁸⁵ He wrote concerning why Christians historically have engaged in all forms of social responsibility:

Because the Christian doctrine of man, male and female, all made in the image of God, though all also fallen. Because people matter. Because every man, woman and child has an intrinsic, inalienable value as a human being. Once we see this, we shall both set ourselves to liberate people from everything dehumanizing and count it a privilege to serve them, to do everything in our power to make human life more human.⁸⁶

Stott argued that a view of humanity created in God’s image necessitated a Christian social conscience. Being socially responsible is one way Christians can exhibit their high view of humanity.

The next doctrine Stott used to ground Christian social responsibility was the doctrine of Christ. Stott maintained that Christian service was based on Christ’s model of service in his incarnation, as he advocated from John 20:21. Because Stott’s statement on the topic was explored in the exegetical analysis, it will not be rehearsed here. It is

⁸²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 15-18; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 49-52.

⁸³Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 18; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 52.

⁸⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 18; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 52-53.

⁸⁵Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 18-19; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 53.

⁸⁶Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 20; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 54.

sufficient to note that Stott believed Jesus modeled compassion and love as a basis for Christian social responsibility.⁸⁷

Stott also used the doctrine of salvation to make his case for greater social concern. By connecting salvation to the Kingdom of God, he presented a case for a broader application of salvation.⁸⁸ He considered the Kingdom of God to be God’s rule, “confronting, combating, and overcoming evil, spreading wholeness of personal and community wellbeing, taking possession of his people in total blessing and total demand.”⁸⁹ Stott did not only use the controversial theological topic of the Kingdom of God to connect salvation and social responsibility. He also believed Jesus’ lordship in the life of the believer and the requirement to link faith and good works in sanctification formed a basis for Christian social activity.⁹⁰

The final doctrine Stott employed to argue for greater Christian social work was the doctrine of the church. Stott believed the church had a “double identity” to be “holy” in the sense of separation for God’s purposes, and “worldly” in the sense of where the church is to engage in its activity.⁹¹ Stott adapted his argument from Matthew 5:13-16 to make his case for Christian social responsibility.⁹² Stott supposed that the doctrine of the church and its mission in the world revolved around this tension of holiness and

⁸⁷Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 21-22; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 54-55.

⁸⁸Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 23; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 56.

⁸⁹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 23; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 56.

⁹⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 23-24; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 57.

⁹¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 24; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 58.

⁹²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 24-25; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 58-59.

worldliness.⁹³ He summarized concerning these doctrines and Christian social engagement, “These five doctrines constitute the biblical basis for mission, for both evangelistic and social responsibility. They lay upon us an obligation to be involved in the life of the world.”⁹⁴

Stott believed these doctrines formed a theological framework that necessitated the inclusion of Christian social responsibility with evangelism in the mission of the church. Stott did not stray too far when he commended these doctrines as foundations for social involvement. He is correct to point out that God is concerned with issues of justice in the world, that human dignity and worth are found in the doctrine of the *imago dei*, that Christ’s service gives the believer a model to follow, that salvation includes sanctification and a life of service, and that the church is both a ‘holy’ and ‘worldly’ institution. Stott’s argument encounters problems when he connects the implications of these doctrines to Christian mission. Stott joined these doctrinal conclusions concerning social engagement to the textual arguments he made for Christian mission from John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16.⁹⁵ These specific texts are seminal to Stott’s argument on holistic mission. If they do not say as much as Stott argued, then a significant foundation for his theology of social engagement is crippled. Without the foundation of Stott’s understanding of John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16, Christian social action is subordinated underneath more explicit commands of the Great Commission. These doctrines do indeed present a biblical case for Christian social action in the world. Stott correctly argued that believers have biblical warrant for living a socially engaged life. The difficulty with Stott’s approach is that that he understood social engagement as a

⁹³Stott, “Christian Ministry in the 21st Century, pt. 2: The Church’s Mission in the World,” 246-47; Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 245.

⁹⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 25.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 21, 25; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 55, 58.

distinct part of Christian mission. Stott argued for a position not warranted by the biblical data.

After exploring the above five basic doctrines, Stott detailed a strategy for applying theology to Christian social action. He noted the complex nature of social issues affecting the world and suggested that Christians must consider these issues in light of biblical truth.⁹⁶ He admonished the adoption of the fourfold framework of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation as an overarching approach to Scripture and social responsibility.⁹⁷ Stott related the complex issues of social concern and Christian responsibility to this theological model.⁹⁸ He applied this fourfold framework in three particular ways: the reality of God, the human condition, and the possibility of social change.⁹⁹ The Christian must, in his thinking and purpose, recognize the authority of God in order to give him glory.¹⁰⁰ Stott noted the paradox found in mankind when he wrote, “We can behave like God in whose image we were made, only to descend to the level of beasts. We are able to think, create, love and worship, but also to refuse to think, to choose evil, to destroy, to hate, and to worship ourselves.”¹⁰¹ Using these foundations of a biblical view of God and humanity, Stott believed society could be influenced for good.

⁹⁶Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 31; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 59.

⁹⁷Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 34-36; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 62-64.

⁹⁸Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 35-36; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 64.

⁹⁹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 36-42; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 64-68.

¹⁰⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 37-38; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 66.

¹⁰¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 38; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 66-67.

The possibility of social change is the third application Stott made underneath his fourfold theological framework.¹⁰² In this section, Stott recognized the tendencies of “liberal” Christians and “evangelical” Christians.¹⁰³ He critiqued the liberals for focusing almost entirely on social activities and the evangelicals for engaging minimally in social activity.¹⁰⁴ He summarized on the possibility of genuinely affecting social change,

Because human beings are made in the image of God, and the divine image (though marred) has not been wholly lost, they retain some perception of the just and compassionate society which would please him, and some desire to bring it about. On the whole, all humankind still prefers peace to war, justice to oppression, harmony to discord, order to chaos. So social change is possible, and indeed has happened. In many parts of the world we can see rising standards of hygiene and health care, a greater respect for women and children, the increasing availability of education, a clearer recognition of human rights, a growing concern to conserve the natural environment, and better conditions in mines, factories and prisons. Much of this has been due (directly or indirectly) to Christian influence, although by no means have all social reformers been committed Christians. But whenever God’s people have been effective as salt and light in the community, there has been less social decay and more social uplift.¹⁰⁵

Stott highlighted the history and even nature of Christian social reform in the world. He is correct to point out the effective nature of Christian influence in the world. In fact, Stott’s use of a theological framework to ground Christian social action is one of his better arguments on the subject. By exploring the Scripture holistically, Stott noted important aspects of theology that necessitate Christian social involvement.

Stott’s use of doctrines and a theological framework to ground Christian social action was a thoughtful solution to the tension between evangelism and social

¹⁰²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 41; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 67.

¹⁰³Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 41; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 67.

¹⁰⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 41; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 67.

¹⁰⁵Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 41; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 67-68.

responsibility. Duane Litfin prescribed a similar methodology when he advocated working through various theological themes to build a theology of social action.¹⁰⁶ He wrote,

In previous chapters we examined five useful lines of biblical thought: godly wisdom, neighbor love, kingdom building, adorning the gospel, and stewardship of creation. All of these abstract themes are the outworking of a still higher insight focused on the nature of God and his general will for creation: he is a God of love, mercy, and justice who is redeeming the entire created order, and he wills humans to emulate him in all of their relationships. Our challenge is to work our way down the ladder as we attempt to tease out what such emulation requires at ground level.

The difficulty with this strategy, of course, is that, as noted above, such moves down the ladder inevitably introduce elements of uncertainty and even controversy. Every such move requires presuppositions others may question; it involves building a structure of thought, not all of which may be equally compelling. And the more specific we are, the more evident this becomes. Blind spots work their magic so that a concern for individual issues, for example, may eclipse corporate concerns, or vice versa. The entire process lies vulnerable to our human frailty. Yet it has this to be said for it. However this interpretational move down the ladder is managed, well or poorly, those who attempt it demonstrate at least this virtue: they are refusing to make their biblical case on the basis of a tissue of decontextualized proof-texts.¹⁰⁷

Litfin's paradigm serves to critique and commend Stott. While it appears that Stott used John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16 as proof-texts for holistic mission and the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, he was not content to leave his argument at the mercy of those texts. Rather, he thoughtfully, and helpfully attempted to build a case for social responsibility from the broad themes and theological framework of Scripture. As Litfin noted, that project may not be incontrovertibly clear to every Christian thinker, but at least it displays a deeper level of theological consideration. Stott's theological arguments for the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility reveal his convictions that Christians have evangelistic and social duties. These arguments are biblically grounded and do make a strong case for Christian social

¹⁰⁶Duane Litfin, *Word Versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 166.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 166-67.

responsibility. They do not, however, suggest that social action and evangelism are partner duties inside of Christian mission. For Stott's position on the subject to be validated, he needed a textual and theological basis for the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility. While the theological case can be made, Stott's interpretation of John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16 fall short of what Stott wished as the final biblical statement on the subject. After this exegetical and theological analysis, we are left with a critique and a commendation. Stott's exegetical work on the above two passages lacks certainty, but his theological perspective reveals a thoughtful and biblical argument for Christian social action. Before advancing to an analysis of the practicality of Stott's prescriptions, another of Stott's theological positions requires analysis—his tentative views on annihilation.

Stott's Views on Annihilation

The inclusion of Stott's theological position concerning the ultimate fate of the wicked is an odd, but illustrative discussion in the context of his theological framework. As with his views on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, Stott attempted to find a biblical foundation for his position concerning the final destiny of the wicked. Furthermore, Stott's view on this particular theological issue displayed his willingness to adopt a controversial position while remaining a self-proclaimed evangelical.

Stott confessed his position on the destiny of the wicked in *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* written with David Edwards. Referring to the concept of conscious eternal torment, Stott wrote,

Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterising their feelings or cracking under the strain. But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it. As a committed Evangelical,

my question must be—and is—not what does my heart tell me, but what does God’s word say?¹⁰⁸

Stott made his case for annihilation related to four arguments.¹⁰⁹ First, he suggested the language of destruction indicated the punishment of the wicked ended in complete destruction.¹¹⁰ Second, while Stott conceded the eternal nature of the imagery of fire, he reasoned that “it would be very odd if what is thrown into it proves to be indestructible.”¹¹¹ Third, Stott believed the biblical view of justice might indicate that eternal punishment exceeded the grievousness of the wrong committed.¹¹² Fourth, he suggested, “that the eternal existence of the impenitent in hell would be hard to reconcile with the promises of God’s final victory over evil, or with the apparently universalistic texts which speak of Christ drawing all men to himself.”¹¹³ Stott alleged that the punishment of the impenitent is eternal, but the nature of that punishment either conscious torment or annihilation is not clear from the Scripture.¹¹⁴ Stott concluded this section by hedging his views,

I do not dogmatise about the position to which I have come. I hold it tentatively. But I do plead for frank dialogue among Evangelicals on the basis of Scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.¹¹⁵

Stott’s views as discussed in *Evangelical Essentials* ignited controversy and debate throughout evangelicalism. For example, John Piper in his book *Let the Nations*

¹⁰⁸David L. Edwards and John R. W. Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 315.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 315-16. Stott referenced Matt 10:28 and Jas 4:12.

¹¹¹Ibid., 316. Stott referenced Matt 5:22; 18:8-9; 25:41 and Rev 20:14-15.

¹¹²Ibid., 318. Stott referenced Rev 20:12 and Ex 21:23-25.

¹¹³Ibid., 319. Stott referenced John 12:32; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; Phil 2:10-11 and 1 Cor 15:28.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 317.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 320.

Be Glad, critiqued Stott's views on annihilation.¹¹⁶ Due to the controversy, Stott wrote a brief statement which he circulated privately in various letters to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues in an attempt to clarify his understanding of the issue.¹¹⁷ In his statement, Stott affirmed his belief in the wrath of God upon evil and sin.¹¹⁸ Upholding God's abiding wrath on sin was not new for Stott. In his work *The Cross of Christ*, he contended that in light of God's holiness and divine wrath against sin, unbelievers would hear "the most terrible of all words: 'Depart from me' (eg. Mt. 7:23; 25:41)."¹¹⁹ He further argued,

When, on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely "hell-deserving sinners," then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before.¹²⁰

Stott had no trouble admitting the holiness of God and the deserved punishment for human sin. Indeed, one of his major arguments in *The Cross of Christ*, is that Jesus, in his substitutionary atonement on the cross, took God's divine wrath in place of the sinner.¹²¹

In light of Stott's scriptural position concerning divine wrath against sin, his position on annihilation was not one where he intentionally mitigated sin or even the punishment on sin. He clarified,

¹¹⁶John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 111-20.

¹¹⁷John R. W. Stott, "A Statement about Eternal Punishment," marked "(For private circulation only - Not for publication)," April 1993, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 109.

¹²⁰Ibid., 111.

¹²¹Ibid., 147-52.

What Scripture teaches I believe (although with tears), namely the wrath of God on evil, the torment of the unsaved during the intermediate state between death and resurrection (Luke 16:24-28), and the fearful “weeping and gnashing of teeth” when the judgment is pronounced and the unsaved learn their fate. I also affirm, as strongly I think as anyone, that “it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). And I believe in “eternal punishment” (Mt. 25:26). The debate 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.¹²²

Stott’s view, then, was not merely optimistic concerning the eternal destiny of the wicked. He acknowledged God’s wrath and punishment. He believed he was biblical even in this tenet of his theology. He pointed to Malachi 4:1 and Matthew 3:12, where he held the “imagery of fire” and the “language of destruction” to naturally “suggest annihilation rather than torment.”¹²³ He thought he was expressing a view within the scriptural framework, which he believed was a hallmark of evangelicalism.¹²⁴ He also admitted to holding this position tentatively for approximately fifty years.¹²⁵ In addition, related to his views on annihilation and evangelism, he confessed, “Belief in the ultimate annihilation of the unsaved does not cut the nerve of my missionary commitment. As far as I know, it has not affected my own zeal for evangelism. The greatest incentive for evangelism is concern for the glory of Christ.”¹²⁶ Stott stated that he was “agnostic,” concerning the annihilation of the wicked.¹²⁷ He believed dogmatism related to this particular issue was not warranted because variant interpretations were plausible.¹²⁸

¹²²Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment.”

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment”; John Stott to John Piper, March 1, 1993, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library; also noted by Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 120.

John Piper clearly disagreed with Stott concerning the destiny of the wicked and suggested the biblical data indicated eternal destruction.¹²⁹ He argued that the various texts which suggest destruction (Matt 10:28 and Luke 12:4-5) can be understood as “ruin,” “lose,” “perish,” or “get rid of,” but do “not imply” annihilation.¹³⁰ Piper further contended that Jesus’ proclamation in Matthew 25:41 concerning eternal fire for the goats as well as eternal torment found in Revelation 14:10 and 21:8 show the “eternal” nature of divine punishment.¹³¹ In critiquing Stott’s position, Piper offered Stott the opportunity to clarify his views.¹³² Piper humbly acknowledged Stott’s role as a mentor in his own life and published a portion of Stott’s reply in a footnote.¹³³ He thanked Stott for his clarification and clearly noted Stott’s “tentative” position.¹³⁴

Millard Erickson, in *Christian Theology*, highlighted the adjectives, “everlasting,” “eternal,” and “forever” as used in relation to the “future state of the wicked.”¹³⁵ In particular, Erickson noted the importance of Jesus’ parallel statements in Matthew 25:46 where the righteous are sent to eternal life and the wicked to eternal punishment.¹³⁶ Commenting on the same text, Michael Horton posited, “If it is generally assumed that ‘eternal life’ means unending conscious joy, then it would seem that annihilationists bear the burden of proof in treating ‘eternal punishment’ as otherwise in

¹²⁹Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 117.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid., 117-20.

¹³²Ibid., 120.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴John Piper to John Stott, March 12, 1993, John R. W. Stott Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London: Lambeth Palace Library.

¹³⁵Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1246.

¹³⁶Ibid.

duration.”¹³⁷ In a summary sentence, Erickson stated that the annihilation of the wicked is contradictory to the scriptural evidence.¹³⁸

What conclusions can be drawn from Stott’s tentative position concerning annihilation? First, Stott believed himself to be an evangelical throughout the controversy. He commented that “One scholar has referred to me as that ‘erstwhile evangelical’.”¹³⁹ As noted previously, Stott connected his evangelicalism not to a certain set of dogmatic positions, but to his willingness to submit to scriptural teaching.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it is not helpful to marginalize Stott’s evangelicalism in light of his views on annihilation. As with John 20:21, his interpretation of the scriptural evidence may not be correct, but he nevertheless sought to ground his views on the Bible. The course of his life and ministry displayed a commitment to the Scriptures, evangelism, and the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Though I agree with Piper, Erickson, and Horton against Stott on this issue, his honest admission concerning a theological question in his own mind is refreshing.

Second, Stott’s self-assessed tentativeness on this issue should be taken at face value. Stott was not a stranger to controversial theological issues. His shift to a holistic view of mission is just one illustration of his willingness to hold a controversial position on a topic. His tentativeness on this issue merely shows that he did not think the biblical evidence warranted a dogmatic view.

Third, Stott’s tentative views on annihilation seem to be deeply personal. He admitted his emotional intolerability to the concept of a conscious eternal punishment.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 984.

¹³⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1245.

¹³⁹John R. W. Stott, “A Statement about Eternal Punishment.”

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 314.

By way of illustration, it appears clear that Stott's opportunities for international travel, introductions to Third World poverty, and interactions with evangelicals from other parts of the world shaped his holistic views of mission. If these circumstances could have inclined him toward a broadened view of mission, then it is at least plausible that a personal, emotional circumstance might have prejudiced his view concerning the destiny of the impenitent. While Stott and his father Arnold reconciled later in life, and Arnold even took an interest in Stott's writing and ministry, it is not clear that Arnold ever professed faith in Christ.¹⁴² In fact, John and his father avoided the topic of religion, although Arnold was reading his son's *Basic Christianity* in the weeks before his death.¹⁴³ Arnold died while John was on a preaching tour in Australia, leaving John with the likely view that his father had died without Christ.¹⁴⁴ Stott's emotional distaste for the idea of eternal torment may derive from his own father's impenitence. I only posit Stott's concern for his father as a possible explanation for his tentative position. Stott's confession remained in the broad category of eternal torment as emotionally deplorable and possible although unlikely scriptural interpretations.

Fourth, by his own admission, Stott believed his view did not negatively influence his evangelistic or mission endeavors.¹⁴⁵ This claim should be considered along with his declaration that he held this view for fifty years.¹⁴⁶ Combining these claims would indicate that Stott held tentatively to annihilation alongside prescriptions in his pastoral ministry and pleas throughout his writings for evangelism. On this count,

¹⁴²Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 113.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 114.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

one should take Stott at his word that his views did not affect his own zeal for evangelism. However, as discussed in chapter 5, Stott's views have been highly influential. A haunting question lingers: Is it possible that Stott's nod toward the ultimate annihilation of the wicked, along with his broadening view of Christian mission minimized the biblical priority of evangelism?

Practical Analysis

The final section of chapter 3 highlighted the practical nature of Stott's view on the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Stott himself suggested that Christians, underneath their social responsibility, must be willing to engage and change aspects of secular society.¹⁴⁷ He stated,

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.¹⁴⁸

Stott believed Christian theology and engagement should address these challenging issues of societal significance. His part in the project consisted in creating the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, as well as writing literature that spurred believers to engage sociopolitical topics.¹⁴⁹ One of his books addressing Christian involvement in global and societal concerns, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, is currently in its fourth edition. I have cited *Issues* to show Stott's theological foundations for social engagement. This text is also an example of Stott practically prescribing Christian social action. An exhaustive analysis of Stott's prescriptions is beyond the scope of this

¹⁴⁷John R W. Stott and Tim Stafford, "Evangelism Plus," *Christianity Today* 50 (2006): 98.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 128-29.

dissertation. However a sampling will provide the analysis concerning the practicability of Stott's recommendations for social engagement.

Chapters in *Issues* address such global topics as nuclear warfare, the environment, economic inequality, and human rights.¹⁵⁰ Social topics include work, relationships, race, and poverty.¹⁵¹ Personal topics highlight gender, marriage and divorce, abortion and euthanasia, and same-sex relationships.¹⁵² Stott concluded his book with a call to Christian leaders to accept the responsibility of addressing these particular topics.¹⁵³ In the preface to the second edition Stott admitted his desire to deal with these issues in light of scriptural truth.¹⁵⁴ The theological paradigm discussed in the theological analysis section of this chapter demonstrated Stott's overall examination of these topics in light of biblical truth. The benefit of this work is that Stott detailed Christian engagement from the standpoint of a biblical worldview. However, in certain instances Stott implied Christian engagement of these issues is more certain, less controversial, and more practical than they may appear at first glance.

To be fair, Stott did not argue that every Christian should attempt to engage each of these issues with equal vigor or involvement.¹⁵⁵ Rather, through different callings, Stott believed that the church as a whole and groups of like-minded believers

¹⁵⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, v-vi; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 7.

¹⁵¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, vi-vii; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 7.

¹⁵²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, vii; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 8.

¹⁵³Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, vii; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 8.

¹⁵⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, xiv.

¹⁵⁵Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 26; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 45.

should engage in various societal concerns.¹⁵⁶ While Stott offered this concession, the overall tenor of the book implies that Christians should have a more complete perspective on these particular social issues.

As Stott worked through various issues in this book, he suggested the following three pairs of activities by which Christians can pursue social change: prayer and evangelism, witness and protest, and example and groups.¹⁵⁷ The first pair, prayer and evangelism, highlights the spiritual importance that both precedes and flows out of Christian social activity.¹⁵⁸ Stott unapologetically believed in the gospel power to change individuals and cultures.¹⁵⁹ Stott further connected the gospel to social transformation when he wrote,

There is another way in which social uplift is facilitated by evangelism. When the gospel is faithfully and widely preached, it not only brings a radical renewal to individuals, but produces what Raymond Johnston once called “an antiseptic atmosphere”, in which blasphemy, selfishness, greed, dishonesty, immorality, cruelty and injustice find it harder to flourish. A country which has been permeated by the gospel is not a soil in which these poisonous weeds can easily take root, let alone luxuriate.¹⁶⁰

By connecting a spiritual influence and motivation to social change through prayer and evangelism, Stott illustrated his partnership understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.

¹⁵⁶Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 26; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 45.

¹⁵⁷Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 68-75; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 86-91. In the fourth revision of the book, the final section was changed to demonstration and organization.

¹⁵⁸Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 68-71; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 86-89.

¹⁵⁹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 70-71; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 88-89.

¹⁶⁰Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 71; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 88.

Witness and protest form Stott's second pair of Christian social applications. Stott exhibited the believers' responsibility to speak truth as a means to developing an apologetic for ethical conduct.¹⁶¹ By grounding witness and protest in biblical truth, Stott articulated a moral motivation for the believer to speak for truth and against evil.¹⁶² He prescribed specific modes of speaking the truth,

From the pulpit (still a much more influential "platform" than is commonly realized, especially in the shaping of public opinion), through letters to and articles in national and local newspapers, in discussions at home and work, through opportunities on radio and television, by poetry, drama and popular songs, we are called as Christians to witness to God's law and God's gospel, without fear or apology.¹⁶³

For Stott, social engagement could happen as Christians acknowledged and proclaimed the truth in whatever practical setting they may have a platform.

Stott's third pair of social engagement applications was example and groups. In this pair, Stott commended the powerful demonstration of truth when it is exhibited.¹⁶⁴ He suggested that individuals and groups of organized believers "can be living embodiments of the gospel."¹⁶⁵ Stott's focus in this section is the outward activity of the church in groups to address specific social issues.¹⁶⁶ While Stott suggested that social activity be demonstrated in personal and group environments, he was not particularly

¹⁶¹Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 72-74; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 89-90.

¹⁶²Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 72; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 89.

¹⁶³Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 73; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 89-90.

¹⁶⁴Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 75; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 91.

¹⁶⁵Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 76; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 91.

¹⁶⁶Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 76; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 92.

precise concerning how a person should proceed in choosing or exemplifying specific activities.

After expressing these three pairs of Christian social activities, Stott proceeded to particular global and social issues. The practicality of Christian involvement in these issues is not immediately certain because, in some instances, they are inherently controversial. One example from Stott's prescriptive activity will suffice to explore the practicality of his theology of social engagement. In the section on global poverty, Stott suggested three ways wealthy nations can assist developing nations afflicted with poverty—aid, trade, and debt. Stott wrote, "As Christians we should support fair trade wherever we can."¹⁶⁷ He proposed a political strategy of debt cancellation for Majority World nations whose spiraling debt severely inhibited their ability to advance economically.¹⁶⁸ After rightly recognizing that many of these nations have experienced the debt crisis due to a combination of complex issues, some of which are beyond their control, he prescribed what appeared to be a rather simplistic solution to a complex issue.¹⁶⁹ He wrote,

Of course unscrupulous governments can squander resources, and those cancelling debts have often imposed conditions on countries as to how they should restructure their economy and reform their civil society before debts can be cancelled. Sometimes this is warranted, but often it is another burden for a country which is already under intolerable pressure. It is true that Majority World countries must take responsibility for their policies and for good governance, but at the same time, in rescheduling and cancellation arrangements it is morally wrong for rich countries to compel debtor governments to reduce their public expenditure on social programmes like education, health and employment, since it is the poor who suffer most from such cuts. Critics claim that this is often what happens under the Structural Adjustment Programmes initiated by the World Bank and the IMF's

¹⁶⁷Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 165-69. The title of the chapter in this 4th ed. is "Living with Global Poverty" and is an updated version of Stott's argument from earlier editions concerning the global inequality of wealth.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 167-68.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

stabilization policies, both of which are aimed at long-term structural change of unproductive economic practices.¹⁷⁰

Not only did Stott prescribe involvement in foreign policy politics and decisions related to Majority World debt, he involved himself in this particular project. Alister Chapman noted that Stott wrote an influential letter to American Christians who then lobbied Congress to incite U.S. involvement in the Jubilee 2000 campaign.¹⁷¹ Stott attributed the success of the campaign, which cancelled debt in a number of Majority World countries, to biblical values drawn from the principles of Old Testament laws concerning the year of jubilee.¹⁷² He clarified, “A sense of injustice and moral outrage fuelled the desire for change and provided the energy to take action.”¹⁷³

Stott should be commended for his involvement in an issue where he had strong beliefs, and he articulated similar prescriptions for other global and social issues. He attempted to explore global and social issues in light of a theological paradigm to offer practical steps for addressing each issue. Stott was not entirely clear about what concrete steps he expected his readers to make. Be informed, yes. But how does the average Christian affect political action at the level of international trade, debt, aid, foreign policy, or human rights? While Stott chose issues generally related to the biblical concepts of justice and love, these issues are rife with complexities. The lack of consensus surrounding the biblical understanding concerning issues of justice fails to create unanimity among Christian thinkers about the position they should take on particular issues. An example of this diversity is espoused by DeYoung and Gilbert when they expressed,

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 168.

¹⁷¹Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 132.

¹⁷²Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 169.

¹⁷³Ibid.

In most cases, poor nations are not poor because Westerners are rich, nor are they poor because they are less industrious or less capable than workers in the West. They are poor because they live and work in a system (often corrupt) that does not have the proper political, legal, and social structures in place to allow for the skills, brains, and ingenuity of the poor themselves to unleash the same wealth-creating process we have seen in the West.¹⁷⁴

DeYoung and Gilbert believed that the multifaceted realities which shape the divide between rich and poor countries cannot be alleviated by simple solutions. Their observation does not negate the good will or even the good results which may come from global and political campaigns such as Jubilee 2000. However, they reminded their readers that international issues of wealth, debt, and poverty necessitate government and not merely Christian intervention.

One of the challenges with Stott's prescriptions, in relation to many of the global issues, is that they are not easily practiced by average Christians. For example, Stott was named one of *Time Magazine's* one hundred most influential people in the world in 2005. When someone of his evangelical stature writes a letter that becomes circulated in the congressional arena, politicians take notice.¹⁷⁵ However, Stott's influence on the Jubilee 2000 campaign was in a country not his own.¹⁷⁶ He never experienced the same type of political influence in England as he had in other international settings.¹⁷⁷

Stott also prescribed that Christians learn to live a lifestyle of simplicity and pursue equality of education and participation, not necessarily wealth, for those in poverty.¹⁷⁸ He acknowledged the complexities that permeate international concerns of

¹⁷⁴DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 188.

¹⁷⁵Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 132.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 144-45; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 184-85.

poverty, aid, trade, and economic inequality.¹⁷⁹ But Stott believed complexity was not an excuse for apathy, and he believed information, understanding, and the willingness to give generously were the means by which Christians should begin to engage these concerns.¹⁸⁰ Stott rightly concluded that generosity must be a part of the Christian life. By connecting Christian generosity to global poverty, Stott broadly demanded Christian generosity without applying it to specific situations. Again, Stott's broad applications lack consensus. For example, DeYoung and Gilbert, presented the issue of moral proximity as one way of interpreting the biblical mandates concerning generosity. They suggested,

This doesn't mean we can be uncaring to everyone but our friends, close relatives, and people next door, but it means what we *ought* to do in one situation is what we *may* do in another. Moral proximity makes obedience possible by reminding us that before Paul said "let us do good to everyone," he said "So then, as we have opportunity" (Gal. 6:10).¹⁸¹

They quickly admitted that moral proximity in an age of instant modern global communication can be tricky and should not be used as an excuse to neglect doing good to the less fortunate.¹⁸² However, in light of Stott's broadly applied prescription to generosity, their critique is important. Although Stott correctly argued that complexity must not cause inaction, careful interpretation of the biblical data is necessary along with avoiding overly broad prescriptions. Stott was also right to note that Christians have an ethical and moral responsibility to be informed about global and social issues in order to act accordingly. Furthermore, his critiques of Western opulence in light Third World

¹⁷⁹ Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 146; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 185.

¹⁸⁰ Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 146-47; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 185-86.

¹⁸¹ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 183. Italics in original.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 184.

poverty must not be dismissed lightly. His critiques and prescriptions call for thoughtful consideration, even if they are not always concretely practical.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Stott's Position

In the preceding pages of exegetical, theological, and practical analysis, I have explored Stott's approach to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. In these final pages of analysis, I will summarize some of the key strengths and weaknesses within Stott's view of this tension. For the purpose of clarity, I will restate Stott's view on the subject. Stott believed that evangelism and social responsibility are best understood in a partnership as duties within Christian mission. He held that both were required of the Christian, although he consistently maintained the priority of evangelism. I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Stott's view using four themes: context, Scripture, theology, and application.

Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Context

Frances Whitehead, Stott's secretary for fifty years, commented that he was a genuinely humble man.¹⁸³ It appears, at least in part, that Stott's humility is one of the factors that enabled him to listen to the perspectives of others. In listening to others and welcoming the theological perspectives from Christian leaders around the world, Stott perceived the neglect of Christian social responsibility within evangelicalism. He allowed his context of international leadership to shape his views on the subject. Along with other evangelical leaders, such as Carl F. H. Henry, Stott rightly recalled Christian attention to issues of social concern. As shown in chapter 5, Stott influenced evangelicals significantly regarding the topic of evangelism and social responsibility. With the

¹⁸³Frances Whitehead, "I Would Not Wish to Have Had Any Other Calling," in *Portraits of a Radical Disciple*, ed. Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 63.

Lausanne movement, Stott showed that evangelicals cannot retreat from the social ills facing contemporary society. Being a Christian may not require having every answer to every social question, but it certainly requires a willingness to engage issues in the social arena. Stott's willingness to listen attentively to theological perspectives from different contexts is a strength of his viewpoint.

On the other hand, Stott went further in redefining Christian mission more broadly than many of his fellow evangelicals were willing to go. While he came short of the position of other Third World evangelicals, he welcomed their perspectives. At least one factor shaping the international spectrum of views on evangelism and social responsibility concerns one's sociocultural setting. For example, some of the Third World evangelicals discussed in chapter 5, served in places where abject injustice and poverty were prevalent. In light of the social context, they demanded a greater level of Christian social involvement. Conversely, in places where injustice and poverty had been minimized by cultural and economic expansion, other evangelicals have subordinated social responsibility underneath evangelism. It is evident then, at least in some cases, that one's sociocultural context informs his understanding of Christian social responsibility. Stott's position was shaped by his attempt to hold these two contentious, paradigmatic sociocultural contexts in what he believed was a tenuous biblical balance. Instead of merely becoming a sounding board or a voice for evangelicals of differing opinions, Stott attempted to balance the two poles. Stott's desire to pursue balance resulted from deference to sociocultural concerns. Perhaps, Stott's attention to these contextual settings is a weakness that motivated his quest for a balance that may not exist.

Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Scripture

Happily, Stott founded his positions in scriptural interpretation. At times, I find Stott's conclusions faulty, but he nevertheless grounded his views in the authority of

Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that believers have a Christian social duty. In fact, his reminder of this duty born of God's commands to love and treat others justly was a welcome and necessary corrective to twentieth century evangelicalism. One of the strengths of Stott's view is his stated reliance on Scripture for his understanding of evangelism and social responsibility. Self-admittedly, the Bible was his authority. The evangelical community continues to benefit from such biblically-based arguments. Furthermore, by publishing his views, Stott gave others the opportunity to consider and critique his theological views and interpretations of Scripture.

Laudably, Stott sought to ground his views on biblical interpretation. On the other hand, his superficial treatment of John 20:21 and his stretched application of socio-political engagement from Matthew 5:13-16 reveal interpretational weaknesses. If Stott's interpretation was correct, then he could make a rather strong case for holistic Christian mission that included both evangelism and social responsibility. However, the biblical data from these passages simply do not support his broadened view of Christian mission. Because he leveled the expectations of evangelism and social responsibility based on faulty interpretation, his balanced proposal concerning their relationship is questionable.

Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Theology

Stott makes his strongest case for Christian social responsibility from his theological framework. By exploring scriptural themes like character of God, the nature of man, and the work of the church, Stott correctly maintained that believers should care deeply about sociopolitical, economic, and interpersonal issues. If for no other reason than God's justice or mankind's creation in the *imago dei*, Christians do indeed have social responsibilities. One of Stott's strengths is that he was willing to explore Christian social duty from a variety of biblical themes. He developed these themes into a theological framework which offers contemporary Christians a thoughtful tool for

interpreting and engaging social, global, and interpersonal issues related to love and justice.

However, it is a weakness that Stott's theological framework offered his best case for his partnership relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. In fact, Stott based a portion of his theological arguments on the exegetical interpretation that clarified in his mind scriptural mandates for partnering evangelism and social responsibility. If we remove Stott's exegetical foundation, his theological framework becomes much more complex. Rightly, Stott articulated Christian social engagement. But claiming God's justice as a foundation for social action does not elucidate the contemporary complexities surrounding issues like international foreign policy or the gap between the rich and poor. Grounding social responsibility in a theological framework requires a willingness to consider each controversial issue in depth, as well presenting an honest admission if there is no clear biblical support for a particular social prescription. Complexity itself does not negate responsibility. However, complexity does factor into the understanding and practicality of engaging the issue. When comparing the theological complexity of engaging social issues with the preciseness of the disciple-making mandate of the Great Commission, it appears obvious that evangelism and disciple-making are more plainly emphasized in Scripture.

Strengths and Weaknesses Related to Application

Stott's attempts to prescribe Christian engagement of various social issues are commendable. In depth theological consideration and practical application concerning social issues should not be avoided. It is a strength of Stott's position that he believed Christians not only should practice evangelism, but should engage in social service and social action. Stott correctly encouraged pastors to address social issues from the pulpit and believers to consider and engage in social activities. He rightly pointed to Jesus as

the believers' model to show God's love in word and deed. In terms of broad application, Stott prescribed helpful ways that Christians can practice social responsibility.

The weakness found in Stott's application of Christian social responsibility is in his partnership terminology. If believers have a mandated social responsibility in the same vein as their mandate for evangelism, then any complexity or difficulty within the application of this mandate must be overcome. The believer is then required to discover the biblical position on any given social topic. In reality, discovering a biblical position with certainty on a host of social topics cannot happen with evangelical consensus. For example, evangelicals may disagree on the biblical interpretation of how to address the gap between the rich and poor, or how to care for the environment, or even how to lobby for a particular political action. These are all issues which fall within Stott's understanding of Christian social responsibility. On the one hand, lack of consensus does not mean that Christians should neglect social issues altogether. Rather, the ambiguity in practicing social responsibility betrays the partnership terminology within Stott's paradigm. Evangelism is a well-defined and plainly understood Christian activity. Social responsibility is not nearly as precise. Confusingly, Stott's practical understanding of their relationship insists that the believer engage in both activities with at least some level of equality.

In closing this chapter, I am not convinced by Stott's arguments for holistic mission and the partnership relationship of evangelism and social responsibility. A narrower definition of Christian mission is required. While Christians should not neglect social issues, I consider social responsibility subordinate to evangelism. In correctly removing Stott's equal emphasis on evangelism and social responsibility in Christian mission, the need for "evangelism is primary" language in the Lausanne Covenant is unnecessary. I contend that social responsibility flows out of Christian discipleship. Yes, we are to care for the sick, help the poor, feed the hungry, and visit the prisoner. We

even have responsibilities to social action beyond immediate needs, or even beyond the needs of community of believers. Illustrations exist of the positive effects of Christian social action. William Wilberforce's political fight against slavery in Britain and the Christian-influenced abolitionist movement in the United States are examples of successful Christian social involvement.¹⁸⁴ But it is unnecessary to ground these broader responsibilities in Christian mission. Stott's writings rightly remind us that impoverished parts of the world need Christian service, action, and even the pursuit of justice. However, the mission of the church does not reflect humanity's natural plight, but its spiritual one. The biblical evidence declares the mission of the church to be disciple-making, which logically and necessarily emphasizes evangelism, not social responsibility.

¹⁸⁴For specific examples highlighting Christian social action in relation to slavery, see the following books. Eric Metaxes, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*, Kindle ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); and Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Kindle ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I will posit some of the results of my research. First, I will advance a possible solution to the theological tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Next, I will discuss Christian social responsibility as a part of the disciple's life. Finally, I will explore specific implications which linger from Stott's particular arguments concerning this tension.

If my analysis of Stott's position is accurate, that the biblical evidence does not warrant evangelism and social responsibility as partners within Christian mission, then the question of the correct location of social responsibility remains. One particular textual analysis from Jesus' teaching may offer help. The sheep and goats parable in Matthew 25 provides a helpful framework for discussing the proper place of social responsibility in the disciple's life.

Social Responsibility and Discipleship: Matthew 25:31-46

This passage is one of several biblical texts that allude to the invariable tension between works of justice, the gospel message, and discipleship. However, this text is a particularly helpful description of the merits and actions of those who have a genuine relationship with Jesus. Understanding and interpreting this passage, in light of the tension between social responsibility and the gospel message, should guide the Christian in understanding his life as both gospel-centered and socially engaged.

Matthew 25:31-46 is located in Jesus' final speech in the Gospel of Matthew, and follows his parables about the wise and foolish virgins and the talents. The text

follows below:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will answer them, saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (ESV)

All three segments of the chapter relate to judgment. Jesus encourages his audience to identify with the wise virgins, who were prepared for the delay of the bridegroom, the wise servants, who invested the master's money wisely, and the righteous, who engaged in activities of service to those in need.¹ Jesus defined the righteous as those who fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, showed hospitality to the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited the prisoner. The unrighteous failed to do these things. The scene is the final judgment where the King will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Because the passage indicates that acts of service and justice are related to escaping judgment and entering eternal reward, its interpretation is vital to understanding the relationship between discipleship and social responsibility.

¹Sigurd Grindheim, "Ignorance is Bliss: Attitudinal Aspects of the Judgment according to Works in Matthew 25:31-46," *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008): 330.

The importance of the text demands that anyone dealing with issues of justice and social responsibility address Jesus' intention in the passage. Two recent books have addressed the larger concern of social responsibility and the gospel, Richard Stearns' *The Hole in our Gospel*, and Timothy Keller's *Generous Justice*. Stearns and Keller, while not directly influenced as contemporary evangelicals by Stott's arguments, exhibit some of the real implications arising out of the current discussion concerning social responsibility and justice. They both addressed this text in the books noted above. By examining the following interpretations of Matthew 25, I will attempt to properly relate discipleship and social responsibility.

In his treatment of Matthew 25:31-46, Stearns affirmed that followers of Jesus should engage the plight of the poor and disadvantaged.² He did not believe that these works of social compassion result in salvation, but are the result of genuine salvation in the life of the believer.³ He also noticed that the righteous disciple at the last judgment was unaware that he was doing these works to Jesus, an insight shared with Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the passage.⁴ If this were all that Stearns argued concerning this passage, then his interpretation would not be problematic. However, Stearns concluded the section by stating that the "whole gospel" must include "compassion and justice shown to the poor."⁵

Stearns' argument in *The Hole in Our Gospel* is that Christianity has somehow limited the gospel to a message of personal salvation when it is actually a social revolution.⁶ Stearns developed his argument from what he describes as Jesus' mission

²Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 60.

³Ibid., 59.

⁴Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, 60; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 279.

⁵Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, 60.

⁶Ibid., 20.

statement found in Luke 4:18-19.⁷ Understanding Stearns' view of Christ's mission is seminal to evaluating his interpretation of gospel and social responsibility. In the passage, Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2 and indicated that he was anointed to proclaim good news for the poor and freedom to the captives, to bring sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Stearns used the passage as a foundation text for his understanding of the gospel. He argued from the passage concerning the gospel,

Proclaiming the whole gospel, then, means much more than evangelism in the hopes that people will hear and respond to the good news of salvation by faith in Christ. It also encompasses tangible compassion for the sick and the poor, as well as biblical justice, efforts to right the wrongs that are so prevalent in our world. God is concerned about the spiritual, physical, and social dimensions of our being. This *whole gospel* is truly good news for the poor, and it is the foundation for a social revolution that has the power to change the world. And if this was Jesus' mission, it is also the mission of all who claim to follow Him. It is my mission, it is your mission, and it is the mission of the Church.⁸

Stearns' description revealed his understanding of the believer's role and responsibility concerning social ministry. Stearns believed that somehow Christianity has missed the whole gospel for a partial gospel, one that is merely proclamation.

Though it is not surprising that the CEO of one of the world's largest Christian relief organizations, World Vision, would argue for Christian responsibility to the poor, his interpretations of Luke 4 and Matthew 25, in reference to a greater vision of the gospel message, are flawed. In some ways, Stearns' interpretations resemble Rauschenbusch's social gospel, though it does not seem that Stearns' theology contains the liberal elements found in Rauschenbusch's writings. Regardless, Stearns failed to take into account some important elements when redefining the gospel to include social responsibility.

⁷Ibid., 21.

⁸Ibid., 22. Italics in original.

Foremost, Stearns did not allow Jesus' reinterpretation of Isaiah's statements to have a metaphorical meaning. Both Isaiah and Jesus may have intended the pictures to be understood as metaphors for one's spiritual condition. This interpretation would understand the poor as spiritually poor, understand freedom in terms of rescue from sin and its oppression, understand sight given to those previously blinded by sin, and understand God's favor resting on those he has redeemed. The Sermon on the Mount reveals this spiritual interpretation of the poor. Jesus indicated in the first beatitude that it was not the physical poor who would inherit the kingdom, but rather those who recognized their spiritual poverty.⁹ He also referenced the Pharisees who were in need of spiritual sight because they were blind to the truths of Scripture and their own personal need for repentance.¹⁰ Moreover, DeYoung and Gilbert noted that the emphasis of Luke 4 appears to indicate that "proclaiming" was Jesus' primary action in his work of freedom.¹¹ They also suggested concerning the use of the poor in this context,

A strictly literal understanding of "the poor" in the immediate context would not make sense. If "the poor" are the literally financially poor, then "the captives," "the blind," and "the oppressed" should be taken literally as well. And yet there is no instance in the Gospels of Jesus setting a literal prisoner free (something that confused John the Baptist in Luke 7:18-23). Quite naturally we understand captivity and oppression to include spiritual bondage. It is not inappropriate, then, to see a fundamental spiritual aspect to "the poor" in Luke 4.¹²

Thus, it is best to understand Jesus' gospel of freedom in Luke 4 metaphorically, focusing on spiritual truths and not physical conditions.

Jesus did engage social issues as evidenced by his healing and compassion ministry. But, while he served others, he did not seek to overthrow Roman oppression or

⁹See Matt 5:3.

¹⁰See Matt 23:16-24.

¹¹Kevin DeYoung and Gregory D. Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 37.

¹²Ibid., 38.

initiate any social or political action to affect the condition of the poor, captives, or oppressed in some recognizable fashion. Neither did he create any sort of charity system or political action committee to address the plight of the impoverished. It is safe to argue from the compassion of Jesus that he would support poverty relief or addressing many social issues. But these passages, Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 4:18-19, do not indicate that Jesus included poverty relief or social action in the mission of his disciples. He even stated that his followers would always have the poor with them.¹³ Further, he did not restate his mission in Luke 4, as it related to the physically poor, blind, and oppressed, as the mission of his followers in the Great Commission found Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-48, or Acts 1:8. In those texts, the disciples' primary task was one of proclamation and disciple-making.

Additionally, the content of the gospel message, as proclaimed in the book of Acts, concerned the death and resurrection of Christ. Those events were still in Jesus' future during his earthly ministry. In other words, Jesus did not openly proclaim or define the content of the gospel as his own death and resurrection because those events had not yet happened. His ministry was good news because he was the good news although the content of the gospel message had not been fully developed during the time of his earthly ministry. Stearns' interpretation of the good news fails to account for the development of the gospel as a message to share and not a work to do.¹⁴

Indeed, it is not necessary to ground social responsibility in the gospel message because Scripture assumes that the genuine disciple will engage social issues out of a sense of love and justice. Timothy Keller's interpretation of Matthew 25 more clearly expounds this biblical dynamic for the follower of Jesus. Keller noted the broad nature of

¹³See John 12:8.

¹⁴Donald A. Carson, "How to Do Justice and Not Undermine Evangelism," The Gospel Coalition, <http://www.churchleaders.com> (accessed 13 March 2011).

the activities Jesus listed for his followers in Matthew 25 when he wrote,

It is a remarkably comprehensive list. This is the kind of community that Jesus said his true disciples would establish. Believers should be opening their homes and purses to each other, drawing even the poorest and most foreign into their homes and community, giving financial aid, medical treatment, shelter, advocacy, active love, support, and friendship.¹⁵

Keller believed Jesus was speaking to genuine believers, not about earning their salvation through these particular works, but rather expressing the authentic nature of their relationship with Jesus by their good works.¹⁶ Keller focused on Jesus' assertion that when his followers served the poor and downtrodden, they served him.¹⁷ Keller implied from the passage that genuine followers of Jesus will address areas of social need in the world.¹⁸

Keller, like Rauschenbusch before him, serves in New York City where the urban environment compounds social needs. However, instead reinterpreting the gospel to redirect Christians to engage social issues, Keller pointed to the "traditional formulation of evangelical doctrine" which he bases on the entirety of Scripture.¹⁹ Arguing from the testimony of the Old Testament, especially the prophets, and Jesus' ministry of compassion and reconciliation, Keller believes "that the Biblical gospel of Jesus necessarily and powerfully leads to a passion for justice in the world."²⁰ The nuance within Keller's argument is that the gospel itself does not need to be broadened, expanded, reinterpreted, or enhanced in order for believers to grasp their responsibility

¹⁵Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice*, Kindle ed. (New York: Penguin Group, 2010), 52.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, location 84-93. In the Kindle ed. the introductory remarks of the book do not list a page number, but only a location number.

²⁰*Ibid.*, location 93.

for social justice.²¹ Keller correctly included the issues of social responsibility within the disciple's life. In other words, the gospel, through which Christ changes lives, will be the starting point for sanctification in the life of the believer. As the sanctification process continues, disciples follow Jesus more closely, and they should be willing to act compassionately in the social arena.

Matthew 25:31-46 seems to indicate this Christian activity as an expression of the disciple's life. Interpreting this passage apart from its context in order to justify a broad emphasis on social ministry would be unfruitful. In his interpretation of the passage, Duane Litfin recognized the prevailing view that serving the poor and suffering in a generalized manner was serving Christ directly.²² However, Litfin rightly noted that Jesus was speaking about ministering to the "least of these my brothers."²³ Very pointedly, Litfin stated that the ministry in the passage concerned suffering believers—people who are already part of God's family.²⁴ He wrote, "Blunting Jesus' point by broadening it out to include all human suffering, however well-intentioned, does not merely miss Jesus' point; it undermines and falsifies it."²⁵ So, the content of the passage itself emphasizes not a broadened social ministry to the world, but compassion for believers who suffer in the name of the Lord Jesus.²⁶

Furthermore, Jesus' description of his followers in Matthew 25:31-46 cannot be divorced from the rest of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew contrasted genuine followers

²¹Ibid.

²²Duane Litfin, *Word Versus Deed: Resetting the Scales to a Biblical Balance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 182.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 193.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

from those who were wicked and hypocritical.²⁷ His Gospel further denotes the contrast of reward and punishment at the judgment as it relates to Jesus' followers and those who will suffer eternally.²⁸ Sigurd Grindheim argued, "In the Gospel of Matthew, the gift and the task are intertwined. There is an inextricable connection between coming to Jesus as a needy person and adopting Jesus' concern for the needy."²⁹ Grindheim explained this imitation theme further:

As Jesus is the light of those who live in darkness (4:15-16), so are the disciples the light of the world (5:14). As Jesus was persecuted, so will the disciples be (10:24-25). As Jesus died on the cross, so must the disciples deny their own self, take up their cross, and follow him (16:24). As Jesus came to serve (20:28), so must the greatest among the disciples serve the others (20:26-27). As the heavenly Father forgives sins, so must the disciples forgive (6:14-15; 18:21-35). This imitation theme is reflected in the judgment scene in Matt 25:31-46 as well. In their works of kindness towards the marginalized, those on Jesus' right side mirror the compassion Jesus is known to show to all those who suffer.³⁰

Imitation, or apprenticeship, was the cultural form for rabbinical training in first century Judaism, and was Jesus' preferred methodology to instruct his disciples.³¹ Jesus not only taught his followers the character they were to exhibit, he modeled and empowered them to be socially conscious and responsible to care for the sick, demon-possessed, and hurting.³² Christ transformed those he described as righteous in Matthew 25, and they learned to emulate his life of compassion and grace.³³ Recognizing the disciple's

²⁷See especially the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus intentionally contrasted his moral imperatives with the false morality of the Pharisees. Jesus' contrast is evident throughout Matthew's Gospel (6:2, 5, 16; 7:15, 21-27; 12:33-37).

²⁸Grindheim, "Ignorance is Bliss," 328. See references in Matthew (5:21-30; 7:13-14, 21-27; 13:24-30; 36-43, 47-50; 16:27; 18:8-9, 23-35; 19:29, 24:51).

²⁹Ibid., 324.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹David M. Csinos, "Come Follow Me": Apprenticeship in Jesus' Approach to Education," *Religious Education* 105 (2010): 51.

³²Ibid., 55.

³³Grindheim, "Ignorance is Bliss," 331.

responsibility to follow Jesus is the vital element that connects social ministry with discipleship.

Jesus also contrasted the attitudes of the righteous and unrighteous in Matthew 25. In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus preached that the condemned will call him, “Lord,” and stated that the unrighteous will respond at the final judgment using the same title, “Lord.”³⁴ Almost confidently, the unrighteous in Matthew 25 question their condemnation.³⁵ In contrast, the righteous stand before Christ “empty-handed, without a prepared defense, and their justification catches them by surprise.”³⁶ Bonhoeffer also recognized the astonishment present in the response of the righteous when they discovered their service was toward Christ himself.³⁷ The passage implies that both attitude and action play a role in whether or not Christ accepts one’s good works. The authentically righteous are not so because they are conscious of all their good deeds and works, but rather supremely focused on following and obeying Jesus because of the grace Christ showed them.³⁸ Grindheim described their attitude this way: “The righteous are blissfully ignorant of their own merits.”³⁹ Instead of casting their hope upon their good works, they rest their hope entirely upon the grace and merit of Christ. In this text, Jesus showed the true disciple to be one who would follow him into a life of compassionate service, not to gain attention or approval, but because Jesus had modeled that concern in his own ministry. The genuine believer is the one who recognizes Christ’s grace as the foundation for his life of service to the community.

³⁴Ibid., 320. See Matt 7:21-23 and 25:44.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 322.

³⁷Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 279-80.

³⁸Grindheim, “Ignorance is Bliss,” 331.

³⁹Ibid.

There are other reasons why we should not reinterpret the gospel in order to ground a mandate for social responsibility. While the gospel does anticipate sanctification, which includes social responsibility, social ministry is not a particular demand drawn from the gospel. To use Jesus' ministry in the Gospel accounts as justification for including social ministry in the content of the gospel seems to discount the balance of the New Testament. Because Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection had not taken place during Jesus' ministry, a gospel message drawn primarily from the Gospel narratives of Jesus' personal ministry is a truncated gospel. The gospel, as defined through the rest of the New Testament is primarily a message, and rarely connected to social activity.

However, the assumption does exist from the Gospel accounts that changed disciples would engage in acts of service and compassion. Social responsibility can imply the gospel's influence in the life of the disciple, but it is not an inherent part of the gospel. Instead of stretching the gospel message to include social responsibility, issues of social responsibility should be related to the arena of the disciple's life. Wayne Grudem offers a similar recommendation when he writes,

Therefore, understood in a broad sense, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" means that we should faithfully teach the *entire* Bible to those who become disciples of Jesus. Preaching "the Whole Gospel" must also include preaching what the Bible says about civil government.⁴⁰

Grudem was not advocating some holistic gospel message, but rather acknowledging that Christian political involvement flows out of the teachings of Scripture. In this way, he grounds Christian social activity under the larger responsibilities of the disciple of Christ. This understanding of social responsibility acknowledges that not every believer is

⁴⁰Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 45. Italics in original.

accountable to engage every social issue, but every believer is required to proclaim the same message.⁴¹ Thus, the follower of Jesus has the primary responsibility of gospel proclamation, and social responsibility takes a necessary, but secondary role in the disciple's life.

Social Responsibility and the Disciple's Life

Based on the clear emphasis of the Great Commission passages, Christian mission centers on disciple-making. The logically primary task in disciple-making is evangelism. Social responsibilities can then flow from the disciple's life of developing sanctification and obedience. So, what social responsibilities fall under Jesus' commission to teach and observe all that he taught? Stott's own paradigm developed at CRESR provides a helpful framework for advancing this discussion. He identified a distinction between social service and social action as defined below:

Social service

Relieving human need
Philanthropic activity
Seeking to minister to individuals
and families
Works of mercy

Social action

Removing the causes of human need
Political and economic activity
Seeking to transform the structures of
society
The quest for justice⁴²

The acts of social service clearly fall within the expectations of the Christian life. Jesus modeled mercy, compassion, meeting needs, and ministering to others. While giving and serving described by CRESR do not constitute the mission of the disciple's life, they do reflect the character of Jesus, which disciples should imitate.

The social action expectations from CRESR are not as plainly delineated as definite aspects of Christian living. According to Stott, political and justice concerns

⁴¹John R. W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 44-45.

⁴²John R. W. Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 196.

flow out of social action. Again, this activity does not constitute Christian mission. Removing the causes of need, engaging in political activity, transforming inherently bad social structures, and pursuing justice can be seen as appropriate and even warranted activities Christian activities. However, the grounding of these activities from a biblical standpoint requires more thoughtful contemplation. As Litfin reminded his readers, careful consideration of how the Bible speaks to the economic, political, and justice-oriented questions of the world is essential for the believer wishing to ground social action in a biblical framework.⁴³ Litfin's recommended approach avoids proof-texting and necessitates a theological framework for exploring Scripture in light of contemporary issues.⁴⁴ Litfin's approach to social action is a helpful paradigm to explore Christian involvement in political and justice-related issues.

Another of Stott's prescriptions may aid the Christian in discerning his practical involvement in social issues. He connected social responsibility to the spiritual life when he suggested, "We should also not forget that our call to social involvement must be integrated into our spiritual lives."⁴⁵ In other words, discerning one's responsibilities socially should flow out of his life spiritually. To be fair, Stott used this spiritual argument to discuss how one might fulfill his mission as it related to social responsibility. I am adapting his argument to suggest that prayer and meditation are foundational to discern the disciple's level of involvement in social activities. I do not think Christians are required to engage in issues politically or to directly address injustices to fulfill their mission. These activities can be good and fruitful, but they do not result in mission fulfillment.

⁴³Litfin, *Word Versus Deed*, 166.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 166-67.

⁴⁵Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 36.

These suggestions for social involvement can be summarized by using objective and subjective terminology. Litfin's biblical and theological framework represents an objective approach to Christian social responsibility. Both Stott's theological model addressed in the previous chapter and Litfin's framework are more nebulous than proof-texting arguments for the disciple's social responsibility. However, because I have concluded Stott's exegetical evidence for the partnership of evangelism and social responsibility to be faulty, a theological paradigm is the next appropriate objective methodology. This method will require exegetical, theological, and practical analysis of the social issue at hand, as well as how it relates to the Scriptures. While remaining objective, this application is not marked by simplicity.

Stott's connection of prayer and discernment to social responsibility offers a more subjective approach in determining Christian social involvement. This approach, which can be intricately connected to one's emotions, should not become the primary motivation to engage social issues. However, learning to emulate the compassion and character of Jesus through prayer and other spiritual disciplines is a part of the disciple's responsibility. Included in these disciplines should be a prayerful willingness to discern how God would have us engage social issues. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, some social action prescriptions may combine emotions, spirituality, and the Scripture to motivate involvement in a particular social issue, specifically emotional motivations used by organizations like Richard Stearns' World Vision, Compassion International, and Samaritan's Purse. These Christian relief organizations pursue emotions by illustrating hunger or happiness in the face of a child, and suggesting some aspect of social responsibility in response. While organizations such as these should be careful not to manipulate emotions into action, God made humanity as whole and emotional beings. Then, as a result of being created in God's image, disciples should engage their whole persons, intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual in the process

of discerning social responsibilities. In this subjective, yet holistic approach, the disciple combines prayer and his spiritual life as he participates in both social service and social action.

The process of properly determining a personal level of social involvement is inextricably linked to growth as a disciple. These two ways, one objective and one subjective, locate social responsibility under discipleship. An objective theological framework requires the disciple to study and interpret Scripture with depth and thoughtfulness to determine appropriate social involvement. In the more subjective approach, the disciple can link prayer and spirituality to perceive appropriate social responsibilities. When explored together, these objective and subjective methods produce a disciple-oriented solution to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Implications from Stott's Solution

After nearly a year of research into the life and theology of John Stott, I have developed a substantial amount of respect for him and his influence on contemporary evangelicalism. He was ambitious for the glory of God and the impact of God's people in the world. He remained humble enough to listen to the ideas and critiques of others, yet he was willing to stand his ground on a controversial theological position if he believed the scriptural evidence warranted such a stand. The genuineness of Stott's ministry and lingering inspiration of his writings oblige in-depth evaluation. Although much in Stott's theology and interpretive strategies can be commended, his influence as a renowned evangelical voice calls for the shortcomings of his theology to be explored. I will examine three particular implications that derive from Stott's understanding of evangelism and social responsibility: the possibility of the minimization of evangelism, the heightened influence of one's sociopolitical context, and the ambiguity of employing loaded terminology.

Stott repeatedly affirmed his belief in the partnership between evangelism and social responsibility underneath Christian mission. The clarity and argumentation of his writing is formidable and far-reaching. Nevertheless, in authoring the Lausanne Covenant, Stott was aware of the problematic solution of raising social responsibility to partner status with evangelism. The primacy of evangelism language in the covenant recognized the possibility of misinterpretation. Regardless of the clarification and hedging that Stott employed throughout his writings, partnering evangelism and social responsibility rather strongly implies equality.

If we are to limit ourselves to the biblical data, then evangelism as proclamation is the dominant focus of early Christian mission. For example, the book of Acts records the early church's missionary expansion and reiterates gospel proclamation as the initial and preeminent expression of Christian mission. It appears to me that a failure to restate the preeminence of evangelism with biblical clarity results in its minimization. Minimization does not simply happen when an issue is not given proper significance. Rather, in this case, minimization occurs by elevating a less important element. An example occurs in Stott's commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. In addressing the salt and light metaphor, he overwhelmingly applies Christian social responsibility as salt and minimally applies evangelism to Christians living as light.⁴⁶ Stott's commentary leads us to believe that evangelism is either a clearly understood mandate requiring little explanation or that Christian social responsibility is more ambiguous, necessitating more clarification. The truth is likely a little of both. However, the final result is that social responsibility appears as the emphasis of the text. Stott's solution minimizes evangelism by accentuating social responsibility more than the text implied. While Stott never specifically articulated anything different than the priority of

⁴⁶John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 67.

evangelism, the balance of his writing stresses social responsibility in such a way that evangelism cannot retain its due place as the preeminent application of the disciple-making mandate.

The resulting dilemma of emaciated or non-existent evangelism in a socially-conscious ministry can occur. As a practitioner of missions and evangelism, I have personally observed minimization of the best thing, evangelism, for a good thing, social responsibility. In some ways, it is easier to feed someone who is hungry, give water to a thirsty man, or even engage in a political activity aimed at alleviating an injustice than it is to lovingly share the gospel with someone. Many social activities have the inherent blessing of the community of people. For example, even non-believers think it right to provide water for an impoverished village and bless personal and governmental activities that assist the poor with necessities. While these things may be good, and in many cases find biblical warrant for Christian involvement, they can never equal the primary mission of the disciple of Jesus Christ. The Christian must always be conscious of the eternal. The disciple must evangelize. I do not believe that Stott intentionally minimized evangelism, but his holistic mission paradigm minimized it by equating it with social responsibility.

A second implication emanating from Stott's proposed solution relates to sociopolitical context. As I hope I have shown throughout the last two chapters, Stott's use of specific proof-texts fall short of his conclusions. A question follows: why was the normally careful exegete, John Stott, so quick to suggest John 20:21 and Matthew 5:13-16 as clear indicators of his understanding of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility? The apparent carelessness of his exegesis in these two instances is uncharacteristic. Stott was too invested in solving an evangelical/liberal tension. Particularly seen during his service in the Lausanne movement, Stott attempted to hold a balanced position between two extremes. On the one hand, he was personally invested in

evangelical conservatism that rightly emphasized evangelism and was skeptical of anything connected to the social gospel movement. On the other hand, he took a personal interest in views espoused by self-stated evangelicals and liberals in various contexts. These Third World theologians, by necessity of the sociopolitical and economic situations in their countries, were more attuned to issues of justice and social responsibility. As detailed in chapter 5, scholars like Orlando Costas, Samuel Escobar, and René Padilla served in locations where their sociopolitical environments generated devotion to social issues. These men meaningfully interacted with Stott. As a result, Stott's pursuit of balance was perhaps motivated more by his desire to relieve the evangelical tension between evangelism and social responsibility than to carefully exegete his proof-texts.

An obvious problem resulting from this implication concerns the grounding of our theological positions. Stott failed to adequately establish the scriptural basis for his solution to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Thusly, we are left with the sociopolitical contexts of Stott and his contemporaries as an elevated factor in Stott's solution. While evangelicals should recognize the influence of context in our theological positions, the grounding of our theological solutions must derive from the Scripture, not societal concerns around us. Stott also felt this way, which explains his attention to texts he believed grounded his solution. Contemporary evangelicals face the challenge of discerning between scriptural and societal bases for their positions. This challenge is not new. Simply stated, the problem with Stott's model is that it instructs evangelicals to interpret Scripture in light of both sociopolitical contexts and theological issues. To be fair, I do not think this is what Stott would have taught explicitly. However, based on my analysis of his proposed solutions, it is the model that he advanced, and his model minimizes the authority of Scripture by elevating the sociopolitical context.

A final implication for this dissertation topic relates to the politically loaded term, *social justice*. As noted in chapter 1, I refrained from using social justice and social responsibility interchangeably. While Stott was comfortable using social justice in his writings, I highlighted in chapter 4 that he interchanged justice and social justice. He placed issues of justice underneath his paradigm of social action. He argued that Christians should pursue justice and used social justice when it suited the situation. Stott's use of the terms is not generally problematic. Certainly, as I have already discussed, citing social action as a part of Christian mission was flawed. But when Stott did employ social justice, he was not necessarily advocating a political or loaded use of the term.

On the other hand, a cursory reading of Stott would lead the reader to conclude that social justice is a valid part of Christian mission. The implication would be that social responsibility and social justice are interchangeable. DeYoung and Gilbert detailed the ambiguity of social justice when they wrote, "For many Christians, social justice encompasses everything from hunger relief to combating sex trafficking to reducing carbon emissions. If something can be deemed a 'social justice' issue, it frightens away opposition, because who in his right mind favors social injustice."⁴⁷ Furthermore, care must be taken when using the term because it can imply the pursuit of economic equality.⁴⁸ Social justice as economic equality is a political scheme rather than a theological one. The authors offer a word of caution when employing the term, "We should explain our conception of social justice and take pains to demonstrate why that conception is supported by Scripture."⁴⁹

⁴⁷DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, 179-80.

⁴⁸Ibid., 180.

⁴⁹Ibid., 183.

Using social justice to imply or mandate a host of Christian social activities is ambiguous at best. At worst, the term can carry political or theological repercussions beyond the author's intention. DeYoung and Gilbert's cautionary advice about the term is helpful for evangelicalism. Social justice as a concept implies a legal and political dimension.⁵⁰ When advocating social justice indiscriminately as a Christian duty, particularly within Christian mission, the argument is shockingly vague when compared to the clarity of the Great Commission mandate to make disciples. Can a Christian engage in activities deemed socially just? Certainly, and Christians should not oppose justice. As Stott rightly reminded us, God is a God of justice.⁵¹ However, because defining social justice is increasingly ambiguous, containing political, legal, economic, and even theological implications, Christian duty with regard to social justice becomes difficult to define. The broadness of social justice implies diversity of opinion on these issues, which clutters its application in Christian activity. As such, Stott's use of the term as well as its use by contemporary evangelicals can create confusion. At the least, if the term is used, a specific definition is necessary.

John Stott's pastoral perspective, commitment to evangelism, and tender social conscience are worthy of consideration. While I may have found some of his admonishments faulty, his works require thoughtful attention by evangelicals today. In his pursuit of balance, Stott prescribed a solution to the tension between evangelism and social responsibility that would be tenable if it were biblical. Unfortunately, his solution muddles Christian mission rather than clarifies it. The biblical evidence for the Great Commission emphasizes proclamation and disciple-making. With pinpointed clarity, the

⁵⁰John Bates Clark, *Social Justice without Socialism*, Kindle ed. (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1914), location 117.

⁵¹John R. W. Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke, UK: Marshalls, 1984), 15-18; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 49-52.

apostle Paul recognized his debt to “preach the gospel” in Romans 1:15. The same precision of mission illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul and early believers is required of evangelicals today. Stott’s legacy in evangelicalism is weighty. Yet, his treatment of mission, evangelism, and social responsibility teach an unintended lesson. Accuracy of biblical interpretation is more important than solving a theological conundrum.

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF JOHN STOTT'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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This dissertation analyzes John R. W. Stott's understanding of the theological relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. Chapter 1 defines important terms and states the case for researching John Stott's views on the subject.

Chapter 2 presents a biographical sketch of John Stott's life, giving particular attention to his theological and social contexts which shaped his views on the tension between evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 3 explores Stott's views on evangelism and social responsibility from the perspective of his pastoral ministry. Stott's role as rector at All Souls, Langham Place in London provided the ministry framework for Stott's practice and theology of evangelism. Furthermore, while in his role as pastor, Stott's views on social responsibility began to shift.

Chapter 4 examines Stott's international ministry within the Lausanne movement and his books that address the topic of evangelism and social responsibility. This stage of Stott's ministry was the primary arena where he adapted and implemented his understanding of the partnership between evangelism and social responsibility.

Chapter 5 recognizes Stott's broad influence on this topic among evangelical thinkers and surveys consequences related to the topic that developed as a result of Stott's position.

Chapter 6 analyzes Stott's understanding of evangelism and social responsibility theologically, exegetically, and practically. This chapter evaluates Stott's position exegetically, theologically, and practically and encapsulates the strengths and weaknesses of his position.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation by offering a discussion of discipleship as the proper place of social responsibility in the Christian life. As a final means of analysis, implications raised by Stott's understanding are presented and explored in light of greater evangelicalism.

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