

CHRISTOPHER J.H. WRIGHT, ED. *JOHN STOTT: A PORTRAIT BY HIS FRIENDS*. NOTTINGHAM: IVP, 2011. (217 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-84474-516-6]

PAUL WINDSOR

LANGHAM PREACHING

With John Stott's "incredible capacity for friendship" (p. 13) in mind, this book is a collection of reflections from 35 friends from the different eras and time zones in which his life was lived. While this sounds like a recipe for unadulterated adulation, this is not the impression created in the reader. With both text and photo this compilation uncovers an honesty, humour, and humanity in the life of John Stott which the longer (by Timothy Dudley-Smith) and shorter (by Roger Steer) biographies did not achieve as readily.

As a way to nurture the honesty it was Stott's desire that it be a "warts and all" story which he had no interest in reading before publication. This honesty emerges, for example, in the chapter by Myra Chave-Jones where the younger Stott is described as an inhibited person, known to become angry, and "not always a good judge of character" (p. 36). The book is littered with a mixture of humorous Stottian quips ("Flattery is like smoking—it is OK, if you don't inhale") and stories. And the humanity is evident as well. For many, Stott remains "the most Christ-like person they have ever met"—but his obsession with Christ was mixed with lesser obsessions with birds, chocolate, the writer Saki—with even a penchant for James Bond movies added into the mix.

The book works well because we are engaging with the people who knew him best who themselves are trying to capture the essence of their friend in a few paragraphs. And so the insightful, helpful descriptions proliferate: "the gracious, perceptive leader" (Michael Green); the "compelling seriousness" (Frances Whitehead); the manner in which John Stott and Billy Graham were "weaving together a worldwide network of truth and trust among Bible believers everywhere" (Richard Bewes); that enigmatic "blend of passion and balance, humility and authority, scholarship and simplicity, austerity and warmth" (David Turner); listeners being "held in thoughtful wonder as John Stott illumined the text" (Keith & Gladys Hunt); "the clarity, forcefulness and pastoral wealth of his words" (Samuel Escobar); "a veritable modern-day church father" (Peter Kuzmic); "a drive for clarity, a confidence in rationality, an expectation of competency" (Mark Labberton).

The freshest contributions to my understanding of John Stott came in the chapters from David Turner (a judge), Peter Harris (the founder of A Rocha) and Mark Labberton (a study-assistant who is now the Preaching lecturer at Fuller Seminary). The most memorable story came from Ajith Fernando where he discovers that his heavily annotated copy of *The Cross of Christ* has fallen out the window of a Sri Lankan bus. He stops the bus so that he can go in search of his copy of "the most enriching doctrinal book I have ever read" (p. 107).

As I read my mind wandered and the questions multiplied. Wouldn't it have been great to have a chapter from Billy Graham and I wonder when his trajectory of ill-health will see him join his friend in

heaven? Why did the church in New Zealand need to be so inhospitable to John Stott, with his last visit to our shores being *forty* years ago? It shows up in the paucity of our traditions of saintly scholarship, authoritative and relevant biblical exposition, and the best in a clear, yet spacious, evangelicalism. And what about those 250 young adults in church the other night? When asked for “a show of hands” on how many had heard of John Stott, a generous estimate was that three people raised their hands. While the reasons can be offered, it was still a sad sight ... and this “portrait by his friends” would serve well as a place where this new antipodean generation might meet the most influential leader in the worldwide evangelical church for a generation or three.

Towards the end of the book is recorded Stott’s response to the doctor when asked for an explanation of his wishes should he become incapacitated or unconscious. He does so before concluding with: “... the reason that I do not wish to cling to life is that I have a living hope of a yet more glorious life beyond death, and I do not wish to be unnecessarily hindered from inheriting it” (p. 211). In God’s goodness, he did inherit it. As with his sermons, so also in his death can there be found clarity and symmetry for the year within the decade and the date within the month are the same: John Stott, 27 April 1921–27 July 2011.

While John Stott has been my hero and my inspiration throughout my working life, it is also true, as Chris Wright expresses it, that “the key thing is not to try to imitate him, but to imitate the Christ who so demonstrably lived within him” (p. 216). He lived for Christ and his greater glory and our response should be “above all, to cling to the cross” (p. 198).

ANALYTIC THEOLOGY: NEW ESSAYS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THEOLOGY. EDITED BY OLIVER D. CRISP AND MICHAEL C. REA. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009. (316 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0-19-920356-7]

BOBBY GROW
VANCOUVER

The editors of *Analytic Theology*, Oliver D. Crisp, formerly reader in theology at the University of Bristol and now at Fuller Theological Seminary; and Michael C. Rea, professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, have brought together a prestigious cast of philosopher-theologians to engage an issue of Christian theology that has become, for many, a beach-head too foreboding to breach; *viz.* the interdisciplinary relation between so called ‘Analytic Theologians’ and ‘Continental’ and/or ‘Dialectic Theologians.’ On this relation, Rea writes in his introduction to the volume:

The methodological divide between systematic theologians and analytic philosophers of religion is ripe for exploration. It is of obvious theoretical importance to both disciplines, but it also has practical import. The climate in theology departments for analytic theologians is much like the climate in English-speaking philosophy departments for continental philosophers: often chilly. Moreover, the methodological divide is surely the most significant obstacle to fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue. The problem isn’t just that academics with different methodological perspectives have trouble conversing with one another. Rather, it is that, by and large, the established figures in both disciplines don’t even view mutual conversation as worth pursuing. They ignore one another. They (implicitly or explicitly)