



# 20th CENTURY ROOTS

Seven influential figures  
who stood for the gospel

John Benton

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## Introduction

Christians need to hold on to their history. God has done magnificent things down the years through frail and failing men and women and it is incumbent upon us to remember what he has done to his praise and glory.

First and foremost, we must be rooted in the Scriptures. The word of God brings life, Psalm 19.7; John 5.24. But our roots in church history play a large part in both inspiring our faith, helping us understand the Bible and in teaching us wisdom for the present.

### **Anti-history**

But there is a problem. We now live in a culture which is becoming increasingly anti-historical. Our society is dominated by so-called political correctness. Surveying the changes over the last few centuries in how Western people have seen themselves and the world, Carl Trueman writes: 'Rousseau's basic point about nature, society and the authenticity of youthful innocence has become one of the unacknowledged assumptions of the present age.... If the state of nature is ideal, and if society corrupts, then the history of society becomes a history of the corruption and the oppression of human nature. It ceases to be a source of wisdom and becomes rather a tale of woe. That is the tendency that will become a hallmark of the modern age...'<sup>1</sup> And, of course, anti-history easily turns into anti-church history.

The current church is so keen to apologize for past mistakes – and certainly there are great blemishes in the church's record (God saves sinners) – that we are in danger of throwing away our past and forgetting great heroes and heroines of years gone by, for whom we should thank God and from whom we can learn.

This booklet is an attempt to say, 'Let's not do that.' Rather we should know about our evangelical predecessors and admire the grace of God.

This booklet concentrates on the twentieth century. And, of course, there are many more than worthy candidates from that era whose biographies could have been included. But this is just a short booklet and not everyone who deserves our attention could be included. I hope that the stories of those who have been included will instruct and encourage.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, by Carl Trueman, Crossway, 2020, page 127

## **1: CORRIE TEN BOOM (1892 – 1983)**

### **Galatians 6.10**

Corrie ten Boom was a Christian woman who cared for people and put her life at risk to save the lives of others during WWII.

Cornelia Arnolda Johanna Ten Boom ('Corrie') was born in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, on 15th April 1892. The family's house, called the Beje, was in Haarlem and her parents, Casper and Cornelia, had three other children, Betsie, Nollie and Willem. The family were Calvinist Christians in the Dutch Reformed Church and they lived out their faith through love and prayer.

### **Using the house**

After the three maternal aunts who lived with them in the house had died, and sister Nollie and brother Willem had married and moved out, their mother died in 1921. Father, Casper, was a watchmaker. Betsie ran the house, while Corrie trained in her father's profession and, in 1922, she became the first woman in Holland to become a licensed watchmaker.

With the size of the family greatly reduced, their faith in Christ inspired them to use the premises to help people, and a church for those with learning disabilities was started. The 1930s saw the rise of Hitler and the Ten Booms viewed with horror the treatment of the Jews, God's OT people, in Germany. In 1940, the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. These were difficult times. In May 1942, a well-dressed woman came to the door of the house. She told them she was a Jew, but had heard that the Ten Booms had previously helped their Jewish neighbours. Thus began the work of Betsie and Corrie opening their home to Jewish refugees and to members of the resistance.

### **The hiding place**

The refugee work of the two sisters became known to the Dutch Resistance and they sent an architect to the Beje to build a secret room where those the Ten Booms were helping could hide. It could hold six people and was in Corrie's bedroom behind a false wall. A buzzer alarm system was set up as a warning if Nazi authorities were coming.

In total over 700 Jews passed through the house as they were helped to escape.

A network of around 80 helpers was organized for making contacts, finding food and ration cards. Corrie had worried about what would happen if they got caught, but her father asked her, 'when you were a girl and we were going away, when did I give you the train ticket?' She answered, 'Just as we got on the train'. The lesson was that God would give them the grace they needed if and when the crisis came.

### **Betrayed**

It came on 28th February 1944. That day the family was betrayed by a Dutch informant. The Nazis arrested the entire Ten Boom family. But a group of six people, in the secret room, made up both of Jews and resistance workers remained undiscovered. Fortunately, though the house was under constant surveillance, some police officers, who were sympathetic to the resistance, managed to get the refugees away.

Kept in prison, with his family, Casper, now aged 84 and not in good health, died there after 10 days in custody. Corrie and Betsie were transferred to Ravensbruck concentration camp. It was exclusively for women and located about 60 miles north of Berlin.

### **Concentration camp**

With God's help, the sisters did their best to change the atmosphere in their hut by showing practical love to other prisoners and organizing daily meetings for Bible reading and prayer. These gatherings gradually grew in size. They even learned to give God thanks for the fleas which infested the place. It meant that the camp guards never came in to stop them.

Sadly, because of the privations of the camp, Betsie became increasingly weak and died in December 1944. But before she died, she shared a dream with Corrie about a place where broken people could recuperate when the war was over. She said to Corrie, 'There is no pit too deep that God is not deeper still'.

Twelve days later, due to what seems to have been a clerical error, Corrie was released. She found out afterwards that a week later, all the women of her age group had been sent to the gas chambers.

## **Bloemendaal and beyond**

After the war was over, Corrie did her best to fulfil Betsie's dream setting up a rehabilitation centre in Bloemendaal. There she became involved in the care of concentration camp survivors and jobless Dutch people who had collaborated with the Nazis. She returned to Germany in 1946 and met with and forgave two Germans who had been employed at Ravensbruck, one of whom had been particularly cruel to Betsie.

As she grew older, a series of companions began to look after her and travel with her as she became an international speaker, sharing what God had done in her remarkable life. In 1971 her best-selling book, *The Hiding Place*, was published and later made into a film. In 1977 she moved to California. She died at her home there, remarkably on her 91st birthday, 15th April, 1983.

## **Lesson**

Corrie Ten Boom's life surely teaches us that God has grace for us, even in the worst and most heart-breaking situations.

## 2: C. S. Lewis (1898 – 1963)

### **1 Peter 3.15**

C. S. Lewis was an Oxbridge professor who could not be called a classic evangelical, but was deeply committed to the truth of Christianity. His books argued with great clarity for a rational basis for our faith and proved highly influential.

Clive Staples Lewis (known as 'Jack') was born to Albert and Flora Lewis in Belfast when his brother Warren was three years old. Albert was a lawyer and the family was Protestant. Tragically when Jack was only 9 years old, his mother died. His father, thinking it was best to get them away from a house associated with such sadness, sent the boys off to various boarding schools in England.

These were not happy years. Eventually, in 1914, the year WWI began, Jack went to be personally tutored by W.T. Kirkpatrick. Known as 'The Great Knock', Kirkpatrick was Albert's old headmaster now living in retirement with his wife in Great Bookham, Surrey. He was a man of stringent logic and his tuition brought out Lewis's astonishing intellectual gifts. At the end of 1916 Jack was offered a scholarship at University College, Oxford.

### **WWI and a promise**

Lewis excelled in English literature focusing eventually on the Medieval period. But, with the war continuing, in March 1917 he joined the British army and was sent to France. There he became great friends with a man named Paddy Moore and made a promise that if ever Paddy was killed, Lewis would try to take care of Paddy's mother. At this time Lewis was a determined atheist. He was scared witless by the action he saw but wrote to his friend Arthur Greeves, 'I never stooped so low as to pray'.

In April 1917, Paddy Moore was killed and Lewis himself was wounded at the Battle Of Arras. Following convalescence, he was discharged from the army in December 1918, just after the war had finished.

### **Oxford and conversion**

During the summer of 1920, Mrs Moore and her daughter Maureen moved to Oxford, into a house Lewis helped them rent, sometimes living with them and

sometimes in college. Mrs Moore was a difficult woman but he cared for her until her death in 1951. Lewis excelled academically and was appointed a fellow of Magdalen College in 1925. He bought a house called the Kilns for them all in 1930.

In Oxford, Lewis became friendly with J.R.R. Tolkien, Professor of Anglo-Saxon, a Catholic who was later to write *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Though there were intriguing discussions with Tolkien and his friends about Christianity, at this point Jack still regarded religion as ‘infernal mumbo-jumbo’. However, he did recognize that he longed deeply for what he termed ‘Joy’ in life and through this God began to make sense. He later wrote: ‘You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity term of 1929, I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert on such terms’.<sup>2</sup>

As yet this appeared simply a conversion to belief in God. But after more reading, thinking and discussions, it was in September 1931 on a trip with his brother ‘Warnie’ by motorbike and sidecar, to Whipsnade Zoo that Lewis came clearly to Christ. ‘When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. “Emotional” is perhaps the last word we can apply to some of the most important events. It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.’

### **Apologist and writer**

Though he wrote poetry and academic books, Lewis, now attending Anglican services, soon began to write about his new found faith. Beginning in 1938, he published the first volume of a science fiction trilogy in which Christian truth was explained. In 1940, a year after WWII began, *The Problem of Pain* came out, a straight book of apologetics, defending the Christian faith in the light of suffering.

Lewis became a popular speaker. He was invited to speak to the aircrews at RAF bases, and then to give broadcast talks on Christianity on BBC radio. The material

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<sup>2</sup> See Lewis’s autobiography *Surprised by Joy*

from these formed the substance of the book *Mere Christianity* – later to become hugely influential.

### **Children's books and marriage**

Also in 1940, a group of writers and thinkers in the circle of Tolkien and Lewis, who named themselves 'the Inklings', began to meet weekly at the Eagle and Child pub in Oxford. Read to the Inklings while in the process of being written, it was here that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, first saw the light of day. Published in 1950, it was the first of the 7 volumes of the Chronicles of Narnia, which introduced Christian ideas to many children.

Still residing in Oxford, Lewis was appointed Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge in 1954. In 1956, he married American writer Joy Davidman – initially in order to ensure she could stay in Britain and continue medical treatment. But it soon became a true love match. Sadly, she died of cancer just four years later. This hit Lewis hard, but he kept his faith and wrote about his struggles in *A Grief Observed*.

Lewis himself died three years later on 22nd November 1963 – the day President John F Kennedy was assassinated. In 2013, on the 50th anniversary of his death, Lewis was honoured with a memorial in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

### **Lesson**

Even the most ardent and intellectually gifted atheist is not beyond God's ability to save.

### **3: MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899 – 1981)**

#### **2 Timothy 4.2**

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was arguably the greatest preacher of the 20th century. While being a robust thinker, his preaching brought a much-needed emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit both in regeneration and revival.

He was born in Cardiff, the second of three boys to Welsh-speaking parents who were Calvinistic Methodists. In 1906, the family moved to Llangeitho, Cardiganshire, the home of Daniel Rowland, much used of God in the revival of the 18th century. Martyn soon showed his intellectual capabilities and, when the family moved to London in 1914 for his father to run a dairy, he went to Marylebone Grammar School.

He went on to study medicine at St Bartholemew's hospital, where Bethan Phillips, later to be his wife, was also a student. He was a brilliant doctor and by 1923 had been appointed chief clinical assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, physician to King George V. Later, as a well-known preacher, he was often referred to simply as 'the Doctor'.

#### **Conversion and call**

Lloyd-Jones never put a date on his conversion. From a human point of view, it appears to have been a gradual process, but it was during his twenties that he came to Christ.

He had regularly attended the Calvinistic Methodist Church in Charing Cross Road with the family but it was his dealings as a medical doctor with both the rich and the poor in London which convinced him of the fact of human sin and indeed of his own sin. He became convicted that there is something profoundly wrong with mankind that cannot be fixed by medicine, education or prosperity. A spiritual conversion to Christ was absolutely necessary.

Even before his conversion, Lloyd-Jones had felt that his future might lie in Christian ministry. But now that sense of call became impossible to resist. In stepping away from an obviously bright future in medicine, he caused something of a sensation among his friends and colleagues.

## **Port Talbot**

He did not despise theological training, but he felt driven by the Holy Spirit to go immediately into ministry. His first pastorate commenced in 1927.

It was in Aberavon, Port Talbot, South Wales, at a Calvinistic Methodist mission, known as 'Sandfields' after the district where it was located. It was an over-crowded, working-class area with Socialist politics. But the Biblical, Christ-centred and evangelistic preaching of Dr Lloyd-Jones had an electrifying effect upon the church and the area. Many locals were converted and the church grew rapidly. The news of what was happening at Sandfields spread. When he visited other parts of Wales, thousands began to come and hear him.

What the church thought of their minister who had left medicine to preach the gospel is plain from a letter written by one of the leaders to ML-J's mother: 'You should be the proudest mother in Britain today, for Martyn is being blessed by God in the *greatest of all work* – a fisher of men.'

## **Westminster Chapel**

In 1938, a year before WWII began, Lloyd-Jones was called to London, to be an assistant at Westminster Chapel and he became sole minister in 1943.

His preaching influenced people profoundly. It was Biblical, expository and Christ-centred. He believed that true preaching involved the whole of a preacher's personality under the control and empowering of the Holy Spirit. In the pulpit he was logical, serious and with a sense of pathos which came from love and concern for his hearers.

There were stand-out sermon series – *The Sermon on the Mount* commenced in October 1950; *Faith on Trial* from Psalm 73 in 1953; *Spiritual Depression* 1954. On Friday evenings from 1955 to 1968 he gave landmark expositions on the Epistle to the Romans which made an immense impact on those who attended. His influence spread as many of these lecture and sermon series were recorded on tape and also published in book form.

## **Strategic ministries**

He encouraged the student works of Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now UCCF) and its international counterpart IFES. He helped establish Tyndale House, a Biblical research centre in Cambridge. He took an active interest in the Evangelical

Library, the Evangelical Movement of Wales and the founding of the Banner of Truth Trust, which republished many Puritan works.

Through the Westminster Ministers' Fraternal he brought help and encouragement to hundreds of pastors. He was also behind the founding of London Theological Seminary (now London Seminary) in 1977. In many of these ventures there was a constant and timely emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the need for God to bring revival to the church and the country.

## **1966**

With great foresight, at the second Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals in 1966, he gave an appeal calling for an evangelical unity which transcended the denominations. He could see the dangers of liberal theology and sentimental Christianity undermining the recovery of the gospel which had been achieved during the 20th century. He explained that the basis of Christian unity is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and is characterized by fidelity to Biblical teaching. He asked how evangelicals could continue in denominations where these fundamentals were being compromised. He felt that the time was opportune for a robust expression of gospel unity.

But this challenge did not go down well, especially with Anglican evangelicals like John Stott (see later in the booklet). They felt that they could win the battle for the gospel by staying within their denominations. But time, it seems, has proved 'the doctor' right.

Lloyd-Jones' ministry at Westminster Chapel continued until 1968, when he underwent major surgery and then formally retired – although he continued to preach around the country. He died on St David's day, 1st March, 1981.

## **Lesson**

Pray for Holy Spirit-anointed, Biblically faithful preachers to be raised up. This is always the great need of the church.

## **4: GLADYS AYLWARD (1902 – 1970)**

### **Joshua 1.8-9**

Gladys Aylward was a woman with determination and is a prime example of God using someone whom others had written off. Her story is a source of great encouragement for ordinary Christians.

She was born in Edmonton, in London, and the primary biography of her life is titled *The Small Woman*, because she was only 4ft 10 inches (147 cm) tall.<sup>3</sup>

### **Her life savings**

Gladys worked as a housemaid in London but she felt the call of God to go to China as a missionary. She applied to the China Inland Mission, but after some initial training she was turned down. Undeterred, she decided she must go it alone. Her attitude is summed up in her prayer, 'Oh God, here's my Bible; here's my money; here's me. Use me God.'

By way of preparation, she began to learn to preach by witnessing for Christ at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. Also, she found that the cheapest route to China was by train through Russia, which had been taken over by Communism since the revolution of 1917.

Her plans crystallized when she heard of a 73-year-old missionary, Mrs Jeannie Lawson, in Yangcheng, Shanxi Province, who was looking for a younger woman to carry on her work. Gladys spent all her life's savings and bought the train ticket. In October 1930, she got on a train at Liverpool Street Station. She had 9d in her pocket, a travellers' cheque worth £2, an old fur coat made into a rug and two suitcases of belongings.

### **The journey**

Her ticket took her on different trains across Germany and Poland through central Russia and into Siberia. The Soviet Union was a troubled place in the 1930s as Stalin sought to impose his totalitarian rule everywhere. At one point, soldiers crowded onto the train. Later it halted and they disembarked. The lights went out and Gladys was left alone in her carriage. The guard told Gladys that her only hope was to walk to the next station along the track. She set off amid

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<sup>3</sup> *The Small Woman*, by Alan Burgess, Pan Books, 1957

falling snow, the sounds of gunfire and later the howling of wolves. Having slept in the open, she got to the station the next day and eventually to Vladivostok on the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

Here she had a narrow escape as government officials attempted to entrap her and force her to work in a factory. Friendly people helped her to slip away on a ship to Japan and from there she at last got to China. It took a long time, but after another arduous journey she reached the Yangcheng mission in the mountains of North China.

### **The Inn of Eight Happinesses**

Here she and Jeannie Lawson came up with an idea for spreading the gospel. Yangcheng was a stopping place for mule trains, carrying goods across the country. They decided to open an inn, with shelter for the mules, good food (provided by Yang, the Chinese cook) and where the muleteers could listen to stories of Jesus. All the Chinese loved stories and it was hoped these would be passed on elsewhere. Jeannie named it 'The Inn of the Eight Happinesses' – love, virtue, gentleness, tolerance, loyalty, truth, beauty, devotion.

The work began. But then, suddenly, Jeannie died. Though Gladys was on her own and despite being treated with suspicion by the locals, she was determined to carry on.

Then two startling things happened. First, a new law forbidding the traditional Chinese custom of binding the feet of baby girls (small feet were considered pretty) was passed. Astonishingly the Mandarin for the area came and appointed Gladys to be the local foot inspector to make sure people adhered to the law. As a foreigner it was thought she would be impartial in her duties. This gave her standing in the community. But secondly, something occurred in her second year. A man came running into the courtyard of the inn saying a riot had broken out in the town prison and she must come immediately. Convicts were killing each other. The guards were frightened. She had been preaching that God protects Christians. 'Now's your chance to prove it', said the prison governor, 'stop this riot!' Praying to God she stepped into the prison yard. It was chaos. There was a convict brandishing a bloodstained axe. Hardly knowing what she was doing, Gladys went towards him with her hand outstretched. 'Give me that chopper,' she said furiously, 'give it to me at once!' The man stepped back astonished. Suddenly, meekly he gave her the axe. She shouted to the convicts, 'All of you, form a line' and they did. The riot was over. A great feeling of

compassion came over her for these ragged, hopeless men. With tears running down her cheeks, she said they ought to be ashamed of themselves but she would ask the governor to deal lightly with them.

From then on, there was deep respect for her and her God. She was given the name 'Ai-weh-deh' which means 'the Virtuous One'. It was around this time that Gladys also started a work for orphans and unwanted children.

### **A long walk**

In 1938 the Japanese invaded China. Yangcheng was bombed. Amidst the changing tides of the war in China, Gladys looked for God's guidance. Eventually she found herself, though wounded in the shoulder by a Japanese bullet, leading a group of over 100 orphan children to safety over the mountains. On the long trail the group kept their spirits up by singing hymns when they could and they saw God answer prayers for food and providing a way for them to cross the wide Yellow River. At last, with a train ride, they got to the city of Sian and safety.<sup>4</sup>

Gladys returned to Britain in 1949 when the Communists led by Mao Tse Tung took over China. She spent some years in this country until going to Taiwan, off the coast of China, in 1958. There she founded an orphanage and worked there until her death in 1970.

### **Lesson**

The life of Gladys Aylward teaches us that working for the Lord often requires courage and perseverance in the face of discouragements.

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<sup>4</sup> This astonishing march prompted Hollywood to make the film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* in 1958, starring Ingrid Bergman as Gladys. She greatly disliked the film for its glamorization and distortion of her story.

## 5: FRANCIS SCHAEFFER (1912 – 1984)

### **1 Chronicles 12.32**

Francis Schaeffer was an American thinker who did more than anyone else to help young people have a Christian understanding of the times in which they lived. This was especially true during the enormous social upheavals of the 1960s – a crucial decade.

He was born of working-class parents of German stock in Germantown, Pennsylvania. His initial aptitudes were in the direction of practical work, but a dramatic change in his intellectual development took place while he was helping a Russian émigré to learn English. The man had been a well-educated count and his language practice included reading a book on Greek philosophy in English. Reading the Bible alongside this, Schaeffer was surprised to find that answers to the deepest questions of philosophy – who we are as human beings, the purpose of life etc. – are best addressed by Scripture. The excitement of this discovery never left him.

At First Presbyterian Church, Germantown, he met Edith Seville who had the same love for the Bible. In 1935 ‘Fran’ married Edith and also began at Westminster Theological Seminary, just outside of Philadelphia. There he was taught by formidable thinkers; Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987); J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937); the great Scots theologian, John Murray (1898-1975).

### **Post-war Europe**

His ministry began with a couple of churches in Presbyterian denominations, but in 1943 the Schaeffer family moved to St Louis and Fran and Edith started ‘Children for Christ’. The movement spread to other churches and other denominations. Under its auspices, he was asked to make a fact-finding tour as to the state of the gospel in post-war Europe. This led to the family moving to Europe in 1948.

In August of that year, at an international Christian conference in Amsterdam, Schaeffer met Hans Rookmaaker who went on to become a life-long friend and confidant. Rookmaaker recalls, ‘I came out of the prisoner-of-war camp as a Christian with quite a bit of training in philosophy. After the war I started my studies in art history...Humanly speaking we met by chance... (at the conference) I was looking for an American who could answer some of my questions about

negro spirituals...I came across Dr Schaeffer and said, "May I speak to you?" He said, "Yes, I have an hour before we start again at 7pm." They ended up walking the streets of Amsterdam until 4am in lively discussion! Schaeffer was already thinking that modern art was a key to understanding society, and the link with Rookmaaker stimulated him immensely.

## **L'Abri**

In the next few years, the Schaeffers (now with two daughters and soon to have a son), settled in Switzerland. From there they worked with children and warned the European churches of the dangers of theological liberalism and especially the teachings of Karl Barth. But great societal upheavals were beginning to emerge in the post-war Western world.

In the winter of 1951, Schaeffer went through a profound spiritual struggle. Was Christianity really true? He paced up and down the hayloft in the Swiss village of Champéry when the weather was wet and walked the countryside when it was dry, wrestling with deep questions. He knew that reality in faith was needed, not just orthodox theology. The lessons Fran learned at this time later formed the basis of his seminal book, *True Spirituality*.

Out of this struggle, Schaeffer later said, the work of L'Abri (French for 'shelter') was born. The work was centred on the Schaeffers' home in Switzerland and began in 1955. By word of mouth, news spread to college and university students in a rapidly globalizing world that there was a place in the Alps where you could go and stay and get honest answers to life's deepest questions. Young people from around the world began making a 'pilgrimage' to the Schaeffers' door. They shared their home. Fran would lecture on everything from the book of Romans to current cultural issues. There were question and answer sessions, food and shelter.

In 1958, the work expanded into England, after Schaeffer had given lectures at Oxford. English L'Abri was started at Greatham, in Hampshire, and was eventually led by Randal Macauley, who had married the Schaeffers' second daughter, Susan. By the mid-1960s, two books by Schaeffer were grabbing the attention of Christians of student age. These were *Escape from Reason* and *The God who is there*. There were really no other Christian books like them which grappled with a changing culture and the challenges presented by an increasingly post-Christian world.

L'Abri was a community and as time went on there was an increasingly clear call that local churches must not only stand for gospel truth but live out the gospel by becoming loving families of God's people if the cause of Christ was going to gain traction in contemporary society.

### **Political activism**

Schaeffer's Biblical stance on the sanctity of human life led him to become increasingly concerned about the moral relativism which was shaping legislation in the Western world. In the late 1970s and early 1980s he produced two films. The first, *How Shall We Then Live?* gave something of a Christian understanding of Western civilization and where it was heading. The second, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* highlighted the issues of abortion and euthanasia and was a co-project with Dr Everett Koop, later Surgeon General of the United States.

Schaeffer became the *de facto* intellectual leader of the 'Moral Majority' in America, which had much influence during Ronald Reagan's Presidency. However, this stirred a great backlash from intellectuals of the Left which might be said to have led to the so-called 'Culture Wars' of the 1990s and 2000s which, by and large, Christians have lost.

Francis Schaeffer died of cancer in 1984 shortly after a lecture tour associated with his final book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, which expressed concern for the churches to stay faithful to the Bible as God's trustworthy word.

### **Lesson**

Jesus Christ is Lord of all and has something to say about all areas of life.

## **6: BILLY GRAHAM (1918 – 2014)**

### **2 Corinthians 6.2**

Billy Graham was arguably the most successful evangelist of the twentieth century.

Many millions of people heard the gospel message from him through his city-wide crusades which took place in many countries and his weekly *Hour of Decision* radio programme broadcast around the world. Later, millions more were reached through TV, video, film and webcasts.

William Franklin Graham Jr was born on 7th November 1918 in Charlotte, North Carolina, just as WWI was coming to an end. The Grahams were a well-off church-going family. His father owned a 400-acre dairy farm and he grew up during the Great Depression years of the 1930s having to work long hours helping to keep the family business going. It was in the Autumn of 1934 that Billy Graham, aged 15, was asked to drive a group to hear the 'fire and brimstone' evangelist Mordecai Ham who was holding a crusade. The preacher challenged people to recognize their sinfulness and to cry out to the Lord Jesus to save them from hell. During one of these nightly meetings the young Billy Graham turned to Christ.

### **Growing profile**

From 1937 he studied at Florida Bible Institute and then during the early years of WWII at Wheaton College in Illinois. Here he met and later married Ruth McCue Bell, daughter of a missionary surgeon in China. Immediately after the honeymoon, Billy took up the pastorate of a Southern Baptist church in Western Springs near Chicago. But it became obvious that he was meant for a wider ministry. Often away preaching, an influential deacon, Robert Van Kampen, defended Billy to the church saying that their pastor was destined to be the next D. L. Moody.

He joined 'Youth For Christ', an organization founded to reach young men and women and especially those who had been involved in the armed services, and preached throughout the US and Europe in the immediate post-war era.

The Los Angeles crusade of 1949 led to Billy Graham making the US national headlines. The numbers of people turning up to the tent meetings far overflowed the facilities, and scheduled to last 3 weeks, it continued for 2

months. Billy preached, 'I don't believe any man can solve his problems of life without Jesus Christ.' The singing cowboy Stuart Hamblen came to faith, as did former Olympian and war veteran Louis Zamperini.<sup>5</sup> This led newspaper magnate William Randolph Hurst to send a telegram to all his editors with the message 'Puff Graham' – in other words give him full coverage. Billy Graham became a national figure in America.

## **Britain**

In September 1951, a letter came from Ralph Mitchell of the Pocket Testament League in Philadelphia to the Evangelical Alliance in London. It suggested they ask Billy Graham to come to Britain. This led to the Greater London Crusade at Harringay in 1954 attended overall by 1.75 million people. Here Billy Graham got to know John Stott, among others, but his ecumenical stance towards Roman Catholics and his habit of calling people to 'get up out of your seat' and come to the front as a sign of coming to Christ caused controversy.

Writing of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray has explained that ML-J 'had meant what he had written in the *British Weekly* that evangelicals "should not separate on the question of Calvinism and Arminianism." Graham held Arminian belief, but his message of sin and reconciliation with God through Christ's shed blood was one which Lloyd-Jones believed and liberals did not. He publicly prayed for the Crusade, attended one meeting *incognito* and personally befriended Graham whom he regarded as an "utterly honest, sincere and genuine man."

There followed many evangelistic visits of Billy Graham to this country.

## **The Billy Graham Evangelistic Organisation**

In 1950, Billy brought together a group of directors, including his song leaders Cliff Barrows and his wife and formed The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). Its aims were 'to spread the gospel by any and all means.' To his great credit, unlike many other crusade and TV evangelists, Graham managed to stay clean and avoided all financial or sexual scandal.

The statistics say that Graham participated in over 400 Crusades in 185 different countries. With the fall of Communism there was even a crusade in Moscow

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<sup>5</sup> Zamperini's war experiences were the basis for the 2014 film *Unbroken*

in 1992. The friendship between Billy Graham and John Stott led to a further partnership in The Lausanne Movement, of which Graham was founder. It built on Graham's 1966 World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin.

### **Political figure**

During the civil rights movement, he supported integrated seating for his crusades. In 1957 he invited Martin Luther King Jr to preach jointly at his meetings in New York City. Graham bailed King out of jail in the 1960s when he was arrested in demonstrations.

He was the confidant of a number of US Presidents including Eisenhower and Nixon. Graham was repeatedly on Gallup's list of most admired men and women. His involvement with those in high office had both positive and negative edges. One commentator says, 'By the middle 1960s, he had become the "Great Legitimator." His presence conferred sanctity on events, authority on presidents, acceptability on wars, desirability on decency and shame on indecency. By the middle 1970s, many deemed him "America's pastor."'

### **Lesson**

God's heart is for a lost world. Jesus' great commission is that the gospel is to be preached to all nations.

## **7: John Stott (1921 – 2011)**

### **Philippians 2.3**

‘I was working at the BBC and was a very nominal Christian. Going for a stroll in my lunch-hour one day, I heard church bells ringing. Making my way towards them, I came upon St Peter’s Church, Vere Street. To my amazement, I found the church full of people listening to a young clergyman preaching from a text in the Bible. I could barely find a seat in a side aisle, but my interest was immediately aroused by the speaker’s manner and bearing, and the clarity of his message. There was a compelling seriousness about this man and the way he was explaining the Scriptures. I was intrigued by all that I saw and heard there and I began attending those lunch-hour services regularly. Later I started to attend Sunday services at All Souls, until the day came when I finally encountered the living Christ...’<sup>6</sup>

This is something of the story of Frances Whitehead who was later to become John Stott’s long-time secretary and it gives us a glimpse of the spirit and attraction of the man. He was perhaps the most influential figure in worldwide evangelicalism during the twentieth century.

### **London home**

John R. W. Stott was born in London, to Dr Arnold Stott and his wife, Lily. His father was a brilliant physician with a practice in Harley Street and a very secular outlook on life. His mother, however, took John and his sisters to Sunday school at All Souls, Langham Place, next to the offices of the BBC. John was interested in music and had a love of birdwatching in the London parks.

In 1935, he got a scholarship to the famous Rugby School. This brought him into contact with Eric Nash (‘Bash’) who had an evangelistic ministry among public school boys. As a teenager Stott was aware of the great difference between his high ideals and what he actually was like. This prepared the way for his conversion in February 1938. He later wrote, ‘what brought me to Christ was a sense of defeat and of estrangement, and the astonishing news that the historic Christ offered to meet the very needs of which I was conscious’. Though very gifted academically, becoming the school’s head boy, Stott was convinced he was called by God to ministry in the Church of England – a move much opposed by his father.

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<sup>6</sup> From *John Stott: A portrait by his friends*, Edited by Chris Wright, IVP, 2011

## **All Souls**

At Trinity College, Cambridge, Stott studied languages and also theology, earning a double first. He joined the Christian Union (CICCU), which provided him with ‘friendships, teaching, books, and opportunities for service’.

Ordained in December 1945, after the end of WWII, he returned to All Souls as an assistant curate. In 1950 he became rector and moved into 12 Weymouth Street; his drawing room being the very room where he was taught in Sunday school as a child. He never married but as rector his priorities were prayer, expository preaching, evangelism (especially through ‘guest services’), discipling new believers and training lay leaders. His involvement with the local community included an occasion of sleeping rough to experience what it was like. Though from a privileged background, he went out of his way to understand and help ordinary people. At the other end of the social spectrum, in 1959, he was appointed a chaplain to the young Queen Elizabeth II and had an influence on her own Christian faith. In all situations he was marked by a gracious, Spirit-filled humility.

Through the 1950s and into the 1970s, his clear and relevant Biblical preaching saw him being asked to speak at many university missions, both in the UK and around the world. His early addresses from these missions formed the basis of his much-used book, *Basic Christianity*. Emerging as a key figure among evangelicals in London, Stott was also deeply involved with Billy Graham’s crusades in London, the two striking up a warm friendship.

## **Wider ministry**

In 1975 Michael Baughen became rector of All Souls, which, though still much involved with the church, released Stott for wider ministry. He was at the heart of many evangelical organisations at this time including Evangelical Alliance, IVF (now UCCF), Tearfund and Scripture Union and often gave the Bible readings at the Keswick Convention.

Though he turned down many opportunities to become a bishop, Stott’s love for the Church of England led him to spearhead the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1967, which took place at Keele. He saw it as the opportunity for ‘evangelicalism to come of age’. It was the year following the call by Dr Lloyd-Jones for evangelicals to leave doctrinally compromised denominations and stand together. John Stott had opposed this and hoped that the Anglican communion could be won for the gospel from within (‘in it to win it’). This sadly

proved a total miscalculation.

In 1974, alongside Billy Graham, he played a pivotal role in the International Congress on World Evangelization, which took place at Lausanne, Switzerland and became a major contributor to the 'Lausanne Movement' noted for its balanced approach to evangelism versus social action.

He often undertook study at 'Hookses', his retreat cottage in Wales and, with help from Frances Whitehead and various study assistants, he wrote many books, especially NT commentaries in the Bible Speaks Today series, which he helped edit. His greatest book is often said to be *The Cross of Christ*, which gives a thorough theology of the atonement.

### **Double listening**

A key to understanding Stott is his insistence on what he called 'double listening'. The Christian leader is called to both listen to the Bible and to the contemporary world in order to be able to apply God's word to where people are.

In a wide-ranging interview given to *Christianity Today* in 1996, his final remarks concerned advice to church leaders. He said, 'My main exhortation is this: Don't neglect your critical faculties. Remember God is a rational God, who has made us in his own image. God invites us and expects us to explore his double revelation, in nature and Scripture, with the minds he has given us, and to go on in the development of a Christian mind to apply his marvellous revealed truth to every aspect of the modern and the postmodern world.'

### **Lesson**

Humility adorns the gospel and Christian leadership.