

Outline in English

”Bible” and ”Gospel” in John Stott’s theology

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1. Introduction

A. Challenging English theology

England today is a secular society where it is no longer a conventional habit to think or act as a Christian. There is a continuous debate going on about the consequences of secularisation and about the church’s response or lack of response to these challenges. According to the church historian Adrian Hastings, theology in England cannot rise to the challenge that confronts the church in a secular community. The situation of the churches in England is by several experts considered to be precarious. Resistance against adapting to secularisation can be found within different groups of English churches. The generic term for these is ”evangelicalism”.

B. Biographical facts about John Stott

The greatest and most influential group of evangelical Christians in England today is within the Anglican Church. This thesis is about the greatest contemporary leader of Anglican evangelicalism, John R W Stott (1921-). The scope of his life work can be described in the headlines: “ Bible Interpreter”, “Evangelist”, and “Ecclesiastical Statesman”.

B.1. Bible Interpreter

John Stott is not primarily a systematic theologian but an exegete and a Bible expositor. The type of sermon mostly used among evangelicals is the so-called expository sermon, i. e. the systematic examination of a Bible text, verse by verse. Stott’s sermons have been considered, by many like-minded, to be excellent models thanks to their analytical structure. However, it is obvious that they should be considered modern rather than postmodern, since they so clearly show his preference for rational thinking.

B.2. Evangelist

John Stott, as pastor of *All Souls Church*, introduced several different methods for evangelism. In contrast to the extremely specialised evangelistic work in the form of mass campaigns often organised by evangelicals, Stott’s aim was to involve the laymen of the church in the work.

Stott had found his Christian faith within a context where people had exceptionally narrow conceptions of their social responsibilities. In this respect John Stott has distanced himself from his original environment. The most well-known result of his re-orientation is his contribution to *The International Congress on World Evangelization* in Lausanne in 1974. In addition to his efforts within the Lausanne movement, he initiated *The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* in order to create a consciousness of the needs of modern society.

B.3. Ecclesiastical statesman

In the history of revivalism, being an evangelist has not always meant being endowed with diplomatic tactfulness. John Stott, however, has been “an ecclesiastical statesman”, while at the same time having distinction in his ministry as a preacher and evangelist. Early in his ministry Stott used his energy to unify the evangelicals. National and international structures were to become carriers of Stott’s visions. The essence of his vision was disclosed at the important gathering for Anglican evangelicals in Keele in 1967 (*National Evangelical Anglican Congress, NEAC I*). When they gathered in Nottingham in 1977 (*NEAC II*), Stott was still the unifying figure. The primary task this time was the question of hermeneutics. During the following decade Stott’s leadership was being questioned. The primary cause for this was his standpoint on social issues and his wish to engage in them. Still, the most delicate question was probably his relationship to the charismatic movement.

C. Comments on the biographical facts about John Stott

John Stott is undoubtedly one of those who have modelled and defined evangelicalism, both nationally as well as internationally. Especially striking are his efforts to strengthen its position by combining activism with theological reflection. Stott balances anti-intellectual currents by stressing the importance of theology as an instrument to consolidate evangelical identity. The conclusion is that Stott’s leadership is respected but his way of dealing with the future issues might be considered imperfect.

2. Method

A. The problem of the thesis and its limitations

The essence of the evangelical understanding of Christian belief is based upon two fundamental teachings, according to John Stott: bibliology and the doctrine of salvation, i. e. obedience to the Word of God and a personal relationship with God. The theology of salvation is, in this thesis, an extensive theme for the purpose of gaining insight in how evangelical theology has expressed itself in a secular situation. The relationship to the Bible includes different issues. The essential issue, according to Stott, is whether in the Christian church, there still is to be found an authoritative message to pass on to modern people. Stott investigates evangelical theology in order to contextualize it. The issue of contextualizing the identity and relevance of theology will in this thesis be illustrated in the form of the question of salvation and the question of authority.

Throughout this study of evangelical identity according to John Stott, the relationship between the objective belief and the subjective experience will be a main thread. The total evangelical identity arises from the effort of believing objectively combined with a subjective experience, according to John Stott’s terminology.

B. Method

The method used in this thesis could be seen as traditionally historical-systematic. The starting point is an analytical textual work, giving a base for a correct description of Stott's theology. I will try to deepen the knowledge by investigating this material historically and systematically. The historical perspective becomes evident, when Stott's theology is examined with the context in mind. Systematically the thesis will consider theological fundamental issues in Stott's theology.

C. Research survey

Research studies about John Stott as an individual theologian have just begun in a small way. Interviews and biographical articles about John Stott have of course been published in different circles. In addition to these articles, Stott's theology has been more closely investigated in a few theses. In addition to these references, the bibliography of this thesis will offer a brief catalogue of the research made in the general field of evangelicalism.

D. Stott's literary production

When studying John Stott's theology, a recently published bibliography is a suitable starting point. During the autumn of 1995, an anthology was also published with Timothy Dudley-Smith as editor. In accordance with the aims of this thesis, Stott's bibliography has been arranged in groups treating the subjects Authority (cf. *Fundamentalism and Evangelism. Christ the Controversialist: A Study in Some Essentials of Evangelical Religion.*), Contextualization (*The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening. Between two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century. Issues Facing Christians Today.*) and Doctrine of Salvation (*The Cross of Christ. Basic Christianity. Focus on Christ: An Enquiry into the Theology of Propositions. The Authentic Jesus: A Response to Current Scepticism.*).

E. The structure of the thesis

The chapter about the method deals with the formulation of the problem, but also its desirable limitations, a description of the method of study, a survey of the literature on the subject, and also of Stott's own literary production. In the third chapter the historical perspective dominates to a certain degree. This is achieved by accounting for the discussion of the evangelical movement's own self-definition during the Stott period. The three main chapters, 4, 5 and 6, are all of the same structure. First, the issue in question is placed in Stott's theology by defining its meaning and importance. In order to throw light on the problems, I also take up the debates within evangelicalism or with the other theological groups that Stott has been involved in. The inner systematic coherence in Stott's theology is brought out in the sections of these three chapters that deal with the theological pattern of each issue. Then systematic sections follow, reported to be Stott's defence for the theology accounted for. The dynamics of the work with the theological pattern, and the defence of it, have grown out of the recurrent problems of objective and subjective elements in Stott's theology. The thesis ends with a chapter of critical evangelical conclusions, recording some distinct personal opinions by the author.

3. An attempt at definition of the Anglican evangelicalism

A. The importance of the issue of definition in the Anglican evangelicalism

A.1. The importance of definition

Working out a correct definition of identity within evangelicalism is essential for its self-understanding. It is also necessary for future progress to have a theologically conscious relation to other Christian churches and groups.

A.2. The structure of the chapter

Description of the structure of the chapter will be left out, here as well as in the following chapters.

A.3. Explaining the issue of definition

Evangelicalism represents the inheritance from the Protestant Reformation within a church that also feels that it has preserved the inheritance from the early church. However, it does not only look upon itself as a child of the Reformation, but also as a child of the revival of the eighteenth century. Theologically, this holding on to the values of the Reformation and revivalism means that the bibliology, the doctrine of salvation, and personal repentance have been in the foreground. In practice the movement has also been marked by activism. Evangelical belief is consequently moving over several spheres: between a doctrinal and an experiential pole, but also between a conservative and a liberal pole.

B. Evangelical identity in history and theology

B.1. Evangelicalism in relation to Fundamentalism and Liberal theology

After the World War I western society became increasingly influenced by secularism and showed less interest in Christian faith. The conservative Christians isolated themselves and became more anonymous. A few conservative theologians were unhappy with the isolation during the forties, and they wished to work for a broader cultural, theological, and ecclesiastical commitment. The leaders in this group took exception to the anti-intellectualism of the fundamentalists, and also to their ghetto-tendencies and lack of social engagement.

B.2. Evangelicalism as a questioned movement

Evangelism was the unifying slogan for the evangelicals during the fifties. The wish to evangelise was focused when the American evangelist Billy Graham visited England. Graham's visit caused a debate on "fundamentalism". Neither Stott nor Graham wished to have their theology labelled as "fundamentalism".

B.3. The breakthrough of evangelicalism in the Anglican Church

The question that pressed on more and more during the sixties among the group around Stott was whether evangelical theology ought to influence more of the church's activities. At Keele 1967 the evangelicals showed their eagerness to get out of their isolation, and they were more willing to cooperate and pay attention to the structures of the Anglican Church. There had been a growing interest for the Christian's social responsibility during the sixties, which showed itself at Keele, but it was too modest, according to certain commentators. Some evangelicals committed themselves to the renewal of liturgy. The fear of ecumenical work with non-evangelicals was diminished by cooperation and dialogue.

B.3.1. The debate on identity in connection with Keele 67

Naturally we ask ourselves: Did the Keele Congress make clear what the concept "evangelical" should cover in describing the Gospel according to the Bible? In a comment when lecturing at Keele, John Stott emphasised the central position of the Bible. The resulting statement of identity shows that Keele, as regards bibliography, stays within the sphere of conservative evangelicalism. The second characteristic of evangelical identity is belief in salvation, based on redemption. An interpretation of Christ's substitutional sacrifice is said to give the deepest, if not the only, meaning of the divine love at the cross.

B.4. Confirming evangelicalism in the Anglican Church

The evangelical leaders had now acknowledged the principle of the comprehensiveness of the church and had denounced their separatist theology. The line from Keele was then to be fulfilled. This was the aim of the NEAC II, the Nottingham Congress in 1977. If this epoch is considered to be the climax of the renewal of the evangelicals under the leadership of Stott, it does not mean that the development was without complications. Difficulties as regards unity and theological views arose around the charismatic movement. Loyalty towards the church did not prevent severe criticism from being expressed against its theological line or against university theology.

B.4.1. The debate on identity in connection with Nottingham 77

The authors of the article on the doctrine of salvation had strangely enough refrained from expounding on the Epistle to the Romans on the issue of salvation. The evangelicals had also changed their bibliography by way of understanding the Bible from a contextual point of view. At the Nottingham Congress 1977 the most shocking occasion was Anthony Thiselton's lecture on hermeneutics. The debate during the congress confirmed a more conservative bibliography. In this respect the congress did not, as with the doctrine of salvation, take steps toward liberal evangelicalism.

B.4.2. The debate on identity after Nottingham 77

The internal discussion after Nottingham follows two lines. On the one hand the more conservative group wishes to hold on to the traditional, confessional criteria for true evangelicalism. On the other hand a growing group of chiefly younger theologians wishes to strengthen and deepen the cooperation with other Anglicans, even at the cost of ceasing to be evangelical. In spite of the fact that James Packer and Stott within the Keele-Nottingham-wing represent a conservative line of doctrine, they will still, because of their opinion on

participation in church life, be attacked by representatives of strict confessional Protestantism. In this debate, the group loyal to the church is represented by Tom Wright. In contrast to the confessional group mentioned above, Wright sees a renewal of evangelicalism in the adoption of a stronger Catholic view of the Church.

B.5. The growing schism within evangelicalism

During the eighties evangelicals have been increasingly integrated in the Anglican church organization on a diocesan and national level. Growth usually takes place in churches that are seen as “evangelical” or “charismatic”. Doctrinally, among most evangelicals the changes are not always very radical. It is probably indisputable that theologians within the Keele-Nottingham-wing themselves have a bibliology that earlier was regarded as belonging to liberal evangelicalism. The mark of identity primarily insisted on is evangelism, but now the traditional forms for it are being questioned, and sometimes because of a non-traditional doctrine of redemption.

Today the internal schism has increased and developed into a questioning of one another’s evangelical identity. But the main target for the conservatives’ attack is not other evangelicals’ lack of true evangelicalism, but a church which, in their opinion, has gone too far in a liberal direction.

B.5.1. The debate on identity in connection with Caister 88

At Caister 1988, evangelicalism appeared as a varied and, according to certain people, a divided movement. John Stott wishes to interpret evangelicalism as an integration of different elements of doctrine and concrete action, out of a comprehensive perspective. Unlike the critics, Stott does not assume, because of the fact that this subject was not focused at the congress, that the bibliology has been changed. Universal truths can be pursued, according to Stott, even if their consequences seem to differ concerning practical interpretation.

C. Final comments on the issue of definition

C.1. Critical assessment of the issue of definition in Anglican evangelicalism

This historical investigation shows that without doubt evangelicalism has changed, in its external expressions as well as in its theological quality. Undoubtedly, large groups of people have moved from a defensive confessional opinion to a more open and comprehensive point of view on many issues. The development of evangelicalism, from a rigid adherence to the authority of the Bible to an open acknowledgement of the pluralism of interpretation, has raised many questions along the way. The American theologian David Wells sees in this a transition from a confessional point of view to a trans-confessional one. This negative development, in the opinion of Wells, has been supported by the charismatic movement, which, in a postmodern way, does not perceive confession as resting on cognitive truths but on spiritual experiences.

4. The message of salvation

A. The issue of salvation in John Stott’s theology

A.1. The main theme in Christian belief – the meaning of the issue of salvation to John Stott.

The salvation issue, according to his own statements, plays a central role in Stott's theology. This is in accordance with evangelical tradition.

A.3. Church doctrine and revival belief – a definition of the doctrine of salvation

It is evident that the influence of the Reformation has strongly affected the development of John Stott's theology. However, it must be added that Stott, from the perspective of church-history, also can be said to belong to the pietist wing. But Stott's doctrine of salvation is more than a reflection on this inheritance. He modifies the influences that surround him.

B. Discussions on the issue of salvation in connection with John Stott's theology

B.1. Separate but equal – salvation and social justice in evangelicalism

Unlike evangelicalism during the first half of the twentieth century, many now active evangelicals have not been satisfied with the traditional doctrine of personal salvation. They aim for a new construction of theology that will cover responsibility for social justice as well. Starting in the sixties the issue has been discussed at a number of conferences. The breakthrough for a stronger engagement in social justice took place at the *Lausanne Congress* in 1974. Within the evangelical movement the discussion has continued since then, with an important landing in the *Grand Rapids Consultation* 1982. There has been a movement away from seeing social responsibility as subordinate to evangelism, via acknowledging them as equal partners, to an attempt by a few theologians to make a comprehensive concept, seeing the two parts as integrated in a joint process. A more or less general evangelical viewpoint today is that human being's total life is placed under God's sovereignty and his redeeming power. The disagreement has often been about evangelism having priority or not, due to the eternal destiny of mankind.

B.2. Faith in Christ as the ground for salvation – John Stott in discussion with liberal theology

Stott's theology can be said to have Christ as its foundation for interpretation. The foundation of soteriology is Christology. This summarises the objective and the subjective, according to Stott. Christ's death, as well as his resurrection, are historical facts, and they are also personally experienced realities.

The death of Christ has a salvific value, because of whom Christ was. In the person of Christ, God has been incarnated. Metaphysical questions on God's existence, on the other hand, are rejected. Through the incarnation God was brought to human beings, and in the crucifixion human beings were brought to God. The connection between the incarnation and the crucifixion is clear. Christ's pre-existence and virgin birth are necessary conditions for the redemption offered by Christ. The cross, however, is the crucial event. The Gospel gives a meaning, passing all human understanding, to his person and his mission. To trust in Christ's salvation is to proclaim his divinity. The divinity of Christ is the centre of Stott's doctrine of salvation. According to Stott, in Christ God has revealed himself as the Redeemer. Salvation is acted out by God himself in history, and consequently it can be proven true. Being historical, this crucial part of Christian belief is given physical form.

B.3. Justification by faith as the way to salvation – John Stott in discussion with Anglo-Catholic theology

All Christian experience, according to John Stott, is based on the doctrine of justification by faith, which, subjectively speaking, means a personal awareness of God's forgiving love, expressed in a sanctified life. Objectively, it acknowledges the redemption of Christ as the only foundation for salvation. In the subjective experience, as well, there is an objective element, since the true and living faith is centered on what Christ has done. Justification by faith, according to Stott, is therefore to be defined as an act of God's free grace in Christ, through which man is accepted and regarded as righteous, only because of the righteousness of Christ, which is attributed to the person who accepts it in faith. The metaphorical language used by Stott is juridical in nature and signifies justification.

However, on the subjective side John Stott emphasises the demand for repentance and faith. God will not justify man until he has accepted what Christ has done. On the other hand, faith does not justify, in the sense that it is the cause for salvation. In a theological environment where the capability to believe is emphasised, Stott is eager to reject every addition to Christ's achievement. Faith is never a deed.

Without making it too wide-ranging, Stott also defines reconciliation, rebirth and repentance in the doctrine of salvation. A recurrent view is that even the conceptions that describe a subjective experience are seen as objectively coming from God himself. The crucial point with Stott is to observe the necessity of personal acceptance. Our faith demands a correct content, and that is not a general doctrine, but Christ himself.

B.4. Truth for ethical change - Critical assessment of the discussions on the issue of salvation in connection with John Stott's theology

Compared to Anglican tradition regarding the importance of the incarnation, evangelical theology is predominantly fixed to the cross of Christ. Faith, understood as trust, is another evangelical characteristic, but here this faith will critically connect to evangelicalism's emphasis on the questions of truth in the Bible. Finally we will illuminate Stott's contribution to the discussion of forensic justification.

Sometimes John Stott is so emphatic about the death of Christ that other things around Jesus remain in the background. Possibly this could be said to correspond to the passion texts in the New Testament.

To John Stott, preaching redemption is not only proclaiming someone who is dead, but proclaiming a Christ who in living power makes redemption an experience, a reality. Since God is personal, we must have knowledge of him in a way that is relevant to persons. Accordingly, faith is more than logically accepting objective matters.

It is an open question whether Stott has placed himself in a traditional Reformation wing concerning justification by faith, and if this should be seen as forensic. Stott's conviction that the basic meaning of justification is forensic does not prevent him from letting the forensic shift into the ethical. He claims that the reformers refused to distinguish between a new status and a new life.

C. The pattern of the issue of salvation in John Stott's theology

C.1. God in Christ – the starting point for John Stott's doctrine of salvation

In the cross God's love and holiness are revealed, and these are realities of God's nature. Accordingly, redemption cannot only be related to one single specific attribute of God, but to

God as God, to God as holy love. No part of the divine reality is prior to the other. God is the holiness that condemns and the love that forgives.

Prevailing in Stott's theology is, however, the sovereignty of the divine love. Stott does not want to emphasise love at the cost of holiness, or by ignoring holiness. Being holy, the loving God reacts with anger over sin. This anger is of a personal kind, even if it should not be understood as a human, defective reaction. God's deprecation of sin is total, absolute. Even when using this concept of God, John Stott is continually extending over the objective as well as over the subjective. The thought of anger will present a subjective complication to modern thought, but this does not prevent Stott from being captured in a personal way by a God, who is objectively described in the Bible. Stott believes that the element of holiness has a biblical reference, but also that it can be embraced by the experience of a contemporary Christian.

C.2. Christ's substitutionary sacrifice – the focus of John Stott's doctrine of salvation

Also in the doctrine presented by Stott, including the substitutionary acting of Christ, it is assumed that Christ is united with God when he carries out his task. The implication is also that the Divine Man acts as a representative for all mankind, i. e. as the second Adam, making universal claims. Christ, being God in human form, fulfills his unique task of redeeming sin. Here his divinity renders real value, depth, and power to his work before God, so that a change in God can be said to have taken place. In light of this, Stott's Christology appears to be a very practical doctrine, for the power of the Christian life all depends on the understanding of redemption, that has originated it. That which is objective will influence the subjective experience.

John Stott rejects a redemptive description with three parties: a sinner, a judge, and an innocent victim. Instead, God himself took our place, since there is no substantial difference between the Son and the Father in the Trinity. The initiative and the accomplishment is therefore a self-satisfaction within the Divinity. For Stott, then, the best description is therefore that God in Christ redeemed the world. It is the Father's initiative and the Son's mediating.

C.3. God's acting in God's Son – a critical assessment of the pattern of the issue of salvation in John Stott's theology

Rather generally, theologians will admit that the New Testament teaches that human being was reconciled with God through Christ's sacrifice. The question raised is if there also is biblical support for the claim that God has been reconciled with man. Stott does not separate justice from love, since he is of the opinion that these are one in God's nature. God's deeds are one with his nature, which is holy love. Redemption is the perfect expression of God's love, and in it justice is done, as far as His holy reaction against sin is concerned. It is evident that Stott eagerly seeks to find the biblical truth about redemption by refusing to imprison truth in a juridical order. One cannot find support for interpreting Stott's theology as insisting that the purpose of Christ's ministry is to persuade the Father to be merciful. Certain expressions with Stott could be implying this, according to his critics, if one does not consider the qualifications he has added. However, this contradictory message with the God who loves and the God who can be angry in his essence does not really exist in Stott's teaching.

D. The defence of the salvation issue in John Stott's theology

D.1. Sinners with responsibility – the anthropology in John Stott's doctrine of salvation

Stott presents redemption not only as a change in legal status and as a recovered relationship, but as having an effect on a person's total life. It is difficult to decide what is most crucial, the objective justification or the subjective transformation. But it is evident that the subjective is dependent on the objective in a way that is not the case of the reversed order.

The reality of the need of redemption is caused by the alienation between God and human beings. Stott points to God's consistent attitude towards sin but also to human beings' position as responsible beings before God. Their sin is a disturbance of their relationship with God, primarily caused by egoism. It is also a disturbance of their constitution, since they are unable to contribute to their own salvation.

Having surrendered to Christ, the Christian is united with his Lord. A Christian life has become possible, since the Christian is "in Christ". Stott frequently comes back to the greatness of this life, seeing assurance of salvation as a true experience. This doctrine can be exaggerated as well as denied, but Stott tries to revive this assurance of salvation by basing his claims on Christ's objective work on the Cross and the Spirit's subjectively experienced ministry in the life of the Christian.

D.2. Creation and the Kingdom of God – salvation and social justice in John Stott's theology

Even if Stott mostly has used creation theology as the ground for social engagement, it is evident that he has paid more and more attention to Kingdom theology. In any case, he has increasingly emphasised the issue of social justice, even in a radical form. John Stott has felt an urgent need to bring evangelism and social justice as close to each other as possible, theologically and practically. Stott views man at creation level as well as at salvation level. Justice is related to the issue of creation. It is also evident that Stott, theologically, has brought the Lausanne Movement to a greater radicalism. And it is obvious, as well, that the movement as it is today has not responded to these challenges.

Stott speaks of the consequences of salvation in the individual believer's life, but his greatest concern is the social implications. Human beings can be regarded from the point of view of creation as well as from that of salvation. Nobody is excluded from Christian's responsibility. Stott has rediscovered the evangelical interpretation of Christian faith as a vital social and moral energy. According to Stott, the most radical consequences of this are to be seen in the Christian life style.

D.3. Faith and experience together – a critical assessment of the defence of the salvation issue in John Stott's theology

The critical assessment, which is of interest for us, is primarily the relationship between Creation theology and the theology of the Kingdom. Concerning the salvation of man, Stott's opinion of the objective and the subjective is here illuminated more conclusively.

As this study has shown, Stott has regarded social responsibility as a necessary part of the Christian faith. However, it is less certain that he has analysed fully the theological consequences. The underlying problem is often the tension between Creation ethics and Kingdom ethics. Professor Oliver O'Donovan, Oxford, pleads for a co-ordination of creation and salvation based on the resurrection of Christ.

Stott tends to judge salvation and social justice as polar opposites, and their combination then becomes filled with tension. In his book *Witness to the World* mission-theologian David Bosch, South Africa, assumed that these two are not identical, but must not be separated. When examining this suggestion it is difficult to see a great deviation from that of John Stott.

With a few modifications, the evangelical solution of the salvation/social justice problem will probably be found somewhere near John Stott's point of view.

It remains for me, in this critical assessment, to investigate how Stott has succeeded in treating the two components objectivity and subjectivity. Stott emphasises the empirical part, and at the same time he insists on its historical objectivity. However, Stott never encourages a faith based on experience. According to Stott, the Cross cannot be preached only as an experience. For him a historical insight of the death of Christ is possible. Our investigation has shown that Christ's resurrection is, for John Stott, a bridge between the objective and the subjective.

Stott's interpretation of the atonement stresses the objective, that is, it places salvation in history, outside of man's subjective experience. Actually, Stott sees three steps – an objective, historical event, described in the Bible, to be experienced today.

5. The authority of the message of salvation

A. The issue of authority in John Stott's theology

A.1. Authority according to Christian belief – the meaning of the issue of authority for John Stott.

The authority of the message of salvation is dependent on whether the Bible is seen as God's word or not. Consequently, the authority issue is clearly connected with the issue of salvation.

A.2. Normative criteria – a definition of the issue of authority

The predominant problem for modern theology, and for evangelicals as well, is the issue of revelation and its authority. The solution of this problem is the foundation for the theological system that is built up. Disagreement on the origin and foundation of truth makes it impossible to agree on the contents of truth. In our discussion, four examples appear to be the most important ones: the Bible principle of evangelicalism, the Anglo-Catholic view on tradition, the rationalistic test of the liberal theologians, and the Barthian view on the Bible as a witness.

B. Discussions on the issue of authority in connection with John Stott's theology

B.1. Truth and authority – the issue of authority in evangelicalism

During the last century the evangelical bibliology has been challenged in different ways by the culture around it. It has therefore varied in expression, according to the primary task it has taken on. Because of the liberal theology at the beginning of the century the evangelicals felt that the truth of the Bible was threatened. After the conflict around Bible criticism that took place in the twenties and the thirties, the conservative wing discovered that society was left without an authoritative message. The new evangelicalism that arose during the forties assumed that the Bible must be the foundation when communicating authoritative truth. However, the ability to do this has been restrained by the internal conflict around the infallibility issue, where, according to our analysis, four groups have been making separate definitions.

B.2. Authoritative bibliology – John Stott in discussion with liberal theology

John Stott has been taking part in the debate with proponents of a critical view on the Bible. Even though he has always been open for dialogue, in his relations with liberal theology, principally, he starts from a nearly total opposite position as regards bibliology. For Stott, there seems to exist a gap between these two types of Christian belief, and this can hardly be bridged over by some form of theological reconciliation, since the welfare of the church and the existence of the message are at stake. He considers the opinions of the liberal theologians as concessions to a relativistic trend. The theology that has not drawn its insight from the Word, the objective Word, according to Stott, will then appear as a subjectifying element. One should not forget, however, that his dialogue with liberal theology also has led him to several self-critical opinions, such as the one on the sterility of evangelical theology.

B.3. Traditional bibliology – John Stott in discussion with Anglo-Catholic theology

The theological debate with Anglo-Catholics has been mostly of a different nature than the sometimes very sharp criticism of the liberal group. John Stott has supported co-operation with the first-mentioned group. Concerning the extreme authority for Christians, Stott adheres to a traditional Protestant view on the sovereignty of the Scriptures. Here Stott also chooses to emphasise theologically the word of the Bible, which he believes can be used as an objective authority. Tradition, being some kind of collective human experience, has the weakness of being subjectively defined, according to Stott.

Consequently, he is critical of several features in the Catholic church as well as in the ecumenical work. It is sometimes mistakenly maintained by these groups, that church tradition is on a level with the Bible. According to Stott's understanding of the canon process, church tradition is subordinated to the Bible. One example of learning from tradition, says Stott, is that the bibliology of evangelicalism can be verified by historical examples from church history.

B.4. Opposites that separate – a critical assessment of discussions on the authority issue in connection with John Stott's theology

We devote this critical assessment to a matter that is also an urgent one in the thesis: to consider the relation between the subjective and the objective in Stott's view on authority. Leaning on the concept of objective truth, he feels that our knowledge of God is not determined by human sense and religious experience, even if it is influenced by these. The revelation is supernatural, God being its source, far beyond man. This is where the dividing line will be concerning liberal theology. Revelation and Scripture can not be identified in this way, according to liberal theology. It finds evangelical theology inconsistent when it states that God did adjust to a certain history, and that certain people received this revelation in such a perfect way that it transcends human limitations. Opposing an evangelical view there is a more subjectively focused theology, where "revelation" is more seen as people's efforts to define their existential experiences.

C. The pattern of the issue of authority in John Stott's theology

C.1. Revelation in deed and words – John Stott's starting point for the issue of authority

For John Stott, deeds and words are brought together in the biblical pattern of revelation. The event itself and its interpretation are one. The Bible records historical events, but it also gives them a divine interpretation. To a certain extent the event must be separated from the Bible as

an instrument for the revelation. But in describing God in personal terms, as an active and speaking God, Stott establishes a connection between deed and word. Through *imago Dei* a communication with God is made possible, on a personal level, and according to Stott this is primarily determined by the rationality of human being. For Stott, as an evangelical, revelation has a cognitive side. For evangelicals, knowing a person is an indispensable part of a personal relation.

C.2. Revelation in Christ and in the Bible –John Stott’s focus for the issue of authority

The Bible has the same purpose as the revelation, i. e. to witness to Christ. Christ is the key to the Bible, but the Bible gives credibility to the witness of Christ. This witnessing includes references to stories about miracles, and those are, according to Stott, part of the historical foundation of the revelation. Historical truth is of great importance, even if it is communicated in other forms than the historical writing of our time.

For a conservative evangelical Christian like Stott, God revealed in Christ is the supreme authority. The Bible should therefore be read for the purpose of salvation and with Christ as a hermeneutical principle. The supreme authority is not the Bible but the living God in the Holy Trinity, seen in the history of salvation. The Bible is, according to this same tradition of faith, a means of grace through which God speaks. The Bible is a means, not a goal. Its authority does not rest in itself, but in God. But the Bible is a part of the revelation of God, and as such it is an authority. It is namely here that the inspired interpretation of God’s work of salvation is to be found.

C.3. Propositions that were personalised - A critical assessment of the pattern of the issue of authority in John Stott’s theology

The issue that will be dealt with in this critical assessment is how the events of salvation can be known. The answer, according to evangelical theology, must be that these historical events are told and interpreted in the Bible. Evangelical theology contends that the revelation of God is taking place in the historical event as well as in the communication of the meaning of these events. The cognitive content of the revelational event can be defined in theological propositions. The Bible will then be a rational revelation of God and man, and God uses our logic to convince us. Stott does not accept a situation where a matter will be seen as true in a religious experience, but as false in an objective reality. But even if, to Stott, the Bible plays this direct role in the authority pattern, it cannot be said to have an absolute significance. The only thing of absolute significance is the divine revelation in Christ.

D. The defence of the issue of authority in John Stott’s theology

D.1. Inspiration as a divine miracle – the Bible’s witness of its authority

The biblical support for the doctrine of inspiration, in spite of the alleged great number of texts, is found, according to Stott, primarily in two texts, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20–21. Stott assumes, in line with the classical evangelical view, that inspiration does not chiefly say anything about what the Bible does, but about what it is. Inspiration concerns the written product and not only the authors or the readers. It must be separated from God’s daily work and, instead, be seen as a miracle. Consequently, it is not a matter of a common form of inspiration, but of a miraculous influence. The words of the biblical authors are also the words of God.

John Stott finds the exegetical ground for this in, for example, 2 Timothy 3:16, where the word “*theopneustos*” is interpreted as the Bible being “breathed out by God”, not as the Spirit being “breathed into” the authors. God’s Spirit is said to have been supporting the authors when producing the Bible, so that they have written that which God wished them to write. As we will see, this does not exclude human being’s free participation, according to Stott’s paradoxical thinking.

D.2. Incarnation in truth – Christ’s witness to the authority of the Bible

Stott’s bibliology is by himself described as established with belief in Christ as a presupposition. This does not mean that it can be fully proved that it is to be preferred to a bibliology with other premises. However, Stott himself would say that it has evidential support in the witness of Christ. Stott does not consider this to be an adapted opinion of Christ’s, relying on his contemporaries and their views. Stott sees the argumentation of Christ as a sign of total belief in the truth of the Old Testament, even in its small details. The historical support for the inspiration of the New Testament is found in the authority with which Christ appointed his apostles to be his authorised representatives. And therefore, in his surrender to Christ a Christian accepts the authority of the Bible. You cannot claim to worship Christ without believing in his clear teaching on the Scripture, Stott says.

D.3. Authorship in freedom – the human authors’ witnessing under the authority of the Bible

The Bible is, to Stott, a product of human as well as of divine activity. Consequently, its authorship can be described on a human level, but also on a divine level. From a human perspective there is freedom of thought and of expression. In Stott’s thinking, the other part of the paradox consists of the divine insight that was given to the authors. Stott means that the inspiration has led to the words, which are born in the minds of the authors, according to one side of the paradox. In a divine perspective this process takes place under the guidance of the Spirit, and this makes it whole. That which is human must not be denied, which is what happens if the inspiration is seen as mechanical, but neither must it be seen as a hindrance for the communication of divine truth. It is necessary for John Stott to stress the human features in the Bible, since God has wished to communicate with us in this way.

D.4. Truth according to genre and intention – infallibility and its witness to the authority of the Bible

John Stott considers the Bible to be true. He is so convinced about this that he uses the word “infallibility” or “inerrancy”. But the fact is that Stott is not satisfied with these expressions, which grammatically seen are in the negative. He would prefer, perhaps at least at the end of the eighties, a positive word, like “trustworthy” or “true”. However, inerrancy does not guarantee that there are no difficulties with the interpretation. Primarily, the key to solve these problems is to study the intention of the text, and also its literary genre. So, by careful exegesis the limits will be set for the teaching that will be true for a Christian.

However, the foremost purpose of the Bible, as Stott and a great number of evangelicals see it, is to teach about the world’s and man’s relation to God. The Bible is an authority on salvation, and not on science, since it has not been intended to give scientific facts. At the instances when the text is meant to teach history it should be seen as true. It is hardly in compliance with Stott’s line of evangelical faith to claim that the statements concerning salvation are true, but not the statements concerning their historical background.

D.5. Authority that has been internalized – a critical assessment of the defence of the issue of authority in John Stott's theology

The most positive contribution in Stott's discussions of the issue of authority is his emphasis that Christ is the focus of the Scriptures. Stott says that he believes in the Bible because of the authority of Jesus – not because of the fact that it scientifically could be proved to hold an exceptional position. Bibliology is a matter of faith. The conviction of the truth of the Bible has its roots in a personal relation with God through Jesus Christ.

The first part of Stott's defence of the authority view, which ought to be scrutinised critically, is his view on the Bible's double authorship. It is not entirely without cause that conservative evangelicalism is criticised for letting its theological presumption of divine inspiration and truth reduce the human aspect in the Scriptures. In the name of justice it must then be called to attention that Stott wants to stress man's freedom. The divine initiative and the human answer must both be given their place.

Many evangelicals think that since the Bible is inspired, it must be infallible. But one could reach quite a different conclusion – that the entire concept of this kind of truth is an anachronistic idea that has arisen during the contemporary pursuit of historical correctness and scientific exactitude. Stott's devotion to the truth of the Bible can be seen as a sort of rationalism. He reads the Bible in order to find divine truths of an objective kind, and in order to get correct information. One could of course increase this criticism, if later hermeneutical views were to be taken into account, with the truth of the Bible seen as being more of a relational and existential nature.

6. The message of salvation contextualized

A. The issue of contextualization in John Stott's theology

A.1. Relevance of Christian belief – the meaning of contextualization for John Stott

Contextualized preaching, for John Stott, aims at explaining the message of salvation. In the seventies John Stott goes into contextualization work. He wants to show that evangelical theology is fully capable of giving an adequate foundation for a modern contextualization that is faithful to the teaching of the Bible and has a keen ear for its contextual expressions.

A.3. The credibility of the biblical interpretation – a definition of the issue of contextualization

During the seventies the optimistic preaching of the authority message had gone to pieces. People did no longer seek authoritative answers. The important issue was a credible Bible interpretation. This resulted in an increased number of evangelicals being interested in the question of contextualization, especially in missiological contexts.

B. Discussions of the issue of contextualization in connection with John Stott's theology

B.1. Meaning and significance – the issue of contextualization in evangelicalism

Evangelicals within the Lausanne movement have increasingly appreciated that the interpreter's situation is taken into account within the so called *New hermeneutics*. It is

considered correct to see God's Word as definite, but also to consider its instrumental function as well. However, some people are concerned that it all will end in historical relativism. The truth equals what the Bible means to us today. For evangelical theology the task is still to find the relationship between this language event and the historic meaning of the text. The Scriptures do not only increase the Christian's self-understanding. It is a criterion of truth.

And so Stott's conclusion, when commentating on "the new hermeneutics", is that it has gone too far. Stott wishes to combine the objective and the subjective interpretation in order to achieve a better contextualization, starting from reality. Throughout this thesis it is made evident that Stott's view on subjectivity is rather cautious and guarded. John Stott gives priority to the objective. An interpreter must first understand the text in an objective sense, Stott argues – and then he can enter it subjectively.

B.2. Rational theology as a method – John Stott in discussion with Liberation theology

John Stott has always been convinced of the normative authority of the Bible. But he is also anxious to show that reason is important when proving the doctrines of the Bible. Faith is trusting in the person of God, but it has always a cognitive, rational side.

So, with Stott there is a trait of rational thinking, and in evangelicalism this is most emphasised by the Warfield-Hodge group in connection with the Princeton-theology from the 1800-century. On the other hand, the group of theologians that have been under the influence of Abraham Kuyper from the Netherlands are more reluctant to build the knowledge of God on reasoning. John Stott seems to want to combine these two features. There is a kind of logical proving of the testimony of the Bible that can lead to a rational thinking as regards faith. Christian faith has fine recommendations in the form of outward, historical reasons for God's actions in history. But the ground for our faith cannot be found in rational proofs but in the revelation. For Stott, there is also a subjective component in the truth. He tries to find the balance between reason and feeling in the Hebrew concept of knowledge, *yada*, where knowledge stands for a living, personal relationship, with experiences included.

B.3. Rational theology as a norm – John Stott in discussion with charismatic theology

According to evangelical thinking the Bible has an objective authority founded on the fact that it has been inspired. This authority will become a subjective experience when the Spirit bears witness in the heart of the believer and makes him obey. Our experience confirms the authority of the Scripture, and the Scriptures confirm that our experience is true. This is the miracle of illumination. Both need to be emphasised. The written text is the source of truth. The Holy Spirit is an active guide in the Christian who can lead and give insight. And this dependence on the Holy Spirit is in fact the contextualization presented by John Stott. This means that the illumination of the Spirit does not replace the knowledge of reason. Human reason and the divine illumination belong together.

Stott felt the need to remind of the dependence on reason in Bible interpretation when he came into contact with charismatic theology. He found tendencies of a much too subjective thinking when meeting the charismatics. He rejects every accusation of not sympathising with the subjective component. However, this must not be the foundation for theology itself. His subjective experiences are said to be considered with a certain objective theology in mind. A religious experience must pass through reason. Reason is God's greatest gift to us.

B.4. Challenges that were laid to rest – a critical assessment of discussions on the issue of contextualization in connection with John Stott's theology

In this critical assessment the first question is what kind of truth concepts Stott uses. The underlying questioning is if the concept of truth can unite the objective and the subjective sides. Then Stott's relation to the methods of liberation theology and of charismatic theology is discussed.

According to the conservative evangelical William Larkin, the duality of historical investigation and spiritual reverence has arisen from the concept of truth in the Bible itself. Truth has a personal, existential dimension, but it is also relevant for correct information. Biblical truth, says John Stott, is only to be found where people are prepared to understand it and obey it. The concept of truth that Stott accepts when stressing obedience to the Bible ought to have led him to a stronger questioning of a one-sided objective truth, often expressed in propositions.

According to the theology of liberation, orthopraxis is relevant for a correct theology. There is a clear connection between doing God's will and knowing God. However, evangelical theology, with John Stott, is usually doubtful in its attitude towards liberation theology and its "new way of doing theology", which is "a critical reflection over Christian practice in the light of God's Word".

Stott did not change his theological method when meeting liberation theology, nor when challenged by the charismatics. Stott wants to seek that which is valuable in each experience, without being misled by subjectivism. One might suspect that he feels that he has paid a high price as far as theological truth is concerned when allowing the charismatic movement into evangelicalism after all. John Stott now lives side by side with a strong subjectivism that his theology finds it hard to cope with.

C. The pattern of the issue of contextualization in John Stott's theology

C.1. Theology as bridge-builder – John Stott's starting point for contextualization

John Stott tries to listen to the old Word and to the modern world in order to combine them in faithfulness towards the Bible and sensitivity towards the world. Consequently he moves between two poles: God's revelation in the Bible and man's existence. Preachers, according to the book *Between two Worlds*, must build a bridge between the biblical authors and men and women of our time. This means a responsibility for a correct communication. It is not possible to speak with a non-problematic authority. When communicating one must take seriously the Bible text as well as the listener's context. The objective truth of the Bible must become an existential truth in human being. The propositions of theology are not sufficient as references of truth.

C.2. An historical incarnation – John Stott's focus for contextualization

The absolutely indispensable requirement for most evangelical theologians, and also for John Stott, is the adherence to the historical truth of the Bible. The central position of historicity will then be a controlling power in the contextualizing work of evangelical theologians. The orthodox teaching, which is so essential for John Stott, must be founded in true history. In polemics against Rudolf Bultmann, Stott comments that there is an important historical content in Christian belief that must be transferred to people of other cultures. It must be communicated to them, whether it can be made to fit into the cultural framework or not. Still,

Stott does not only want to transfer historical truths of for instance the resurrection. Through his resurrection Christ can be available for all people today.

C.3. The intensified listening – a critical assessment of the pattern of the issue of contextualization in John Stott’s theology

The question is to what extent one’s own pre-understanding of the Bible has influenced the lenses through which the texts are being read. Stott’s solution is to be aware of one’s cultural heritage, even if one can not be free from it. Stott says that he can acknowledge this influence without consciously embracing a relativistic view. Still, Stott is not of the opinion that an absolute and final method for theology can exist. It can not be justified, only to see the Bible as an historically given Word. Every preacher must consider the Bible as being the present Word of God.

D. The defence of the issue of contextualization in John Stott’s theology

D.1. Exclusivism as an irreducible minimum – the risk for relativism in the issue of contextualization

Evangelical theologians try to hold on to some constant element, sometimes of anthropological character, sometimes of a theological kind. Stott’s intention has been to point at the constant factor in the teaching of the Bible. It is quite clear that Stott does not deviate from the view that the content of the doctrine is an obligation. The picture used by Stott to describe the Gospel as being everlasting is that of clothes that are being changed while the person is the same. In spite of his extensive contacts with churches of different cultures, Stott has not left his doctrinal concentration. At the same time it has become more and more evident for Stott that Western Christianity is culturally formed and therefore can not be universally normative.

D.2. A truth that became one-sided – critical assessment of the defence of the issue of contextualization in John Stott’s theology

John Stott seriously sees culture as a precedent for the origin and interpretation of the Bible. However, he refuses to accept that the Bible is defined, in an absolute way, by culture in its contents and its truth. The solution of the contextualization problem presented by Stott is sometimes expressed in a way that reduces it to a communication of a given message. Stott admits that it is difficult to decide exactly which elements are cultural and which are temporal in the Gospel, and which principles are super-cultural or eternal. Stott compares this with transposing music to another key. There is always the responsibility of finding a corresponding cultural pattern, a cultural transposition where the inner meaning is preserved. The Lausanne theology and Stott himself lay claim to a true super-cultural Gospel, the structure of which can be contextualized in different forms of language. The evangelical theologian Harvie Conn feels that pursuing such a universal Gospel is a dualistic misunderstanding. The claim must in any case be reduced and embrace a trans-cultural “pattern” instead of “content”.

A more immediate problem is the connection to changes in the conception of truth. Evangelicalism, according to Harvie Conn, must change its conception of truth. The truth that is communicated in revelation is not only an objective word that can be verified in the usual sense and be described in propositions. Instead, truth is also God’s faithfulness. For man, truth ought then to be more of an actualising of such faithfulness, where the opposite of truth is not

falseness, but disobedience. There is a functional line with Stott, where truth becomes a question of obedience and faithfulness. The difference could be that with Stott this is not allowed to neglect the rationally formulated doctrine. Stott tries to unite the objective and the subjective in the issue of contextualization, as he did in his view of revelation.

7. A critical evangelical perspective on the theology of John Stott

A. The challenge for evangelical theology

A.1. Evangelical theology in today's context

In this thesis John Stott's theology has been analysed as an evangelical answer to the challenge of secularisation. Faced with secularisation and its tendency to restrict Christian belief to the private sphere, Stott has aimed at a wholistic view on personal salvation and social justice.

A.2. Evangelical theology and postmodernism

Even for a person who sympathises with evangelical theology it is difficult to make an evaluation of Stott's theology. The difficult part is that Stott's ministry has taken place during a transition period between modernism and so-called postmodernism. Modernism emphasises objective analysis and the difference between subject and object, between the mental and the physical, the intellectual and the emotional, I and the other, and this concept is replaced by a more wholistic attitude where reality is more understood as an organic unity.

One group of evangelicals is of the opinion that great incisions in evangelical belief are needed to make it meet the needs of postmodernism. In the U.S., these so-called "postconservative" theologians are, among others, Clark Pinnock and Stanley Grenz, while Dave Tomlinson has expressed similar opinions in England, where he is called "post-evangelical". Nigel Wright and David Hilborn represent a group within evangelicalism that wants to be influenced by postmodern thinking. Hilborn calls the movement "postmodern evangelicalism".

A.3. Evangelical opinions about the method and content of theology

How, then, will the challenge for theology be appreciated in an evangelical context? This kind of theology, says Stott, wishes to be committed to the Bible as the standard for theological evaluations and for the Christian's faith and life. To him, evangelical also means that Jesus Christ is central as the God of salvation in the history of mankind. The third characteristic feature seems to be the contextualization work.

A.4. Evangelical theology as "Bible" and "Gospel"

In evangelicalism, Christian experiences have been seen as complementary, but also as a protest against a one-sided rationalistic belief. For Stott, faith is not only belief in the Bible, but also trust in the Saviour. Today an increasing number of evangelical theologians interested in spirituality want to emphasise this side of the evangelical inheritance.

B. Evangelical theology and its view on objectivity and subjectivity

B.1. A "correct" and "creative" interpretation

It is an extremely delicate task today to comment on the methods of theology. But, really, all the different suggestions have perhaps arisen out of the tension between a "correct" and a "creative" interpretation of the Bible. The "correct" and the "creative" have been polarised to an ever greater extent.

B.2. Evangelical theology standardised by the content of belief

Faith is objective in the sense that its object is outside of myself. It is subjective since it includes the decision of the will. Accordingly, faith cannot be without an object. The trusting is in itself a thing that makes human beings abandon themselves and rely on that which they find trustworthy. For John Stott, Christ is this reliable foundation. A theology ought to promote the double aim of the Bible: adherence to God's objectively revealed will and to the subjective experience of God's presence.

B.3. Evangelical theology tested scientifically

The demand for a faith that is a point of reference seems to block every true scientific work within theology. Today no scientific definition ought to be accepted uncritically as normative. No science can be at hand without axiom and postulate, and those do not emanate from empirical evidence. The scientific criterion is, however, a systematic line of action. The normative feature in evangelical theology is not that all that is said is absolutely true, but that it can be criticised.

B.4. The Spirit and the Word in evangelical theology

In my thinking, evangelical theology must reach behind a defensive mentality and try to find the dividing line in the suspense of the objective and the subjective by thinking integratively. The connection between that which is objective, a fact, and that which is subjective, an experience, is to be found in God himself. He was God then, and He is God now. Traditional evangelical theology has emphasised God's participation in the history of salvation and in the inspiration of the Bible. Now it needs to be amplified more than before, as regards God's actions today. On a theoretical level Stott has always wanted to assert that the Word is an objective fact while the anointing by the Spirit is a subjective experience. Unfortunately the part played by the Spirit has sometimes been concealed by a rational trend, even with Stott.

B.5. The Spirit and the Word in Pentecostal theology

The Pentecostal movement, according to several scholars, is a protest against modernity, against rigid reason and against one-sided objectivity. It has an evangelical view on the inspiration of the Bible. There is also a very strong emphasis on the direct ministry of the Spirit, in the Christian and in the church. This integration in the life of the Christian and in the church does not disparage the biblical revelation as such, but gives protection against a rationalistic faith. Eliminating people's direct confrontation with the spiritual dimension of reality is a symptom of "the epistemological myopia".

B.6. Freedom and creativity

Evangelical theological work should be an integrated part of life with the Holy Spirit of God. A theologian should not be ashamed of having experienced God. An evangelical theologian ought to have a close relation with the Word as well as with the Spirit.

C. The bibliology of John Stott in an "integrative" perspective

C.1. Receiving the Word

The preaching of the message of the Scriptures about salvation is based on the belief that the Bible is God's Word. The relevant part for Stott is therefore to make the contents of the Bible available for people today. But, says Stott, then it must be known to be a true message. Christian faith can be proved to be true.

C.2. Reason and experience in evangelical theology

For this generation, evangelicalism with John Stott, among others, as a leader has been a religion marked by its emphasis on doctrines. But evangelical tradition also comprises an objection to erroneous rationalistic forms of belief, for example the liberal belief, since it always has asserted the importance of a personal faith and an active Christian life.

C.3. Reason and experience in Pentecostal theology

If Stott would like to follow up his theology on the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration and illumination with a practical experience in theological work, the pneumatological aspect needs to be reinforced. This is a positive trend in the contributions to the hermeneutical debate among Pentecostal theologians round the magazines *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* and *Pneuma*. In Pentecostal theology the authors of the Bible are the witnesses of a tangible historical relationship with God that continues even today. The spectrum of knowledge includes cognition, affection and behaviour, all melted together. The support that Stott assumed he had in a Hebrew understanding of knowledge, from the verb *yada*, is then supplemented with pneumatological insights and experiences. The solution is a more integrated point of view, as interpreted in terms of the *yada*-hermeneutics in Pentecostal theology.

C.4. Evangelical theology and transcendentalism

Conservative evangelicals have said that they want to defend the transcendental against the immanent thinking of our time. It must be said that Stott and evangelical theology have met a great deal of opposition for representing a claim for supernatural truth in the form of biblical inspiration. However, many evangelicals confine supernatural features to the inspiration of the Bible. The challenge is to let charismatic and other religious experiences deeply influence all theological thinking.

C.5. Evangelical theology and the plurality of the text

In order to secure the uniqueness of the Bible being the result of inspiration, evangelical theologians prefer another expression, illumination, for the actual work of the Spirit. The new contribution to evangelicalism within post-conservatism, in this case drawn from the Pentecostal theology, is that the text also might be seen as less dependent on the author's original meaning. The thinking influenced by Pentecostalism could accept "a second naivety".

The biblical story is regarded as true, but just preaching about what happened in a historical context does not satisfy a Pentecostal preacher.

C.6. Functional authority

With such a diverse interpretation of the text, evangelical theology will be one voice among several, and none of them could claim to have found the exclusive truth. The authority of the Bible will then be based on its function, as in post-conservative theology. In a post-modern culture the best way to defend the authority of the Bible could be to create a fellowship in which the Bible works authoritatively.

D. John Stott's doctrine of salvation in an "integrative" perspective

D.1. Preaching the Gospel

According to John Stott's view on Christian faith, the concept of salvation is always a major and important idea.

D.2. The innovation of social justice

As regards a radical application of salvation in the form of Christian engagement in social issues, Stott has stepped forth as an innovator, even if this feature of social justice has been manifest in the evangelical history. Evangelism as well as social justice are crucial concerns for John Stott.

D.3. Salvation in a modernistic perspective

The concept "objective redemption in Jesus Christ" is almost embarrassing in a subjectively disposed society. The emphasis is now more on what Christ can reveal to us about human life. In a post-modern culture, particular claims can be accepted within the scope of a number of varied cultures and beliefs. The problem is no longer the particularity of Christ, but rather the universal claim, that Christ's work includes everyone.

D.4. Salvation in a contextual perspective

Stott has made an effort to bring theology into the world by contextualization. It is then possible to describe God's work of salvation with the aid of different models. Naturally, a more subjectively aimed preaching, with a psychological terminology, could be regarded as a form of adjustment. It is also possible to regard it as a correct contextualization with a more positive focus on human being. The entire question of God might perhaps be better described with human being as the subject than with God as the object.

D.5. Metaphors and true content

A requirement for this contextualization work within the issue of salvation is the thought that even the authors of the New Testament used different metaphors to explain the meaning of the cross. The great number of literary forms must be taken into account when interpreting, and Stott has admitted this in his theory. The matter has been more clearly presented by Kevin Vanhoozer in his discussion of the biblical truth and its varied nature. The literary form of the Bible should determine the hermeneutical line of action.

D.6. Evangelical theology in dialogue with postliberalism

In narrative theology the story and the symbol become integrated features in Christian belief. But a linguistic usage like this cannot be separated from the claims of truth made in Christian belief. In the face of postliberalism and its narrative theology, the first question that is asked is whether faith can be defended in terms of publicly acceptable criteria of truth, or if its claims only can be maintained when based on the logic of faith itself. It is extremely difficult for evangelical theology, following John Stott, to give up the thought that there is a divine rationality that we all have in common, making it possible to distinguish the true from the false.

The second problem is that postliberalism much too quickly leaves the question of the reference of the text and its historical truth. Evangelical theology demands from postliberalism that it will clarify the relation between revelation as literature and history in time and space.

D.7. Objective doctrine questioned

For the post-conservative theologians the preaching of the contradiction of sin is less important. They wish to work with a tempered concept of sin. In their opinion the doctrine of sin does not make sense for post-modern people. The doctrine of penal substitution could easily remind of a legal case where the parties act according to certain rules. A requirement for this doctrine of redemption is the concept of God's wrath. Today many Christians are doubtful of such a language, since they find it totally unworthy of God.

D.8. Objective doctrine defended

All of evangelical history has shown the importance of the doctrine of the substitutionary suffering described in penalty terms. Stott admits that there are a great number of other biblical metaphors, but he argues that substitution is the central theological model. The emphasis on forensic categories could of course mean that God's love is eclipsed. But it is evident that God's love is a central thought in John Stott's theology.

Without an objective way of looking at things, salvation will be nothing but an anthropocentric phenomenon. Salvation is objective, since it takes place ahead of man's own acting or cooperation. The alternative is a conditional salvation with an offer of something to be done – or something that must be experienced.

E. Summary - duality or integration

Evangelical theology has been formed by each of two poles, a doctrinal pole as well as an empirical one, and, historically seen, it has influences from both scholastic and pietistic tradition. Even John Stott has worked within this tension. He has seen this relationship as one with contrasts challenging each other.

The criterion of truth in its modernistic form brought him to a rational theology that did not want to see Christian theology as a subjective undertaking, but as being founded in an objective, historical belief. It must also be acknowledged that Stott moves in an intermediate field, in, for example, his apologetic reasoning. He considers the human mind to be marked by sin, and thereby not wholly capable of discerning truths from lies. And so, in theology, faith is the motive for the pursuit of the intelligence.

The task for rational theology was to protect the objective truth from the subjective experience. Integrative theology must not be understood as a dualistic contrast by placing experience above theology. Instead, the dualistic view is rejected and Bible and theology are integrated with experience.

In this final chapter Stott's theological inheritance has been assessed and criticised from the point of view of a rising evangelical theology that more manifestly seeks integration. The difference is that he has been influenced by the dualistic view of modernity, while the integrative theology attempts to assert evangelical interests in the face of post-modernism. By evangelical standards, Stott was a competent theologian during a couple of crucial decades. He tried to attain sensitivity for certain complicated sections in theology, and he also emphasised the rational feature. This attitude was correct under the circumstances prevailing then. However, due either to his engagement in many parts of the world or to a lack of interest, Stott was not capable of leading evangelical theology into altered cultural and theological circumstances.

Translation: Kerstin Gårsjö, Örebro