

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS IN THE HOMILETICS OF

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# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Topicality and problem

### *1.1.1 Introduction*

Preaching has been recognized throughout the church's history as central and distinctive to Christianity, but in the tide of preaching, in the entire process of ebb and flow, the general level is low today. It is stated by Stott (1982a:7) that "the standard of preaching in the modern world is deplorable". Williams' (1973:1-17) verdict is even harsher: "the sermon is out". The reason for this is to be found not only in the lack of confidence in preaching that comes from the biblical text but also originates in ignorance of the form and content of the expository sermon.

In fact, it is very difficult to determine how an expository sermon should be conducted in modern preaching. But if we give due consideration to the exegetical, hermeneutic and homiletic principles and methods of John Stott's homiletics, a solution can be found and this can help to restore the power of the pulpit in today's world.

### *1.1.2 The content and extent of John Stott's homiletics in his books*

The closing decades of the twentieth century cry out for preaching that is genuinely *biblical*. The constant threat of nuclear war, the rising number of broken families, and the bewildering dilemmas occasioned by technology, combined with a thousand other contemporary problems, demand an encouraging word from pulpits that can be heard as the authentic word from the God who reveals Himself in the pages of the Scriptures (Thompson, 1981:9). But the message flowing from the pulpit has no meaning for the congregation if the content of the sermon has no connection with their own lives and simply bypasses many burdensome and unavoidable issues.

### 1.1.2.1 John Stott emphasizes expository preaching

The type of preaching that could best carry the force of divine authority is expository preaching. We find that John Stott stresses expository preaching: "it is my contention that all Christian teaching is expository preaching" (1982a:125). However, in spite of the clear importance of the expository sermon, it is rare in today's church. The major reason can be a lack of conviction (Stott, 1978b:160). John Stott tries to marshal the major theological convictions which underlie and gird the practice of preaching. They concern the doctrines of God and of Scripture, of the church and the pastorate, and the nature of preaching itself (Stott, 1978b:160-169). Any one of them on its own is really enough to invoke our obedience; the five together leave us without any excuse. He is confident that these arguments will reinforce our trembling resolve so that nothing will deter us from devoting ourselves to our main task of biblical, or expository, preaching.

### 1.1.2.2 John Stott emphasizes preaching as bridge building

Stott is known as one of the greatest and most effective preachers of the twentieth century because he is an expert expositor who accentuates the bridging of the gap between the biblical and the modern worlds. In the message of Ephesians, for example, he displays to an excellent degree his gift for lifting out the central thought from a passage and looking at the whole in perspective, before guiding the Bible student along the finer exegetical points as well, in order to apply the whole forcefully to contemporary church life (1979:89-173). He always concentrates on bridging the gap between the text and its context. So the preacher must do both, being faithful in working at the meaning of a text and then being sensitive in discerning its message for today (Stott, 1992:216). In *The preacher's portrait* he states his own conviction that "we need to gain in the Church today a clearer view of God's revealed ideal for the preacher, what he is and how he is to do his work" (Stott, 1961a:vii).

Up to the present, apart from odd reviewers' brief comments on his published sermons and his books, there has not been an adequate study of the whole body of John Stott's homiletics.

### *1.1.3 Lack of research specifically on the homiletics of John Stott*

No previous detailed research has been done in this specific area. Although this is the case, it does not, however, suggest that Dr John Stott is unknown in evangelical circles. In 1988 one study was done by Groover for his dissertation under the title *The theology and methodology of John Stott as a model for pastoral evangelism (England)*. However, the purpose of his dissertation was to examine the work of John Stott as a pastoral evangelist and theologian in order to begin documenting his contributions to the field of evangelistic studies, even though in chapters 5 and 6 he dealt with his preaching and significant contributions as an expositor in his (Groover's) critical viewpoints. Groover's research concentrated on the matter of John Stott's evangelism but not on his homiletics.

Therefore, the principles and methods of his view on expository preaching, the praxis of preaching, as well as the role of Holy Spirit in preaching, have to be investigated more thoroughly.

Although these principles are going to be dealt with in more detail as this study progresses his principles of preaching are stated specifically here briefly for the sake of the contexts and situation for this study..

#### 1.1.3.1 Principles of preaching

Throughout so many of his published books and articles (more than one hundred) John Stott particularly emphasizes expository preaching as follows: "It is my contention that all Christian teaching is expository preaching" (1982a:125). Expository preaching familiarises both the preacher and the congregation with the Bible because of the emphasis on the text and its context. When he composes his

sermons he always has in mind the main principles of preaching, that is, the triangle of Scripture, tradition and the modern world. His first concern is to be true to the Word of God, allowing it to say what it has to say and not asking it to say what he might want it to say. There is no alternative to the careful exegesis and hermeneusis of the text. He has always tried to understand Scripture, not only in its own light and in the light of tradition, but also in relation to the contemporary world (Stott, 1986a:11,12).

Groover's research is limited to one main point of John Stott's pastoral evangelism. Therefore, it is justified to give full attention to Stott's view on the principles of preaching, both the exegetical principles and the hermeneutic principles of his preaching, because these principles are part and parcel of John Stott's homiletics. The terms exegesis, hermeneusis, hermeneutics, and homiletics will be defined and dealt with more extensively in chapters 3 and 4.

#### 1.1.3.2 Praxis of preaching

All his sermons are situational preachings. They must be studied in a cultural, historical, sociological and personal context. His preaching pertains to what is significant in the Christian faith in today's world; he consistently shows the ability to involve one as a human being in an attempt to understand one's self in the light of what God has created one to be and one's commitment to Jesus Christ as the Lord of life, as well as stimulating one to think for oneself in life situations.

Though Goover's investigation touched the praxis of his preaching and significant contributions as an expositor, he did not present concretely data from Stott's sermons. It is therefore considered that this investigation of the praxis of Stott's preaching may make up for a grave omission in Groover's research.

#### 1.1.3.3 The work of the Holy Spirit

The genius of the Reformation is best described as the rediscovery of the Holy Spirit, the present Christ (Oberman, 1960:11). All Reformed preachers, from Calvin to

Kuyper, even modern preachers, have agreed that preaching should be guided by the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit (Adams, 1982:27). The work of the Holy Spirit makes preaching effective and applicable (Whitesell, 1963:145). John Stott (1990:60) says that "there cannot be understanding without the Spirit of truth and no effective witness without the power" of the Holy Spirit. In his homiletic book, *I believe in preaching*, he emphasizes it again: "our greatest need as preachers is to be 'clothed with power from on high' (Lk. 24:49), so that, like the apostles, we may 'preach the gospel... by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven' (1 Pe. 1:12), and the gospel may come to people through our preaching, 'not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction' (1 Th. 1:5)". Therefore, in order to receive His power, (1) we first have to acknowledge our own emptiness, (2) we must humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and (3) we should admit, and then even to revel in, our own weakness (Stott, 1982a:329-330).

Therefore, undoubtedly, it is the Holy Spirit who renews the church, but the Spirit's sword is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). Through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God together it is possible to recover serious biblical preaching. So it is very important to deal with the role of the Holy Spirit in Stott's preaching because an absolute need of the Holy Spirit is the essence of true preaching. The research of Groover and some others did not treat the work of the Holy Ghost as an important element in the theory and practice of Stott's preaching. Stott makes it clear that in the act of preaching, or the communication of the sermon, an unshakeable reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit is the most crucial factor.

In conclusion, we will concentrate in this study on the following main questions:

- (1) What are the principles and methods of exegesis, hermeneusis and homiletics in his sermons? And subsequent to this, what are the implications of the principles and methods of exegesis, hermeneusis and application in his sermons.
- (2) In particular, what does application in a sermon, that is, 'Bridge-building' in his sermons mean and what are the implications for preaching?

- (3) How can we evaluate and apply his homiletic principles and methods of preaching in the contexts of biblical and Reformed theology?

*1.1.4 Possible contribution of this study to existing knowledge.*

A further result of this study may be to elicit from this material some principles and methods of homiletics which he holds in his books.

Since he is evaluated as a great preacher of this century in Reformed and evangelical circles, it should be accepted that his sermons deserve more attention than they have received up to now.

Finally, this research can give fresh impetus to all preachers to appraise the principles and methods of their own homiletics.

## **1.2 Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this study is threefold:

- 1.2.1 to undertake a closer investigation of and to describe Stott's exegetical, hermeneutic and homiletic principles and methods;
- 1.2.2 to arrive at a descriptive analysis of his homiletic principles and especially, to examine his views concerning the application in a sermon - "BRIDGE-BUILDING"; and
- 1.2.3 a final objective is not to stop at a descriptive analysis of his principles and methods of preaching but to try to evaluate them in the context of both biblical and Reformed theology.

### **1.3 Basic hypothesis**

Firstly, the basic hypothesis for this study is that the theories and methods of Dr. John Stott's homiletics have been founded on the Holy Scripture and this foundation deserves closer investigation, also for the praxis of preaching.

Secondly, a study of the way in which Stott handles the relationship between exegesis and hermeneutics may shed new light on the process of homiletics.

Finally, the result of an investigation of his homiletics could possibly reveal a model of the expository sermon for modern preachers.

### **1.4 Method of research**

The method of this study is to identify, interpret, analyse, evaluate and synthesise John Stott's principles from writings, sermons, commentaries, articles and other published data or material applicable to this subject.

The main method of this study is to investigate John Stott's works by way of analysis and interpretation.

Secondly, the method of this study is especially to study the recorded tapes of his sermons, personal interviews with him and members of his staff, and the close scrutiny of all materials published by him on the overall subject of preaching.

Thirdly, in our presentation it is sometimes inevitable that many quotations and examples have to be used in order to elucidate his principles and methods. Occasionally, when the matter concerned is not so all-important as the others, the citations are not given in the text of this thesis; in that case we will only refer to where they can be found.

In connection with the method of our evaluation the following remarks are necessary: Where no elucidation is given, it should be assumed that the writer agrees with John Stott's position. Secondly, when the writer judges that certain matters are more important or relevant than others, an explicit evaluation, either in the positive or the negative, will be presented. These methodological principles will consistently be applied throughout this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 2: A SKETCH OF JOHN STOTT'S BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 A general sketch of his pilgrimage

#### 2.1.1 *Early life*

##### 2.1.1.1 Preamble

The primary factor in the development of man's preaching is the process of growth of the man. All preachers recognize the importance of the developmental process. First of all, we need to study Stott's background of life. Because an understanding of the process of his growth facilitates an interpretation of Stott and of the relevance of his sermon for contemporary preaching.

John Stott requested that no biography be written about him while he was living. This requirement stems from his conviction that no objective biography of a living person should be written. On his 70th birthday, four years ago, his friends produced a book, *The Gospel in the modern world*, the opening chapter of which contains a very short biographical summary of his life (Eden & Wells, 1991:11-26).

Because a biography is important to gain perspective on his thoughts, we will give a brief general sketch of his pilgrimage.

##### 2.1.1.2 His family background

John Robert Walmsley Stott was born on April 27, 1921, and was named after his grandfather (John Robert Stott) and his father (Gordon, 1991:294). He was raised at home with his two older sisters. They lived in West Kensington, in London and later in Harley Street, known for its consulting rooms of prominent physicians. It was not far from All Souls' Church, Langham Place where he worshipped, strategically

located near the BBC headquarters and all the major department stores of Oxford Street and Regent Street (Capon, 1974:34; Catherwood, 1985:13).

His father was Sir Arnold Walmsley Stott, a distinguished physician (heart specialist) (Dudley-Smith, 1991:13). He was educated at Rugby School, Trinity College, Cambridge, and St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and was honoured by being named Extra Physician to Her, Majesty's Household, Consulting physician to Westminster Hospital, the army, and the Royal Chest Hospital (Stott, 1995: interview with author; Gordon, 1991:294). He was knighted for his service to the Army during World War II. He passed away on June 15, 1958 (Stott, 1964:1051). He was not a believer and only went to church twice a year, at Christmas and on Easter day to show solidarity with his family (Stott, 1995:interview with author).

John Stott describes his father as "a self-styled agnostic brought up under the influence of scientific secularism" (Capon, 1974:34). His father's embodiment of scientific methodology and analytical thinking can be seen today in John Stott's work. The attention to detail and orderly thinking was no doubt learned as much at home as at Cambridge. The fact that his father was a very learned agnostic may be the reason why Stott felt a strong urge to reach this type of person. Many Christians exhibit great concern for the 'down and out' but neglect the upper classes as though these people can take care of themselves. Stott, as will be seen, has had empathy for all of humanity. His parish included many middle and upper-class people, and he accepted the pastoral burden for these people.

Stott's mother, Emily Caroline Holland, married his father in 1911 (Groover, 1988:53). She was a Lutheran. Since there was no Lutheran church in the Langham Place section of London where they lived, she took her children to an Anglican church, All Souls' (Stott, 1995:interview with author). This early blending of Lutheran and Anglican influences are still seen in Stott's ecumenical openness. Stott says of his mother: "My mother had been brought up as a devout Lutheran ... she taught my sisters and I [sic] to go to church on Sundays, and to read the Bible and 'say our prayers' daily (Eddison, 1983:57). She was fluent in German and French, being a

German who had lived in Belgium (Stott, 1995:interview with author). Thus Stott was brought up in an international home, aware of his being a world citizen as well as a British subject.

#### 2.1.1.3 His school background

From 1935 to 1940 John Stott attended the secondary school, the well-known Rugby School, famous for the origin of the British game with the same name. Under its distinguished headmaster, Dr. Arnold, it became known for founding not only the popular sport named after it, but also the public school tradition of the 'stiff upper lip', the scorning of emotion, and the cultivation of the gentlemanly image that so long marked the English middle and upper classes. Needless to say, as one older man has recalled, such a school was far from sympathetic to evangelical Christianity (Catherwood, 1985:14).

Following completion of his studies at Rugby he attended Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1940 to 1944. There he studied the Modern Language Tripos [examination for an honours degree at Cambridge University] (Stott, 1995: Interview with author). This school seemed to have been a very suitable background for a career in the Diplomatic Service for which John's natural gifts, and his talent for languages, fitted him so admirably. There is a photograph of him as head boy at Rugby in which one can discern a certain patrician cast of countenance before the grace of Christian humility had been long at work (Dudley-Smith, 1991:13-14). He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1943 and was elected a Senior Scholar. It is interesting to note that these are the same schools to which his father went.

Following these academic accomplishments, Stott entered what is called a theological college known as Ridley Hall, at Cambridge. From 1944 to 1945 he studied theology to prepare himself to be ordained into the Church (Stott, 1995:interview with author). He took a Master of Arts degree in 1947 with honours. In 1971 the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, proclaimed him a Doctor of Divinity. He also received a Lambeth D.D. in 1983 (Groover, 1988:55). Stott could have remained at

Cambridge for further formal academic training. Charles Raven, Master of Christ's College, encouraged him to do doctoral work there, but a strong call to pastoral ministry and the opportunity to return as curate to his home parish prevailed in 1945 (Capon, 1974:35).

## *2.1.2 Conversion and glorious calling*

### *2.1.2.1 His conversion*

A basic urge to be a Christian is a prerequisite to heeding a particular call to be a preacher (Jung, 1986:9). This cannot be disputed. But our contemporary understanding of the pulpit ministry demands that we take into consideration John Stott's conversion before his calling as a preacher. It was his own conviction that, "the preacher's words, however clear and forceful, will not ring true unless he speaks from conviction born of experience" (Stott, 1961:76). In addition, Lloyd-Jones (1982:103) says that "obviously the preacher is a Christian like every other Christian. That is basic and an absolute essential". As we have seen, John Stott was born and brought up by a pious mother who was a devout Lutheran. He regularly attended the All Souls' Church, read the Bible and prayed daily. He had by then already professed his faith and was a communicant member. Everybody assumed him to be a real Christian. But Stott confesses that "in fact, I found the whole exercise extremely unsatisfying. Convinced that there was more to religion than I had so far discovered, I was used on half-holiday afternoons to creep into the Memorial Chapel by myself, in order to read religious books, absorb the atmosphere of mystery, and seek for God" (Eddison, 1983:57) who seemingly continued to elude him.

He also attended various Christian meetings on occasion. In his case, his conversion was progressive. But Groover (1988:56) points out that John Stott experienced conversion prior to his sixteen birthday in 1938 while a student at Rugby School. There were some irresistible influences which gradually prepared his way to accepting the Christian faith. One of these was the sermon of the Rev. Nash of the Scripture Union. He was a visiting speaker. When he had been invited by a friend, John Bridger,

a year senior to him, to attend a meeting of the school Christian Union, Stott wrote as follows: "He was nothing much to look at and certainly no ambassador for muscular Christianity. Yet as he spoke I was riveted. His text was Pilate's question: 'What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?' That I needed to do anything with Jesus was an entirely novel idea to me, for I had imagined that somehow he had done whatever needed to be done, and that my part was only to acquiesce.

This Mr. Nash, however, was quietly but powerfully insisting that everybody had to do something about Jesus, and that nobody could remain neutral. Either we copy Pilate and weakly reject him, or we accept him personally and follow him" (Eddison, 1983:57; Gordon, 1991:295). Stott went on saying "that night I came to Christ on my own, on my knees my bedside. No I did not have an emotional experience; it was only gradually that I came to understand what had happened to me. That was in 1938 when I was 17" (Stott, 1995:interview with author).

Significantly, however, Nash did not even then press for a decision. He had the sensitivity and wisdom. Stott remembers, "to let me go, so that I could 'open the door' to Christ by myself, which I did that very night by my bedside in the dormitory while the other boys were in bed and asleep" (Catherwood, 1985:16).

During the third period in Stott's spiritual growth, Nash began writing letters to him weekly and continued to do so for seven years. Stott has written that Nash's expectations "for all those whom he led to Christ were extremely high. He could be easily disappointed. His letter to me often contained rebuke, for I was a wayward young Christian and needed to be disciplined. In fact, so frequent were his admonitions at one period that, whenever I saw his familiar writing on an envelop, I needed to pray and prepare myself for half an hour before I felt ready to open it" (Catherwood, 1985:17). Nash had given Stott a great love for the Bible, but he had now advanced considerably beyond the rather basic kind of Christianity represented by Nash (which, to the more doctrinal Evangelical, seemed rather too pietistic in approach and divorced from reality), while fully retaining his evangelical faith.

On Stott's expository sermon, *The message of 2 Timothy*, he (1973:29) remembers his spiritual fellowship with Mr. Nash by the saying the following: "I thank God for the man (Nash added by writer) who led me to Christ and for the extraordinary devotion with which he nurtured me in the early years of my Christian life. He (Nash) wrote to me every week for, I think, seven years. He also prayed for me every day. I believe he still does. I can only begin to guess what I owe, under God, to such a faithful friend and pastor".

Stott later became secretary and treasurer of Nash's Varsity and Public schools camps (Capon, 1974:34; Gordon, 1991:295). There was a further powerful factor in his conversion. Using the third person, he told the story of his conversion in his best-selling book, *Basic Christianity*, published twenty years later in 1958. "A boy in his late teens knelt at his bedside one Sunday night in the dormitory of his school. It was about 10 p.m. on 13 February 1938. In a simple, matter-of-fact but definite way he told Christ that he had made rather a mess of his life so far; he confessed his sins; he thanked Christ for dying for him; and he asked Him to come into his life. The following day he wrote in his diary: 'Yesterday really was an eventful day...Up till now Christ has been on the circumference and I have but asked Him to guide me instead of giving Him complete control. Behold, He stands at the door and knocks. I have heard Him and now He has come into my house. He has cleansed it and now rules in it ...' and the day after: 'I really have felt an immense and new joy throughout today. It is the joy of being at peace with the world and of being in touch with God. How well do I know now that He rules me and that I never really knew Him before....' These are extracts from my own diary. I venture to quote them because I did not want you to think that I am recommending to you a step which I have not taken myself" (Stott, 1958a:128-129).

John Stott was really converted and overwhelmed by the power of God to change men's lives through the Word of God (preaching). Thus he was becoming aware that God acts and intervenes in human history.

Later, in his famous book titled, *The contemporary Christian*, Stott (1992:167) says that "God's purpose in Scripture is not real facts which can be discovered by the scientific method of observation and experiment, but rather to reveal truths which are beyond the scope of science, in particular God's way of salvation through Christ. This is why Jesus Christ is Himself the centre of the biblical revelation, since it bears witness to him (Jn. 5:39; 20:31). As Von Allmen has expressed it, "the heart of the Scripture(what sums it up and makes it live) or the head of the Scripture (... what explains it and justifies it) ... is Jesus Christ. To read the Bible without meeting him is to preach it falsely" (Von Allmen, 1962:24). It is because Scripture instructs us for salvation that it instructs us about Christ, by faith to whom salvation is received.

#### 2.1.2.2 His vocational calling

Stott (1992:132) points out that "we have to make a similar distinction to the one we made with regard to guidance, namely between our 'general' calling and 'particular' calling. Our general calling is that of all God's people, and that therefore is the same to all. But our particular calling is different to each of this, and is therefore not the same. We all share in the same general call of God; we have each received a different particular call from God". We can clearly deduce two meanings of the word for calling from the Bible. God's general call to us is not so much to do something (a job) as to be something (a person), that is, to be free and holy and Christlike. On the other hand, God's particular calling is to relate to the highly individual details of our lives. Stott (1992:136) points out that this is true Reformational thought about the particular calling. They insisted that every Christian man and woman has a divine 'calling' ... and affirmed that God is interested in the whole of life, and that to be a farmer, craftsman, magistrate or housewife was just as divine a calling as to be a 'priest' or 'pastor'. All those who in their own field have also been 'consecrated' like priests, each to 'the work and office of his trade'. Calvin (1967a:III.x.6) supports this claim as follows: "The Lord commands every one of us, in all the actions of life, to regard his calling ... there will be no employment so mean and sordid (provided we follow our calling) as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God".

John Stott also thinks that our glorious vocations belong to the category of the 'particular calling', like the Reformers did. He does not seem to have had the experience of a calling from God directly. He early thought that "the pastorate was the only ministry but he repented of his opinion, and therefore of this language, about twenty - five years ago later always" (Stott, 1992:140). All Christians without exception are called to the ministry so that they will serve the Church and the world through their gifts. Stott (1992:144) confesses that "by the grace of God I am who I am", that is, he became a pastor of the Church only by the total grace of God. Although he does not think that the word ministry is a generic term, neither is the pastoral ministry less important than the others.

One of the things he never did was to encourage anybody to consider the pulpit ministry because he firmly believes that all Christians are called to spend their lives in the ministry, that is, there are many different ways in which we can serve God and people, and a decision to join the pastoral ministry must be a personal call from God (Stott, 1992:141). Stott was concerned about the ministry in the church and especially of evangelism while he was a student at Trinity college, Cambridge. He was strongly influenced by evangelism and to be minister of the campus movement, namely CICCU (the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union). And then the evangelical emphasis upon preaching obviously influenced the young John Stott deeply.

While he was working late as secretary and treasurer for Nash's Varsity and Public Schools Camps in 1938, he expressed his desire to the Headmaster at Rugby to be ordained and enter the pastoral ministry. He believed that God had called him to work in these schools, and that the reason for his divine call was that the future leadership of church and state was to be found there. This was certainly very true of Stott's own generation (Catherwood, 1985:19).

Thus, when war broke out and military deferments were available to clergy and to those who could document a pre-war intention to be ordained, Stott was granted exemption. His father, Arnold Stott, at the time a Major-General in the Army Medical Service, did not accept John's unwillingness to fight and did not speak to his son for

two years. He threatened to cut off financial support for John at Cambridge but he never carried out his threat (Capon, 1979:34).

In the months following World War II, Stott accepted a position as curate under Harold Earnshaw-Smith at All Souls' Church, Langham Place. Within six months, after he became a curate, Earnshaw-Smith became seriously ill and could not work full-time. During this time additional duties and responsibilities fell on the shoulders of his young curate.

Although it was unusual for a curate to stay in one position for as long as five years, and though he had been offered other positions including chaplaincies at Eton and the Mayflower Family Centre in the East end of London, Stott stayed at All Souls' to maintain stability while the rector was ill. During this period he became "impatient with the Lord" and wanted to continue with his own career (Groover, 1988:58).

When Earnshaw-Smith passed away, All Souls' church decided to invite John Stott as his successor. So he accepted the call from the All Souls' Church to be a minister. On September 26th, 1950, Stott was appointed as the new rector at All Souls' Church. Thus he confirmed the glorious vocation, that is, his particular calling to the ministry by the Church and at the age of twenty-nine, began the pastoral ministry at one of London's leading Anglican churches.

### *2.1.3 The ministry in All Souls' Church from 1950 to 1975*

When John Stott became Curate at All Souls', Langham Place, in 1945, the congregation had to meet several blocks away in a smaller church building, St. Peter's, Vere Street, now the headquarters of Christian Impact (of which the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity is a part). The need for this relocation was documented in the records of All Souls' Church: "On the evening of December 8th, 1940, the Church was rendered unusable by aerial bombardment. The following Sunday the whole congregation moved to St. Peter's Vere St., W1, where they continued to worship until the Church was reopened by the Right Rev. J.W.C. Wand, D.D., Lord

Bishop of London, on Sunday, April 29th, 1951" (Groover, 1988:81). The congregation had dwindled during the war years, and by the time they were back into their facilities at Langham Place there were only 220 communicants in three services (Service Record Book, All Souls' Church, entry for Apr. 29, 1951).

John Stott was appointed rector in 1950, following the illness and death of the much-loved Harold Earnshaw Smith. Here on 26 September the new rector was instituted and inducted (Dudley-Smith, 1991:16). Following the return to All Souls' and his installation as rector, Stott began a comprehensive programme of ministries designed to reach his parish. He continued in this role until 1975 when, upon the urging of several people close to him, Stott became rector emeritus in order to spend more time. It must suffice to say soon All Souls' rivalled Westminster Chapel as the leading Evangelical pulpit in London, and under Stott's leadership All Souls' Church became the most attended Anglican Church in downtown London. All Souls' Church during the years John Stott was rector expanded considerably, apparently due to John Stott's preaching. Oliver Barclay points out that it was the preaching ministry of All Souls' that brought the church to people's attention. Stott was at the height of his preaching powers at Westminster Chapel. The chapel was to remain London's main preaching centre for some time to come. But in Anglican circles, expository sermons such as were now being given at All Souls' Church were a new phenomenon because of the sad decline of preaching in the Church of England that had continued since the end of the nineteenth century (Catherwood, 1985:21).

Many young people, especially new converts, were deeply influenced by hearing expository preaching—the thorough, careful discussion of the biblical text that was characteristic of Stott. As a result, many of these men went into the ministry themselves, deliberately adopting the same style of doctrinal yet challenging preaching through which they themselves had become Christians or had had their Christian lives changed.

He was Rector of All Soul's Church at Langham Place in London for twenty-five years from 1950 to 1975. During his ministry in All Soul's Church he was invited to be

honorary chaplain to Her Majesty by the Queen of England in 1959 ( Dudley-Smith, 1991:21).

#### *2.1.4 His activities as evangelist*

Evangelism is not only the labour of the professional, it was the primary task laid upon the whole early church, and it still is. Green (1979:14) puts it this way: "Evangelism is not an optional extra for those who like that kind of thing. It is not an acceptable pastime for the person who likes making a fool of himself on a soap box in the open air, or titillating his ego by addressing a large gathering in a public hall. Evangelism is sharing the good news of what God has done for us all. It is the sacred duty of every Christian".

John Stott is known very well as one of the most famous evangelists of modern times having been involved in a number of professional organisations, evangelical fellowships, and service groups.

It is an undeniable fact that, unlike Lloyd-Jones, Stott has given the Bible readings at Keswick. Indeed in 1965 he expounded Romans chapter 7 in the Keswick convention (Lloyd-Jones, 1973:238-57). As a Church of England clergyman Stott expresses deep, though not unquestioning, loyalty to his own tradition. It is his contention that evangelicalism can offer a vision for the Church that is biblical, intellectually coherent, socially and ethically aware, and humbly open to the insights of the other Christians (Gordon, 1991:282).

Gordon (1991:284) distinguishes two different perspectives of evangelism, that of Lloyd-Jones and the other of Stott as follows: "The influence these two leading figures have exerted within their respective spheres has been enormous; Lloyd-Jones amongst Evangelicals who endorse principled separatism and Stott amongst Evangelicals across the denominations seeking dialogue with the wider Christian world. Theological consistency, biblical thinking and personal integrity have been the

common and constant features of two ministries characterised above all by Christ-centred devotion".

Dudley-Smith (1991:26) points out Stott's opinion on the evangelical spiritual tradition as being: "John Stott, who stands as one example of the vitality of the tradition at its best, has always insisted that Evangelical spirituality is by definition Christ-centred: 'The hallmark of authentic Evangelicalism has always been zeal for the honour and glory of Jesus Christ. With that, I think, we shall be safe' ".

#### 2.1.4.1 His activities as evangelist in England

John Stott himself has briefly sketched the story of the founding of the Church of England Evangelical Council (1960), and then of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (1961) in his chapter in *Evangelical Today* - though in a typically self-effacing manner (Stott, 1973:2). In the mid-60s he also devised and inspired the series of twenty-two small books, *Christian Foundations*, which was another indication of a desire among Anglican evangelicals to address themselves to themes, theological and practical, which are of vital significance for the *Christian Church* (Dudley-Smith, 1991:20).

It would be difficult, too, to overestimate his contribution to the two national Evangelical Anglican Congresses at Keele (1967) and at Nottingham (1977), which were organised by a committee whose chairman was John Stott (Gordon, 1991:283). Following the first of these, David Edwards remarked that if evangelicals were going to take the Church of England seriously, the Church would need to return the compliment; and following the second, Clifford Longley wrote in *The Times* of 'the growing power and influence' of evangelicals in the Church of England. It would be an exaggeration, but not wholly wide of the mark, to see in such growing power and influence the lengthened shadow of one man.

But all this - and much more - was to lie ahead in the future with the Langham Trust, the London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity, Care and Counsel, the Evangelical

Literature Trust And an important role in the International Congresses on World Evangelisation at Lausanne (1974) and Manila (1989).

#### 2.1.4.2 His activities as world-wide evangelist

##### 2.1.4.2.1 International Congress on World Evangelism

His association with Dr. Billy Graham in the campaigns of evangelism began in 1974. He had no hesitation in giving public support to the Billy Graham campaigns and ensured that 150 people referred to his church were given adequate spiritual guidance (Manwaring, 1985:98).

But Lloyd-Jones habitually appealed to the past to find truth which would provide a corrective to the unbalanced and unhealthy emphases in contemporary Evangelical Christianity. He refused to be identified with the 'decision' style of evangelism associated with Billy Graham campaigns, arguing that such a practice oversimplified doctrine and turned the scriptural example of Christ receiving sinners into the more man-centred theology of sinners receiving Christ.

Even though John Stott had co-operated closely with Lloyd-Jones during the fifties when both were involved in university missions, they had significant differences of view about evangelism. Stott does not share Lloyd-Jones' fears that co-operation with non-Evangelicals would seriously compromise the gospel (Gordon, 1991:282). It is his contention that Evangelicalism can offer a vision for the Church that is biblical, intellectually coherent, socially and ethically aware, and humbly open to the insights of other Christians.

##### 2.1.4.2.2 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism

Officially John Stott was the chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Lausanne Covenant. Unofficially he has been called 'chief architect' (Wang, 1987:1). Stott's committee had the responsibility in the months prior to the congress of reading the

papers which were to be presented and distilling a consensus statement for participants to endorse.

This first draft was mailed to 'a number of advisers' a couple of months prior to the meeting. The committee took the suggestions received back from the first draft and had a second draft ready at the opening of the convocation (Stott, 1975:1).

John Stott personally worked day and night during the congress so that by the middle of the meeting the third draft was ready for signing. The great importance of Lausanne '74 for John Stott was not the covenant but the movement which grew out of the congress. The covenant did help to originate the movement and define some crucial terms, but writing a covenant was not the main purpose of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (Groover, 1988:89). Stott was in charge of four groups, that is Strategy, Intercession, Communications, and the Working group of theology and education in the Lausanne Congress, for several years, but stepped down as chair of these groups in 1981 (Reid, 1981:10).

#### 2.1.4.3 His activity in The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

Stott still has a world-wide ministry through preaching, lecturing and writing. Moreover, he has not stopped his efforts to spread evangelisation to the world. He founded the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity in order to disseminate the Gospel to the whole world. The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity opened its doors in 1982 at St. Paul's Church, Robert Adam Street, with a ten week course. In July of the next year Stott moved the school to St. Peter's Church, Vere Street, with permission to use that property from All Souls' Church. The Institute has remained there since then (Eden & Wells, 1991:26).

Since its inception, the purpose of the Institute has been to help thoughtful lay-people to relate their faith in Christ to every area of life. The Institute meets its goal of relating Christianity to the modern world by maintaining four objectives. First, they seek to interpret the Bible and defend its authority. Second, they seek to understand

the modern world and criticize its assumptions, values, and standards. To live as Christian disciples is the third objective, or put in other words, "God calls us to live under his Word in his world". The final goal involves mission, or, the "combination of evangelism (proclaiming the biblical gospel to the real world), apologetics (defending and arguing it) and social activity (demonstrating it by good works of love)". The purpose can be summed up in two words: 'integration' and 'penetration' (Pamphlet, introducing the L.I.C.C.).

## **2.2 The formative influences on his theology and preaching**

### *2.2.1 Preamble*

The itinerary of one's life, i.e., everything that happens to one, is in the hands of the God of providence, and all these things influence one's life. We can clearly see it in John Stott's life as well. He is the product of a number of influences. There are some events in his life that irresistibly influenced his character, thoughts, theology, preaching and convictions. We cannot fail to notice the influence of his parents that has already been documented in the previous paragraphs (2.1.1.2).

Stott names several Evangelical preachers who have had a strong influence on him: Charles Simeon, J.R. Ryle, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, D.L. Moody, Ted Schroder, and the man responsible for his conversion, Eric Nash (Groover, 1988:59).

This section will deal with two main influences which include the individual persons and groups, that is, some preachers who gave strong influences to him and theology of the church of England.

### *2.2.2 The influence of Anglican theology*

John Stott grew up in, studied theology, was ordained by, and has served his adult life in the Church of England. In a word, he was deeply influenced by his lifelong interest in the history of the Church of England, especially in the annals of the great revivals

and in the biographies of the great saints and preachers. As we have seen in his biographical background, he has never left the Church of England since his childhood.

When we know the reasons why he has remained in the Church of England, we can obviously understand the influences of his theology on that church. In his article, *'I believe in the Church of England'*, he clarifies four reasons. Firstly, the Church of England is a historical church. As other historians noted, he traced the origin of the church past Henry VIII back to the first century. The Church of England is the original bastion of Christendom in England.

Secondly, the Church of England is a confessional church, and he confirms the historical confessions as they are found in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles. These confessional statements affirm the supremacy and the sufficiency of Scripture, and the justification of sinners by grace through faith in Christ. Stott's third reason was, the Church of England is a national church. Here, Stott differentiated between a state church and a national church. The Church of England is national because it has a national mission to serve England and bring the English nation to Christ. Finally, the Church of England is a liturgical church. Stott has found the biblical examples of the liturgical forms in the Prayer Book to be doctrinal safeguards, to give a sense of historical continuity, to protect the congregation from excesses, and to aid in participation (Stott, 1978b:18-21).

The foundation of Stott's faith and theology is especially authenticated in the Thirty-Nine Articles. We can frequently find his statements in his many books about the Thirty-Nine Articles to support his arguments. Thus, for the purpose of defining 'Anglican Theology' in a manner such as using 'The Westminster Confession' to define Presbyterianism, all one can really conclude is the Thirty-Nine Articles were intended to represent Christian orthodoxy.

### 2.2.3 *The direct influences on him by some famous preachers*

#### 2.2.3.1 Charles Simeon

Charles Simeon was one of the greatest and most persuasive preachers the Church of England has ever known. He was born in 1758, the same year as his lifelong friend William Wilberforce, champion of the slaves (Stott, 1986c: 27). He was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he remained a Fellow until his death. He served as Vicar at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge for fifty-four years (Hopkins, 1979:3). His publications include the twenty-one volume *Horae Homileticae*, number about 2,500 on the entire Bible (Stott, 1986c:27). Simeon's career got off to a quick start. He was converted in his first year at Cambridge and within three years was ordained and was appointed Vicar of St. Edward's Church (Hugh Latimer's pulpit). Within the year of this appointment he became Vicar at Holy Trinity Church, the church strategically located in the centre of Cambridge University. This church is where Richard Sibbes and Thomas Goodwin preached (Stott, 1986c:30). Stott (1986c:31) declares: "Simeon's uncompromising commitment to scripture, as the Word of God to be obeyed and expounded, has captured my admiration and has held it ever since". Simeon's influence did not predate Eric Nash's, but it certainly strengthened Nash's influence.

Stott (1983:37) refers to Simeon's stormy ministry in *Our Guilty Silence* as follows: "One man who followed in the footsteps of Paul, even against the fierce opposition of men, was Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, at the beginning of the nineteenth century". A tablet on the south wall of the church commemorates him as one who, "whether as the ground of his own hopes or as the subject of all his ministrations determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified ..." (Stott, 1986a:8).

Some statements about Simeon's effectiveness as preacher appears significantly in Stott's two main homiletic books, *I believe in preaching* and *The preacher's portrait*. Simeon's exhortation for the preacher to have a steadfast personal faith in Christ echoes through everything Stott wrote, particularly in relation to preaching: "The main

objective of preaching is to expound Scripture so faithfully and relevantly that Jesus Christ is perceived in all His adequacy to meet human need. The true preacher is a witness; he is incessantly testifying to Christ" (Stott, 1982a:325). And then Stott (1961a:25-26) quoted Simeon on the importance of not only preaching from the Bible but also the importance of preaching all of the Bible as follows: "The household of God urgently needs faithful stewards who will dispense to it systematically the whole Word of God, not the New Testament only but the Old as well, not just the passages which favor the preacher's particular prejudices, but those which do not! We need more men today of the calibre of Charles Simeon of Cambridge, who wrote in his preface to the *Horae Homileticae*: 'The author is no friend to systematizers in theology. He has endeavored to derive from the Scriptures alone his views on religion, and to them it is his wish to adhere with scrupulous fidelity'... Only such a faithful exposition of the whole Word of God will deliver us and our congregation from little whims and fancies (whether ours or theirs), and from a more serious fanaticism and extravagance".

Stott (1982a:26) again used Simeon in *I believe in preaching* as an example of continuing the tradition of exposition of Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Matthew Henry, and others. Clearly John Stott devoted himself to his pulpit ministry; the only question is whether Stott's view of preaching was as high as Simeon's. Simeon (1959:188-189) said that "Ministers are ambassadors for God, and speak in Christ's stead. If they preach what is founded on the Scriptures, their word, as far as it is agreeable to the mind of God, is to be considered as God's: this is asserted by our Lord and His apostles. We ought therefore to receive the preacher's word as the word of God Himself".

Stott stopped short of being convinced by Simeon, though the disagreement is more of degree than substance: "The Christian preacher, therefore, is not a prophet. No original revelation is given to him; his task is to expound the revelation which has been given once for all. And however truly he preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit, he is not 'inspired' by the Spirit... Now that the written word of God is available

to us all, the Word of God in prophetic utterance is no longer needed. It has come for all; men must now come to it" (Stott, 1961a:12-13).

During his whole life Stott followed in the footsteps of Charles Simeon about the life of prayer and of the devotional study of Scripture. Stott devotes four hours every morning to prayer and the Bible Study (Stott, 1995:interview with author). Gordon describes it as follows: "Mr. Simeon invariably rose every morning, though it was the winter session, at four o'clock; and, after lighting his fire, he devoted the first four hours of the day to private prayer, and the devotional study of the Scriptures".

In conclusion, Stott took lessons from a past master, and applied the lessons in his ministry, especially his preaching. Stott (1986c:27) confessed that on many occasions "I have had the privilege of preaching from his pulpit in Holy Trinity Church". Thus, the influence of Charles Simeon on John Stott is clearly demonstrable, especially his preaching. Stott (1986c:27) confessed that on many occasions "I have had the privilege of preaching from his pulpit in Holy Trinity Church". Thus, the influence of Charles Simeon on John Stott is clearly demonstrable.

#### 2.2.3.2 Eric Nash

In the introduction to *I believe in preaching*, Stott (1982a:12) thanked those who helped him along the way: "I begin with the Rev. E.J.H. Nash, who showed me the way to Christ when I was almost seventeen, nurtured me and prayed for me with astonishing faithfulness, developed my appetite for the Word of God, and gave me my first taste of the joys of expounding it".

Eric Nash was born on April 22, 1889, and died April 4, 1982. His father was the Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Maidenhead. Nash attended an independent Day School for boys, Maidenhead College. Following his secondary education he went to work for an insurance firm. Then, in 1917 while riding a train home, "he finally faced and responded to the claims of Christ upon his wife" (Eddison, 1982:7-8). It was not until 1922 that Nash began further study at Trinity College and Ridley Hall, Cambridge, the

same schools where John Stott later studied. He was ordained in 1927, served two curacies, and became Chaplain at Wrekin College, Shropshire. In 1932 he joined the staff of the Scripture Union with the responsibility of leading camps for boys from England's most prestigious schools. Nash held this position until his forced retirement in 1965 (Eddison, 1982:8).

Nash's concern for the future leaders of society can be seen in Stott's later concern. While Stott did not limit his ministry or the ministry of All Souls', Langham Place, it can be said that he reached out to the students at the universities and the young professionals in London. All Souls, however, did sponsor a day school and the All Souls' Clubhouse which focused on the working class children in the parish: Stott's current international ministry and social concerns can hardly be criticized for being elitist.

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Nash's influence on the young Stott began immediately following John's conversion. The letters from Nash were generally long, with heavy theological paragraphs, some broken down with subheadings, expounding doctrines or ethical issues. Nash, while leading the young disciple into seriousness, did not want him to take himself too seriously. Humour, the veteran camp leader knew, was still a good door into the heart and mind of a schoolboy (Stott, 1982c:58).

While Stott was at Cambridge he served Nash as camp secretary. Not only did this position give John the opportunity to preach but it kept the two men in close contact.

Nash's influence on Stott and others was summed up by his former study assistant, Mark Labberton, an American who wrote that "... single-minded commitment to Christ, passionate concern for sharing the gospel, disciplined devotion to the Word, simple and direct preaching were all hallmarks of Bash's influence on Stott and many other ... evangelical preachers in the Church of England" (Catherwood, 1985 :18-19). Many leading Anglicans such as Stott himself, Michael Green of Oxford, Mark Ruston of Cambridge, and Dick Lucas of London are former Bash campers, as are several influential non-Anglican Christian laymen, such as two successive chairmen

of the IVF (now UCCF): Fred Catherwood, the industrialist and politician, and John Marsh, the surgeon, both of whom were also Cambridge contemporaries of John Stott (Catherwood, 1985:19).

Moreover, Stott as former Bash camper, emulating the model set by Nash himself, has remained a bachelor. He has never married, and many have attributed this partly to the influence of Nash, whose ideal of the celibate clergyman, giving his whole life to Christian service without the distraction of family, motivated several deliberately to remain single (Catherwood, 1985:19). Stott was especially influenced by Nash's evangelical concerns and the perspective of the biblical preachings. Stott (1995:interview with author) finally says "I had my early experience of speaking and of getting biblical expositions under Nash's leadership".

#### 2.2.3.3 J.C. Ryle

Charles H. Spurgeon called John Charles Ryle "the best man in the Church of England" (Packer, 1959:vii). He was born on 10 May 1816 into a home that provided both wealth and security. Ryle, like Simeon, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford (B.A., 1838; M.A., 1841), and excelled both academically (he obtained an outstanding 'First Class' degree in 1837) and on the sports-field, where he captained the University cricket XI for two years (Newby, 1991:5). He worked his way up through the ranks as curate, rector, vicar, rural dean, honorary canon, dean, and finally Bishop of Liverpool from 1880-1990 (Newby, 1991:6). He was much in demand as a preacher and lecturer, and began to devote more time to writing. The publication of his tracts, of which literally millions were distributed, dates from this time, but his most valuable written works of the 1850's were undoubtedly his *Expository thoughts on the gospel* (Loane, 1967:29; Gordon, 1991:223). These books had enormous popularity and drew enthusiastic if qualified praise from Spurgeon: "We prize these volumes. They are diffuse, but not more so than family reading requires" (Spurgeon, 1893:149).

Utterly loyal to Ryle's understanding of the historic reformed Church of England, and standing on the theological foundation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Prayer Book and the Bible, Ryle fought tirelessly against any perceived weakening of the old faith (Gordon, 1991;217-218). In other words, Ryle fought for limits to the inclusiveness of the Church of England and encouraged Evangelicals to stay within the Church to reform it.

Indeed, Stott read Ryle's great book, *Holiness*, and his historical books about the Reformation and the 18th century evangelistic leaders. So John Stott has credited Ryle for influencing his own decision to stay in the church (Groover, 1988:72).

#### 2.2.3.4 David Martin Lloyd-Jones

David Martin Lloyd-Jones, recognized as one of the most famous preachers in twentieth century, was the pastor of Westminster Chapel at Buckingham Gate in London. G. Campbell Morgan extended to Lloyd-Jones the invitation to join him in joint ministry there in 1939 and Lloyd-Jones remained at Westminster Chapel until his own retirement in 1968 (Catherwood, 1985:67,69). Lloyd-Jones was born in Cardiff, South Wales, on 20 December 1899. After his 81 years of pilgrimage in this world he had “an abundant entrance into glory” (2 Pe. 1:11) on Saint David's Day, Sunday March 1 in 1981(Jung, 1986:5). Lloyd-Jones attended the St. Marylebone Grammar school at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London (where Stott's father had studied). He left a promising medical career in 1926 to accept the call to pastor a Presbyterian church, the Bethlehem Forward Movement Mission Church in Sandfields, Aberavon, Wales (Catherwood, 1985:53-58).

Lloyd-Jones is widely known and respected as an expository preacher and a “pastor to pastors”. His books on preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and Ephesians, and his Friday night Bible study on Romans are all classics in their own fields. Stott (1986a:9) said of Lloyd-Jones he “... occupied an unrivaled position of evangelical leadership in the decades following the Second World War”. One influence Lloyd-Jones had on John Stott was to introduce the younger pastor to Robert Murry McCheyne's Bible

Reading Calendar (Stott, 1982a:183-184). Though Stott already had a deep love for Scripture before using this “new” plan of reading the Bible through, the Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice yearly, he adopted this method still uses it and recommends it. Indeed, copies may be obtained at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, or from in his London flat (Groover, 1988:74; Gordon, 1991:299). There is one remarkable issue that caused a confrontation between the two preachers.

The confrontation between Lloyd-Jones and Stott over the issue of ecumenism has tended to obscure the many areas in which they found agreement and to eclipse other real differences between them. The emphasis on the primacy of the mind in spirituality was originally given powerful support by Lloyd-Jones. His influence was already being felt in the circles in which the young John Stott moved. In the 1950s and 1960s they were the two most influential Evangelical preachers in London and often followed the same university mission trail. Central to their spirituality is the conviction that the ability to think and study is a God-given gift, making them persuasive exponents of ‘scholarly evangelism’.

The focal point of their spirituality, drawing all else together, is Christ and His cross. Lloyd-Jones laboured to preach a ‘felt Christ’, to communicate not only truth, but also truth soaked in fellowship with Christ, truth on which life's ultimate issues depended. The same passion glows in Stott, tempered by a similar sense of privilege.

His most recently published words on the spiritual experience of the preacher illustrate the intimate connection between the Word of God and the personal spirituality of the preacher (Gordon, 1991:306). Still, John Stott continued to hold Lloyd-Jones in highest esteem (Groover, 1988:76).

#### 2.2.3.5 Edward A. Schroder

John Stott gave credit to one of the curates who served with him at All Souls’ Church for having a significant influence on his preaching. Edward Amos Schroder, or ‘Ted’

as he is referred to in Stott's writings, served with Stott from 1967 until 1971 when he became Dean of the Chapel at Gordon College in the United States (Stott, 1982a:12). Originally from a small town, Hokitika, New Zealand, Schroder was converted in 1953 at the age of thirteen when a revival team lead by J. Edwin Orr and Corrie ten Boom came to New Zealand. He was called to preach shortly after his conversion. Schroder was educated at the University of Canterbury, Christ Church, New Zealand, and the University of Durham in England (Groover, 1988:76).

Schroder is quoted by Stott as having challenged him "to relate the gospel to the modern world" (Stott, 1982a:12). Schroder's emphasis on relevance came from his involvement with university students in London in the late sixties. While Curate at All Souls', he was also Chaplain of the Polytechnic of Central London, a ministry to students. In this context Schroder dealt with many radicals, 'flower children', Maoists and Marxists. Evangelicals had long since discredited the social gospel, but these people to whom Schroder was ministering demanded relevance (Catherwood, 1985:32). The titles of the sermons he preached during the sixties, such as 'The Cosmic Revolution', and 'Christ's Attitude to Hippie', illustrate Schroder's almost radical relevance (Groover, 1988:77).

Because of the younger preacher's encouragement, Stott began to speak out on social issues and he became very involved with these matters. As a result of Ted Schroder's influence Stott eventually wrote *Issues Facing Christians Today*, founded the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, and made social issues a major emphasis in pastoral preaching (Stott, 1995:interview with author). Stott discovered the Bible is most effective when it is allowed to speak to the problems people face in contemporary society.

## 2.2.4 *The indirect influences on Stott by some preachers*

### 2.2.4.1 The Puritans and Richard Baxter

First of all, while he read the historical books, which were the Reformational and the evangelical books of the 18th century, he especially observed the leaders of the Reformation and the people who were called Puritans. He was interested rather in some works which were written by Puritans than the others. For example, the famous book, *A treatise on the vocations or callings of men* (published in 1603) was written by William Perkins who had a very influential ministry in Cambridge, and then a century later, and on the other side of the Atlantic, Cotton Mather, the Harvard Puritan, wrote *A Christian at his calling* (1701) (Stott, 1982a:30; 1992:136-38). He especially concentrated on reading the great book by Richard Baxter, the Puritan, called *The Reformed pastor* (published in 1656). Baxter stands out as consistently exemplifying the ideas which the Puritan tradition and his own book set forth. Then, shortly before he was ordained, he read it, and found it to be "a beautiful and wonderful book" (Stott, 1995: interview).

The influence of the Puritans in general and of Richard Baxter in particular on John Stott was definitely decisive. So Stott has cited a lot of verses from Baxter's book, *The Reformed pastor*, in his book on homiletics, *I believe in preaching* (28-33; 152; 226; 248; 257; 268; 286; 321).

### 2.2.4.2 Dwight L. Moody

The change of Stott's evangelistic technique was due to the influence of the American Dwight Lyman Moody, who was born in the agricultural township of Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1837 (Gordon, 1991:177). Moody's educational attainments were modest and throughout his life he felt the inadequacy of his early schooling.

In 1885 he became a shoe salesman in Boston. He joined the Y.M.C.A. mainly for the social contact it provided. Some months later his Sunday School teacher told him of

Christ's love for him and the love Christ wanted in return. Moody made a simple 'decision' for Christ, and "the following day the old sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before ... I fell in love with the birds ... It seemed to me I was in love with all creation" (Findlay, 1969:49-50).

He became increasingly involved in evangelistic activity, starting an independent Sunday School which soon developed into a vigorous church. The revival of the late fifties, his growing success as a preacher and personal evangelist as well as growing skills in organization, publicity, fund-raising and motivation, were among the factors which determined Moody's career (Gordon, 1991:178). In the sphere of Christian social concern, education, ecumenical co-operation in evangelism and Christian publishing Moody exerted an enduring influence.

When Stott was in his late teens, he used to read the books of some American Evangelists. There was a man who was called Rubin A Torrey. Stott read all his books on evangelistic addresses, so called: *A revival addresses, Real salvation, Why God used D. L. Moody* (1923). Stott lapped up all his books (Stott, 1995:interview with author). He has continued to consult its pages for encouragement. He said he had practically memorized its content so far (Groover, 1991:78).

Torrey offered seven reasons to answer the question his title raised. John Stott, also wanting to be used by God, has modeled his life on these characteristics. They are (1) a fully surrendered man, (2) a man of prayer, (3) a deep and practical student of the Bible, (4) a humble man, (5) his entire freedom from the love of money, (6) his consuming passion for the salvation of the lost, and (7) definitely imbued with power from on high (Torrey, 1923:8-51).

Much of what Torrey said about Moody could be said of Stott. John Stott, too, is a fully surrendered person and a man of prayer. The fact that he has been a practical Bible student is clearly seen in the books he has written on Bible study and on books of the Bible. Stott's humility and his commitment to a simple lifestyle are documented elsewhere in this chapter. His passion for the lost has been shown clearly in his career.

While 'power from on high' is a highly subjective proposition, a similar statement may be made comparing Stott's effectiveness to his contemporaries.

The centre of Moody's preaching is Christ as the expression of the love of God. Stott's preaching also centred on Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection. Stott (1992:167) emphasizes it as "... Jesus Christ Himself is the centre of the biblical revelation ... and to preach the Bible without proclaiming Him (Jesus Christ) is to preach it falsely". Thus, while the personalities and methods of preaching of D.L. Moody and John Stott may differ, there is much similarity to be found in comparing R.A. Torrey's description of D.L. Moody with that of John R.W. Stott.

#### 2.2.4.3 William Temple

Fletcher (1963:248) quotes the following from Punch's statement such as "in dark days of post-war doubts and premonitions" (1948), "If Christian sanity services the modern world, none will deserve a greater share of the credit than William Temple". William Temple was born on 15 October 1881, in the Bishop's Palace in Exeter. He was the second of Frederick's two children, both born in the Palace at Exeter.

Before he was four years old his father went from Exeter to Fulham Palace as Bishop of London, and there young William lived until he was fifteen years old. He was educated at Colet Court in Hammersmith in London and finished school in 1894. After that he entered Rugby in the Fall of 1894 and remained, studying hard and profitably, until he went up to Oxford in 1900 (Fletcher, 1963:243). He studied at Balliol College in Oxford from 1902 to 1904. After he took his degree in 1904, he was chosen as Fellow and Lecturer in philosophy at Queen's College a position which he held for six year. He was ordained by Archbishop Davidson as Deacon, in December, 1908, and Priest, in December, 1909 at Canterbury. In 1910 he became headmaster of Repton School in Derbyshire, an ancient foundation refounded in 1557 - ten years before Rugby, and contributed to the volume *Foundations* (Douglas, 1974:957).

William left Repton to become Rector of St. James' Piccadilly in 1914 in London's West End. In 1920 he was appointed Bishop of Manchester, and in 1929 Archbishop of York. As Archbishop of York (1929-42) he became increasingly prominent in the national life, especially through his lively concern with social, economic, and international questions, though remaining independent of organized parties, both political and religious (Cross, 1984:1347). He also gave his whole-hearted support to the Faith and Order and Life and Work Movements and to the Ecumenical Movement generally. He was finally enthroned at Canterbury on St. George's Day in April, 1942. His death came in the morning of October 26, a few hours after the death of Princess Beatrice, last surviving child of Queen Victoria. On his own 80th birthday, October 31, Cosmo Gordon Lang, his predecessor as Primate, officiated at the funeral in Canterbury (Fletcher, 1963:283).

He wrote a lot of books which are incalculable and left a precious Christian heritage to the Anglican Church. His principal works include *Mens Creatrix* (1917), *Christus Veritas* (1924), and *Nature, Man and God* (1934), *Reading in St. John's Gospel* (1939) and *Christianity and Social Order* (1942) (Cross, 1984:1347).

When Stott was young, he liked to read William Temple's books, especially *Reading in St. John's Gospel* (Stott, 1992:322). The influence of Archbishop William Temple in particular on John Stott was almost incalculable. Stott delighted in his theology which was based on Scripture with an exegetical precision and combined with devotional emphasis. Temple gave him a profound impression of the gravity of the sins of humanity, the wonder of the greatness of salvation.

Stott gained some insight into the necessity for Christian doctrinal teaching through Temple's book. Stott (1992:50) confesses That "I can myself remember what revelation it was to me to learn, especially through the teaching of Archbishop William Temple, that what the Bible means by 'sin' is primarily self-centredness". When Stott insisted on the unity of Christians, he (1992:267) quotes some verses from William Temple's writing, *Reading in St. John's Gospel* such as: "the way to the union of Christendom does not lie through committee-rooms, though there is a task of

formulation to be done there. It lies through personal union with the Lord so deep and real as to be comparable with his union with the Father" (Temple, 1947:327). Besides citing Stott's above mentioned, Stott also quotes widely from Temples' books in all his books (1992: 242, 322,369; 1984:192: etc.).

#### 2.2.4.4 G. C. Morgan

We finally cannot help studying about Dr. Morgan's influence on Stott. Morgan was born on 9 December 1863 at Tetbury, in Gloucestershire, England. He was the youngest of two children born to George Morgan, a Baptist preacher, and Elizabeth Farm Brittan. His older sister, Lizzie, was his companion until her death when George was only eight (Morgan, 1972:24-25).

Four months after his birth, the Morgan family moved to Cardiff, Wales. While here George attended elementary school at Chepstow and later Cheltenham. It was during this early period that Morgan felt a personal desire to preach, and on 15 August 1876, at the age of thirteen, he preached his first sermon before an audience in the schoolroom of the Wesleyan Chapel at Monmouth (Jeffs, 1981:171). Without academic training, he joined the staff of a Jewish school, learning much from the headmaster, a rabbi. After being rejected by the Salvation Army and the Methodists, he was accepted by the Congregationalists as a full-time minister and was pastor of many churches, including Westminster Chapel, London (1904-17 and 1933-45). He assumed the position of President of Chestnut College in Cambridge (1911-14) along with his regular duties at Westminster. Morgan travelled much, especially during 1919-32; his preaching and biblical expositions attracted great crowds with numerous concessions. His literary output of Bible notes, sermons, and commentaries was immense (Douglas, 1974:677).

Campbell Morgan was a preacher of one book, and that book was the Bible. The Bible became his only authority for preaching. He was committed to the authority of the Scripture. Stott follows Morgan's viewpoint on theology and especially the doctrine of Reformed faith. Like Morgan he believes that the whole of Scripture is the Word of

God and is essentially a revelation of God (Stott, 1972a:123). And then, Stott thoroughly read Morgan's book, *Evangelism*, when he was young. After he read that book, he decided to preach the love of Jesus Christ. Stott ends his great book, *The cross of Christ*, quoting Morgan's statement (1972:59-60) "It is the crucified man that can preach the cross ... It is the man who has died with Christ,... that can preach the cross of Christ".

### 2.2.5 Conclusion

So far we have dealt with the direct and indirect influences on John Stott's character, ministry, and his theology. Though this treatment has been incomplete, practicality and the purpose of this thesis demand that the discussion of influences be stopped and left for another work.

Certainly the influences of home and schools helped to shape the reserved young gentleman. Rev. Nash, who introduced Stott to Christ and continued to discipline him, will have to stand as probably the major influence on shaping Stott's theology. This has been well summarized by his former study assistant, Mark Labberton, an American who wrote that "single-minded commitment to Christ, passionate concern for sharing the gospel, disciplined devotion to the Word, simple and direct preaching were all hallmarks of Bash's influence on Stott and on many other ... evangelical leaders in the Church of England" (Catherwood, 1985:19). The other influences, that is, Simeon who helped teach Stott to preach, Ryle and Temple who helped give credibility to evangelical Anglicanism and doctrinal thoughts, Torrey's book on Moody which is so clearly seen again in the life of Stott, Morgan who helped to realize him the love of Christ's cross, and even one of his younger assistants who challenged him to address contemporary issues, all did their part to mould the person who has helped shape good preachers and evangelists in the late twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 3: THE EXEGETICAL PRINCIPLES IN JOHN R.W. STOTT'S PREACHING

### 3.1 Preamble

In general, the preacher's task in its broadest definition is to understand both what Scripture has meant historically, literally and theologically and what it means to us today, that is, how it has a bearing on our lives. This task involves three constant activities.

**First** comes the process of exegesis, the extracting from the text of what God, through the human author, was expressing, for example, to the letter's envisaged readers. This involves extracting from the passage what the passage actually says. Jn. 1:18 says, that "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the father, he hath declared (ἐξήγησατο) him" (Vines, 1985:67).

**Second** comes the process of hermeneusis, the correlating of what God says through this text-of-then to us today in our concrete situation, here-and-now. A hermeneutical meeting between the text of Scripture and the text of life takes place (Venter, 1991:4). Thus, the original meaning of the text is transposed to and made applicable for the concrete reality of today (Coetzee, 1995a:3). Of course, the process of hermeneusis will be distinguished from the hermeneutics, which is regarded in this study as the science supplying the principles for the exegesis (In the next chapter, we will deal with the principles and methods of hermeneutics and the process of hermeneusis in Stott's preaching.)

**Third** comes the process of homileusis which means here the building of the sermon, using the building blocks provided by the exegesis and hermeneusis (Venter, 1995:16). This especially involves an application - in congruence with the exegesis and hermeneusis - as the source of correcting and directing thought and action (Chapell, 1994:199). Application is based on the knowledge that God's will, man's nature and need, the saving ministry of Jesus Christ, the experiential aspects of

Godliness, which embrace the common life of the church and the many-sided relationship between God and His world, His plan for its history, are realities which do not change with the passing years. It is with these matters that both testaments constantly deal (Packer, 1984:909).

We know that since the time of the Protestant scholastics, sermons have been designed according to a conventionalised schema: *subtilitas intelligendi, subtilitas explicandi, subtilitas applicandi* - careful understanding, explication, and application. Procedurally, a text is exegeted, interpreted, and applied in what I often call a tri-part sermon (Buttrick, 1981:46).

Thus, the process of exegesis, the process of hermeneusis and homileusis will be divided into three subsections that each in turn points towards a certain process in the total action of writing a sermon. These processes should be regarded as a strong unity in the process of constructing a sermon.

In this chapter we will deal especially with the principles and method of exegesis in Stott's preaching and his homiletical books. In this step we will not deal directly with the content of Stott's preaching, because the theological content of preaching cannot be guaranteed without correct exegetic and hermeneutic principles and methods. In other words, exegesis and hermeneusis may be regarded as the theory that guides sound preaching.

### **3.2 Stott's definition of exegesis**

First of all, it is important that we study his definition of exegesis. The terms 'exegesis' and 'hermeneutics' or 'interpretation' have often been used interchangeably. Coetzee differentiates between exegesis and hermeneusis. He distinguished two stages within the practical process of explanation. The exegete in the first stage asks what the author of the text said at that time to the readers of then in their concrete situation. This first stage is called exegesis (confined, in a narrow sense).

The exegete in the second stage asks what God says through this text of then to us of today in our concrete situation, here and now. This is called hermeneusis (Coetzee, 1990:15).

Kaiser (1981:47) also makes clear distinctions between exegesis and hermeneutics: "While hermeneutics (hermeneusis added by writer) will seek to describe the general and special principles and rules which are useful in approaching the biblical text, exegesis will seek to identify the single truth-intention of individual phrases, clauses, and sentences as they make up the thought of paragraphs, sections, and, ultimately, entire books. Accordingly, hermeneutics may be regarded as the theory that guides exegesis; exegesis may be understood in this work to be the practice of and the set of procedures for discovering the author's intended meaning".

Stott also attempts to distinguish between exegesis and hermeneusis as Coetzee and Kaiser do. Stott emphasizes that exegesis is the process of determining the original meaning of a biblical text and what the author was trying to convey to his readers, but hermeneusis is the attempt to apply the meaning of the text to modern-day hearers. Stott (1992:214) says that "In practice, as we study the text, we need to ask ourselves two distinct questions, and to ask them in the right order. The first is 'what does it mean?' and second, 'what does it say?' Imposing these two questions, our concern begins with the original meaning of the text, when it was first spoken or written, and then moves on to its contemporary message, as it addresses people today". He continuously warns us: "... we must neither confuse these two questions, nor put them in the wrong order, and must not ask either without also asking the other" (Stott, 1992:214).

In the light of his statement above, we can understand his definition of exegesis and hermeneusis. That is, there apparently are two stages. In the first stage he asks 'what did it mean?', which could also be worded as 'what does it mean?' This stage is called exegesis. In the second stage he asks 'what does it say?', that is, having discerned its original meaning which is fixed by its author. This is called hermeneusis.

Thus, Stott (1992:214) has defined exegesis as the first stage that includes an effort to determine what that text said and meant in the framework of its own original objective, that is, what it meant when it was first written. Perhaps better, what did it mean when first spoken or written. Hirsch (1967:1) is right to emphasise that “a text means what its author meant”.

### **3.3 His understanding of the task of exegesis**

The task of exegesis is never a simple one, as the exegete seeks to bridge the centuries between the text and his own historical context. The difficulty of the task, however, is neither new nor unique, nor one that should cause the exegete to retreat in dismay. Stott (1992:212) acknowledges that the task of exegesis is very difficult because the biblical text is partially closed "and a wide and deep cultural gulf yawns between the ancient world in which God spoke His Word and the modern world in which we listen to it".

So, Stott (1992:212) suggests that we have to accept the discipline of exegesis, that is, of thinking ourselves back into the situation of the biblical authors, into their history geography, culture and language. This task has long been graced with the name "grammatico-historical exegesis". In addition, we cannot avoid the discipline of thinking ourselves back into its cultural milieu, into its word and images, and so into the mind and purpose of its author (Stott, 1982a:221).

In fact, the task of exegesis begins with a careful, critical examination of the text in its historical context, paying attention to the political, cultural, religious and philosophical milieu. Since language is an integral part of the historical milieu of a text, another dimension of this historical investigation must always include an analysis of the language of the text.

Moreover, Stott (1992:212) points out some risks of exegesis, such as the worst blunder that we can commit is to read back our twentieth-century thoughts into the minds of the biblical authors (which is ‘eisegesis’), to manipulate what they wrote in

order to make it conform to what we want them to say, and then to claim their approval for our opinion.

We can listen to a similar warning from two great preachers, John Calvin and Charles Simeon. Calvin said that "it is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say" (Farrar, 1986:347). And then Simeon enunciated the same principle: "My endeavour is to bring out of Scripture what is there, and not to thrust in what I think might be there" (Hopkins, 1979:57). We can also hear a similar warning from a modern preacher, Nicholls (1980:30) who says that "faithful eisegesis is far to be preferred, on theological grounds, than careless or routinized". Eisegesis is the opposite of exegesis, in which we twist a text out of shape to suit one's own ends. He continues that "If anything stands in homiletics as an undoubtedly pure evil, it surely must be eisegesis, the dastardly process of (1) reading into a biblical text whatever it is one wants to find, or more delicately, (2) of starting sermon preparation with an idea and then finding a text to match" (Nicholls, 1980:26).

Therefore, the task of the exegete must be to seek and find the meaning of a text in the words themselves, and not in the exegete's thoughts and feelings. In our day we urgently need both the integrity and courage to work by this basic rule, to give the biblical authors the freedom to say what they do say, however unfashionable and unpopular their teaching may be. It is a basic attitude and obligation of the exegete for the efficient conduct of the task of exegesis in the text.

### **3.4 His understanding of the Bible as the foundation of exegesis**

Stott's view of the principles of the inspiration of Scripture has a direct bearing upon the way in which he interprets the Bible and upon contemporary meaning he finds in it. This description of his view of the Bible begins to demonstrate that relationship.

Although Stott has not claimed to make any systematic statement concerning the doctrine of Scripture, he has published two works, *You can trust the Bible* (1982b),

and *Understanding the Bible* (1972a), which both reveal his viewpoint. In addition, his expository sermons, books and articles give some insights as well.

#### *3.4.1 Scripture as revelation*

John Stott understands the nature of Scripture primarily in the light of his Reformed heritage. Stott (1992:209) confesses that "we believe God has revealed Himself, not only in the glory and order of the created universe, but supremely in Jesus Christ his incarnate Word, and in the written Word which bears a comprehensive and variegated witness to him". And then Scripture is 'God's word written', His self-disclosure in speech and writing, the product of His revelation, inspiration and providence. This first conviction is indispensable to preachers (Stott, 1992:210).

Stott (1982b:22) summarises three points about revelation in his exposition of Isaiah 55, such as (1) divine revelation is not only reasonable, but indispensable: without it we could never know God; (2) divine revelation is through words. God spoke through human words and in doing so was explaining His deeds. (3) Divine revelation is for salvation. It points us to Christ as Saviour.

Therefore, Stott understands that the revelation of Scripture is the biblical theme for biblical exposition.

#### *3.4.2 The inspiration of Scripture*

Every appropriate exegesis of the Bible must be grounded upon the principle that all Scripture is given by "the inspiration and guidance of God through the Holy Spirit" (Ames, 1969:185). But, unfortunately, there are some differences of opinion about inspiration, i.e., rational, fractional and mechanical theories.

From his sermons we are able to discern a clear and well-defined view of the origin, nature or character, and authority of the Holy Scripture. He believed that the Scriptures were divinely inspired and therefore contained no errors. The Scriptures are

the final authority for the faith and life of the Christian. These strongly-held convictions determined John Stott's view of preaching (1973:101).

While rejecting what he calls rational, fractional and mechanical theories of inspiration, Stott (1972a:138-140) himself holds to a dynamic, plenary, verbal and supernatural theory. The inspiration is dynamic because in producing the Bible, God used the minds and personalities of men instead of mechanically manipulating them.

By the process of inspiration we mean that human authors, even while God was speaking to and through them, were themselves actively engaged in historical research, theological reflection and literary composition. For much of Scripture is historical narrative, and each author has his own particular theological emphasis and literary style. Therefore, divine inspiration did not dispense with human cooperation, or iron out the peculiar contributions of the authors (Stott, 1992:168). Furthermore, the language, style and content are foreign to humanity because these have been influenced by human thought form and style. Thus, on the one hand God spoke, determining what he wanted to say, yet without smothering the personality of the human authors. On the other hand, human beings spoke, using their faculties freely, yet without distorting the truth which God was speaking through them (Stott, 1992:169; 1982a:97). Stott likewise accepts the plenary inspiration of the Bible. Here he is satisfied to make a distinction between different books of the Bible or different passages by saying that they differ only in degree of worth, not in degree of inspiration. Though the reader may find some parts of more value, all parts are equally inspired.

Stott (1972a:139) points out that the reason why the notion of 'verbal inspiration' is unpopular today is that people misunderstand it. In consequence, what they are rejecting is not its true meaning, but a caricature. So Stott (1982b:50-51) tried to clear the concept of some major misconceptions. To sum up, (1) 'Verbal inspiration' does not mean that 'every word of the Bible is literally true', (2) it does not mean verbal dictation, (3) it does not mean that every sentence of the Bible is God's Word, even in isolation from its context, (4) but it does mean that the Holy Spirit has spoken and still

speaks through the human authors, understood according to the plain, natural meaning of the words used, and is true and without error.

Stott (1972a:139) especially emphasizes that inspiration was 'verbal inspiration', in that it expended to the very words used by the human authors. This is what they claimed. The apostle Paul, for example, could declare that in communicating to others what God had revealed to him, he used 'words not taught by human wisdom but... taught by the Spirit' (1 Cor. 2:13). Finally, the inspiration is supernatural. The Bible is the revelation of God in which God makes known to us a special message (Stott, 1972a:123).

Furthermore, the effect which the Bible has upon those who read it and hear it is supernatural. The Bible is not the result of the rational power of any person or persons, but is sent from God in heaven to man on earth.

So John Stott (1992:168-170; 1972a:140) accepted the dual authorship of the Bible, that is, Scripture is equally the Word of God and the word of human beings. Even better, as it is the Word of God through the words of human beings, he strongly suggests that its double authorship should demand a double approach. Because Scripture is the Word of God, we should read it as we read no other book on our knees, humbly, reverently, prayerfully, looking to the Holy Spirit for illumination. But because Scripture is also the words of human beings, we should read it as we read every other book, using our minds, thinking, pondering and reflecting, and paying close attention to its literary, historical, cultural and linguistic characteristics. This combination of humble reverence and critical reflection is not only not impossible; it is indispensable (2 Tim. 2:7) (Stott, 1992:170).

Though Stott makes such a big point of the inspiration of the Bible, he carefully limits himself to the original documents, not to translations, since translations are affected by human error (Stott, 1992:142). Furthermore, having limited access to the original manuscripts, none of which scholars have in their possession, Stott (1972a:142) is left without a 'genuinely' inspired document. Here he presents a simplistic and thoroughly

optimistic opinion concerning the work of textual criticism. First of all, he boldly states that the thousands of variant manuscripts are God's way of protecting the Bible. Their vast number gives the scholars more of a chance to compare readings and find errors (Stott, 1992: 143). Secondly, he says that the older manuscripts will invariably contain the correct reading. Copyists' mistakes will show up in the recent manuscripts but not in the older ones. Stott's (1992:143) final statement is the most optimistic: "... we possess a great many more early copies of the original text than of any other ancient literature. By comparing these with each other, with the early 'versions' (i.e. translation) and with biblical quotations in the writing of the church fathers, scholars (called 'textual critics') have been able to establish the authentic text (especially New Testament) beyond any reasonable doubt".

### 3.4.3 *The infallibility of Scripture*

Following directly upon this view of inspiration, comes the infallibility of the Bible. God's Word is infallible, for what He has said is true. By this Stott (1972a:156) really means the inerrancy of the Bible. In *the Lausanne Covenant* Stott (1975a:4) affirms that "the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice". For Stott (1972a:145-146), the most convincing proof of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible is the "fact that the Lord Jesus Christ regarded it and treated it as such". Stott does not hesitate to say that Jesus taught that the Bible is infallible. With regard to the Old Testament, he says that the frequent quotations from it by Jesus are sufficient proof of its infallibility (Stott, 1972a:145).

Furthermore, His personal attitude towards the Old Testament Scripture was one of reverent submission, for He believed that in submitting to the written Word, He was submitting to his Father's Word. Regarding the writings of the New Testament, Stott (1971:42-43) says that Jesus anticipated the inspiration of the apostles before they began to write. Nevertheless, the ministry of the Spirit which Christ promised the apostles was something quite unique, as should be clear from these words: "All this I

have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (Jn. 14:25,26)(Stott, 1972a:150).

Stott's other important proof of the infallibility of Scripture is the internal witness of the Bible itself. He (1973:101) states that "2 Timothy 3:16 means that all Scripture (from Genesis to Revelation) is verbally inspired and profitable", that several times Paul claims to be speaking in the name and with the authority of Christ (e.g. 2 Cor. 2:17; 13:3; Gal. 4:14), and calls his message 'the Word of God' (e.g. 1 Th. 2:13), and Peter clearly regarded Paul's letters as Scripture, for in referring to them he calls the Old Testament 'the other Scriptures' (2 Pe. 3:16).

As a result of his insistence not only on biblical infallibility but also on biblical inerrancy, Stott must state that besides being the church's infallible rule or authority in matters of faith and practice, the Bible is also at all times historically and scientifically accurate.

Therefore, Stott (1972a:123) insists that we should not hesitate to claim God Himself as the ultimate author of both Testaments or to designate the whole of Scripture 'the Word of God'. It does not reflect the scientific background of the day in which it was written. The Bible is a historical book but it has been kept error-free by the Holy Spirit of God. The purpose of the Bible is not scientific. This is not to say that the teaching of Scripture and of science are in conflict with one another for when we keep each to its proper sphere and discern what each is affirming, they are not. Nor is it to say that the two spheres never overlap and that nothing in the Bible has any scientific reference, for the Bible does contain statements of facts which can be scientifically verified (Stott, 1972a:11). Stott (1972a:142) concludes that "whatever Scripture affirms is true, whether in the field of religion or ethics, history or science, its own nature or origin"

Finally, the Bible is trustworthy because it has been communicated to us without error and unique in its claim to instruct us for 'such a great salvation' (Heb. 2:3).

#### *3.4.4 The authority of the Bible*

The authority of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is the source of the authority of the Bible. The inevitable conclusion to John Stott's views of the inspiration, and all-sufficiency of Scripture is that Scripture is the final authority. The authority of Scripture is defined by Stott (1972a:139) as "the power and weight which Scripture possesses because of what it is, namely a divine revelation given by divine inspiration". In a word, Stott grants authority to the Bible based on 'revelation' and 'inspiration'. If it is a word from God, it has authority over men. So God's word carries God's authority.

Stott (1982b: 56) exhorts us to "accept the supreme authority of Scripture, and earnestly desire to submit to it". Stott (1982b:57) differs from the creed of the Roman Catholic Church about the authority of Bible: their official position is still that "both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence". Of course, Stott can accept the tradition which is consistent with Scripture. But when Scripture and tradition are in collision, we must allow Scripture to reform tradition, just as Jesus insisted with the 'traditions of men' (cf. Mk. 7:1-13). If the Church of Rome were to have the courage to renounce unbiblical traditions (e.g., its dogma about the immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary), immediate progress would be made towards agreement under the Word of God (Stott, 1982b:57; 1992:182). This statement sets out Stott's adherence to Biblical authority; and it also defines its term. It is the Bible above the church, whether the church is dogma, the church is history or the church is liturgy. It is also the Bible above human opinion, whether considered cognitively or intuitively.

We have to mention the Reformer's viewpoint of the authority of the Bible, because John Stott has thoroughly followed their views on the authority of the Bible. He also has believed that the authority of the Bible is a vital basis for exegesis and hermeneutics. We especially state two representative Reformers' opinions, Martin Luther and John Calvin, by following statement:

Martin Luther (1483-1546) is one of the most heroic and fascinating figures of history. For Luther, the authority of Scripture was a constant theme in all his lectures, commentaries, treatises, and sermons. So, it is the best way of explaining Luther's theological foundation. He thoroughly believed in the Bible as the Word of God (Godfrey, 1992:227). He proves it by his statement: "We make a great difference between God's Word and the word of man. A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlasting" (William, 1990:20). The Bible was a compass used by Luther and other Protestant Reformers in their day-to-day journey amidst the turmoil and unrest caused by the Reformation of the church. Watson (1994:175) sums up Luther's understanding of authority: "For Luther, all authority belongs ultimately to Christ, the Word of God, alone, and even the authority of the Scriptures is secondary and derivative, pertaining to them only inasmuch as they bear witness to Christ and are the vehicle of the Word". Althaus (1966:3) starts his standard work on Luther's theology with the following statement: "All Luther's theological thinking presupposes the authority of Scripture. His theology is nothing more than an attempt to interpret Scripture. Its form is basically exegesis".

John Calvin (1509 -1564) was the most brilliant light of the second generation of the Reformers. Concerning the authority of Scripture, as Calvin's famous words in the *Institutes* ( I, vii, 1) show: "Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard". Calvin (1967: I. vii, iv) also says that "the principal proof of the Scriptures is every where derived from the character of the divine speaker". It is God Himself who speaks through the Scripture and therefore from the Scripture. This is the basis for its authority. In another passage Calvin (1967: I. vii) says that by faith we hear from the Scriptures "the very words pronounced by God Himself". He (1967: I. vii, iv) continues: "As God alone is a sufficient witness of Himself in His own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit". Here Calvin indicates the decisive testimony and verification of Scripture. Calvin (1967:I. vii) adapts the traditional formula that "God

is the author of Scripture" as his famous words in the Institutes show: "Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard". Scripture, therefore, is the sole authority in the life of the church, not with regard to its proclamation, but also with regard to all the other aspects of its life. This authority is not finally dependent on the interpretation of scripture by the church; to the contrary, the church in all its interpretation is bound to the clear message of scripture, for it is here that the Spirit speaks to us (Runia, 1984:144). So Calvin believed that every word of the Bible was God's Word and that every word was true in all that it says.

In a word, in line with the Reformers, Stott holds to the classical Protestant position of '**Sola Scriptura**' which was one of the ringing cries of the Reformation.

After briefly discussing recent attacks on the authority of the Scriptures, Stott presented what he considered 'the right approach' to the authority of the Bible. The 'right approach' includes five arguments. First, the historic churches have consistently maintained and defended the divine origin of Scripture. Second, the historic churches have consistently taught what the biblical writers themselves claimed. For example, Moses received the law from God. Third, the authority of Scripture is supplied not by the writers but the readers of Scripture. For there are certain characteristics of the Bible which cannot fail to strike the observant reader. There is, for instance, the book's remarkable unity and coherence. Fourthly, there is the power which the Bible has had in human lives, disturbing the complacent and comforting the sorrowful, humbling the proud, reforming the sinful, encouraging the faint-hearted, bringing hope to the bereaved and giving direction to those who have lost way (Stott, 1982b:143-144), Fifthly and most importantly, Jesus testified to the authority of Scripture. Christ Himself thought of Scripture in terms of a divine word or testimony (Stott, 1970:94; 1972a:9).

However, Stott (1982b:145; 1972a:12) affirms that the first and foremost reason why Christians believe in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture is not because of what the churches teach, the writers claimed or the readers sense, but because of what

Jesus Christ himself said. Since He endorsed the authority of Scripture, we are bound to conclude that His authority and Scripture's authority either stand or fall together. For Stott, the authority of the Bible rests in the revelation of God through the experiences recorded in it, rather than in a revelation found in its words.

#### *3.4.5 Summary*

Stott's view of the Bible as the foundation of exegesis, therefore, consists of the following elements: (1) Scripture is the revelation of God, that is, God has disclosed Himself in the written Bible; (2) the Bible is the record of God's speech to man; (3) not only was the truth inspired or the biblical writers inspired, but also the very words were inspired; (4) the Bible contains no error, and (5), the Bible has the supreme authority because it came from the living God

These strongly-held convictions had everything to do with John Stott's view of the process of exegesis and preaching. From a negative point of view, he feels very strongly that the chief reason for the decline in preaching is the loss of belief in the authority of the Scripture and due to what Amos called "a famine ... of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). On the other hand, Stott (1992:173) believes that the submission to God's self-revelation in Christ and in the full biblical witness to Christ, far from inhibiting the health and growth of the church, is actually indispensable to them.

Therefore, Stott (1982b:69) is convinced that the principles we need to guide ourselves are there in the Bible - theological and ethical principles - and together we can discover through the illumination of the Holy Spirit how to apply them to our lives in the contemporary world.

### **3.5 His three characteristic attitudes for Bible study**

Bible study is a basic step for proper exegesis and an indispensable element for preparing a sermon. Stott treats Bible study as one of the most important duties of a

pastor who is called by God. He (1982a:181) says "Since the Christian pastor is primarily called to the ministry of the Word, the study of Scripture is one of his foremost responsibilities, to which he commits himself at his ordination".

The higher our view of the Bible, the more painstaking and conscientious our study of it should be. If this book is indeed the Word of God, then away with slovenly, slipshod exegesis! We have to make time to penetrate the text until it yields up its treasure. Only when we have ourselves absorbed its message, can we confidently share it with others (Stott, 1982a:182).

Therefore, Stott suggests at least three maxims for Bible study

### *3.5.1 Comprehensiveness*

Stott (1982a:182) stresses the vital importance of the right approach to the Bible. Because it is unique, it must not be studied as any other book is approached. We should never read the Bible except comprehensively. As we read the other book, sporadic and haphazard dipping into the Scriptures is not enough. Nor must we limit ourselves to our favourite passages, or concentrate on the microscopic examination of a few key texts. Lloyd-Jones (1975a:189) advises us "not to be impatient with ourselves when studying a difficult passage in Scripture; keep on reading or listening; and suddenly we will find that not only do you know much more than you thought you knew, but you will be able to follow and understand".

He (1979:253-4) keeps on advising that "we must read, we must study, we must meditate, we must exercise our faculties, we must ... struggle with truth. Insist upon getting an understanding of truth. If you have a willing heart, and a true desire, you can be certain that the Spirit will always come to your aid".

If we hope to help our congregation to develop a Christian mind, we have to develop one ourselves. And the only way to do this is to soak our mind in the Scriptures. "Be masters of your Bibles, brethren", said Spurgeon (1977:25) to his students; "Whatever

other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly". "To understand the Bible should be our ambition; we should be familiar with it, as familiar as the housewife with her needle, the merchant with his ledger, the mariner with his ship' (Spurgeon, 1977:1956). Again, "it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last.. your blood is *Bibline* and the very essence of the Bible flows from you" (Day, 1934:131). This steeping of the mind in Scripture was a major secret of the powerful preachers of the past.

Stott always studies the whole Bible through the comprehensive method. It is helpful to survey the rolling landscape of Scripture, and to grasp its underlying and recurring themes.

### 3.5.2 *Open-mindedness*

Stott (1982a:184) asserts that if our study of the Bible is to be comprehensive, it must also be *open-minded*, that is, we must genuinely desire through our Bible reading to hear and heed God's Word, without distorting its meaning or avoiding its challenge.

In Bible study, there is one absolutely vital necessity, according to John Stott (1982a;185): Though we cannot altogether rid ourselves of our cultural inheritance, we should be aware of our cultural bias. We also have to put in an effort to get rid of the prejudices from our mind, because prejudice is one of the greatest enemies of true exegesis. Prejudice is a power that pre-judges issues and it does it by shutting out all aspects of truth except one. The result is that we are blind to every other facet.

Rather than do that Stott (1982a:186) says "we have to transport ourselves back, by the use of both our knowledge and our imagination, into the biblical writer's context, until we begin to think what he thought and feel what he felt. Our responsibility is not to assimilate his view to ours, by reading our opinions back into what he wrote, but to assimilate our views to his, by struggling to penetrate into his heart and mind".

Therefore, the exegete should face Scripture as far as possible with fairness and an open mind. We have to be willing to do it this way for God Himself laid down the ground rules, and we must decide what He wants to say to us, however uncongenial we may find it. We have no liberty to circumscribe Him, or to suggest lines of demarcation within which we are prepared to negotiate. No, we have to break down the cultural barriers, and struggle to open our hearts and minds to listen to whatever He has to say (Stott, 1982a:187).

### 3.5.3 *Expectant study*

Our Bible study needs to be *expectant*. Stott (1982a:188) points out at least two conditions which are hostile to the joyful expectancy when we come to the Scriptures. The first is pessimism, aroused in some by the current hermeneutical debate itself. The interpretation of Scripture now appears so complicated to them that they become cynical, and despair of ever gaining a true and balanced understanding of God's Word. But if we limit only the professional person to exegesis and study of the Bible, it must be condemned as a dangerous aberration, because Scripture is intended for ordinary people like us. For example, even the first book of Corinthians, with all its profound teaching on doctrine, ethics and church order, was addressed to a Christian community to which 'not many wise' belonged.

The second condition which militates against expectancy is spiritual stability, and this can be a major problem for all pastors. We can be proud if we read regularly through the whole Bible. And then after a few years we feel we know it fairly well. So it will bring the repugnance of reading the Bible and our daily reading with no very lively expectation that God is going to speak to us through it. We need to "cry out for insight and raise our voice for understanding", to "seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures", for then we shall understand and 'find the knowledge of God' (Pr. 2:3-5). It is this spirit of eager and determined expectation which God honours. He promises to fill the hungry with good things.

Therefore, we must not give in to spiritual stableness as if it were normal or even tolerable, but must pray for the refreshment of the Holy Spirit so that, if our appetite is blunt He will sharpen it, and if our heart is cold He will rekindle within us the fires of expectancy.

Although the Bible itself is always our textbook, we shall, of course, take advantage of the many aids to biblical understanding which are available to us today, as Stott encourages us in this comprehensive, open-minded and expectant study. Books are the preacher's stock-in-trade. How widely we spread our theological reading will depend on the time we have available, and where we concentrate our studies will depend on our individual interests (Stott, 1982a:188).

### **3.6 The characteristic principles of his exegesis**

#### *3.6.1 The Bible as its own interpreter*

The golden rule of all Reformed Scriptural elucidation for more than five centuries has been and remains (in Latin): **Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres**. In English this means that the Holy Scripture is its own interpreter (Coetzee, 1995a:13), or “the Bible is its own expositor”, is derived fully from Scripture (Lk. 24:27; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Pe. 1:20).

The Roman Catholic Church claimed that it possessed the mind of Christ and the mind of the Spirit in its teaching magisterium so that it could render obscure doctrines clear. But the Reformers rejected this assertion of the Catholics that they had the gift of grace and illumination to know what the Holy Scripture taught (Ramm, 1989:104).

Thus Calvin and Luther emphasised that ‘Scripture interprets Scripture’. Consequently they placed a strong emphasis on grammatical exegesis and the need for examining the context of each passage (Zuck, 1991: 47; Pink, 1990:42; Evans, 1979:36). They believed that Scripture possesses a unity given it by the mind of God, that it must therefore be allowed to interpret itself, one passage throwing light upon

another, and that the Church has no liberty so to "expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another" (Stott, 1982a:128). Lloyd-Jones (1976:106; 1981:102) states that "Scripture must be taken with Scripture. Defining it negatively means that one must never interpret any part of Scripture in such a manner as to contradict other part of Scripture. Defining it positively, means that one must compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to expound and to elucidate Scripture".

Stott's principles of exegesis stand firmly within this Reformed tradition, that is, the golden rule of all Reformed Scripture elucidation.

With regard to the Bible as its own interpreter, Stott (1991:116) writes that "we will be right to seek harmony by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture" and "it is always important to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture" (1978a:167). Moreover, he urges us to interpret each text in the light both of its immediate context in the chapter or book concerned and of its wider context in the Bible as whole (Stott, 1972a:116).

Therefore, Stott thinks there is no better rule than to compare Scripture with Scripture when one has a difficult passage to interpret. For example, if a given text is capable of two variant interpretations and one of those interpretations goes against the rest of Scripture while the other is in harmony with it, then the latter interpretation must be used. He thoroughly holds fast to the Reformer's stance about the principles of exegesis (Stott, 1970:40).

### *3.6.2 With much prayer, a priori of exegesis*

It is very important to pray before we use some principles and methods of exegesis, because we have a responsibility in the study and exegesis of a text for preaching, through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Venter (1995:11) endorses the above-mentioned point: "the absolute requirement for the whole process of a sermon is prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit".

Stott (1982a :22) emphasizes that we should pray regularly in all kind of situations, supplicating God for illumination by the Spirit of truth. We shall repeat Moses's petition "I pray you, show me your glory" (Ex. 33:18) and Samuel's "Speak, Lord for your servant is listening" (1 Sa. 3:9,10). Because we cannot understand the meaning of the text which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit without involving the help of the Spirit of God (2 Tim. 3:16). So then, before we preachers prepare, before a congregation listens, before an individual or a group begins to read the Bible - in these situations we must pray for the Holy Spirit's illumination (Stott, 1982b:60,61).

Stott (1982b: 60) says the following: "We need to acknowledge that the truths revealed in the Bible are still locked and sealed until the Holy Spirit opens them to us and opens our mind to them". So we can catch the original meaning of the text by the help of the Holy Ghost through our prayer. When we have faithfully discharged our full range of duties as exegetes and when we have also pressed on to apply that exegesis by principalizing the text paragraph by paragraph into timeless propositions which call for an immediate response from our listeners, we need the Holy Spirit to carry that word home to the mind and hearts of our hearers if that word is ever going to change men's lives (Kaiser, 1981:236). It is the Spirit of God who teaches us to pray for the exegesis and for all who will hear that Word of God.

Therefore, whenever John Stott has Bible study, he first begins to think about the text and prays about it again and again in order that he can realize the original meaning of the Word of God through the help of the Holy Spirit (Stott, 1995:interview with author).

### *3.6.3 Simplicity*

The principle of simplicity - or perspicuity, as it is sometimes called - is not to be understood as meaning that the exegesis of Scripture is simple, that it is to be interpreted literally, or that each text has a single meaning; it is to say that much of the time, the meaning of Scripture is powerful and clear without digging or distorting, and that simple common sense is to be exercised in the process of exegesis (Thompson,

1987:48). So Blackman (1957:118) says that "Scripture too is simple, and preacher must expound not its multiplicity of meaning, but its single fundamental meaning: *simplicissimae Scripturae simplicissimus sensus*".

In his commentary on Galatians, Calvin (1964:573) says: "Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us always from the natural meaning".

Stott also emphasizes the principle of exegesis of the Bible. His principle of exegesis is very simple, that is, exegesis looks for the natural sense of the biblical text. Stott firmly rejects that the exegete allows his imagination and wishful thinking to put meaning into a text. So he (1972a:166) says "in reading the words and sentences of the biblical text we must look first of all for their obvious and natural meaning". The exegete needs to begin with a disciplined study of the text, preferably in the original language, Hebrew and Greek, and a good translation such as the Revised Standard Version or the New International Version (Stott, 1972a:167).

Thus, reading and meditation upon the text, looking for the simple, natural meaning of the text, is the first step. This natural meaning may be literal, figurative, or even allegorical, though never an elaborate allegorical contraction as were the common finding of the Alexandrian exegetes of the fourth century. Stott warns that an exegetical way to abuse the principle of simplicity which is not to deal honestly with obviously figurative language or to refuse to take into account the cultural conditioning of a particular text. For example, Stott rejected allegorical interpretations which suggest that the two denarii given to the innkeeper represent the two sacraments, etc. (Stott, 1972a:168-170). But he called the good shepherd in John 14, the vine and the branches in John 15, and the sower in the Mark 4 allegories. His explanations do not follow the pattern of excess that has allegorical interpretation so distasteful to modern scholars, but rather follow the pattern of interpreting metaphor.

The vast amount of metaphorical language in the Bible forces the question, "how can one tell the literal from the figurative language?" At this point, Stott advises one to read the context, both of the verse and of the passage, and listen to the second teacher, reason. "Common sense will usually guide us. In particular, it is wise to ask ourselves what the intention of the author or speaker is" (Stott, 1972a:169).

Therefore, even though Stott does utilize some limited allegorical exegesis, his intention is to find the simple, natural, and most obvious exegesis of a passage.

Stott's principles of exegesis are not complicated but simple and straightforward. The only original idea shown is in the terminology, "the Bible interprets Scripture, Prayer is a priority of exegesis", and "the principle of simplicity". His description of his principles is well explained; they reflected his keen, analytical mind and seasoned practice of trying to explain complicated truths in a simple manner. Stott is to be commended for trying to help modern expositors, and not for attempting to impress and confuse them.

It seems as if something is lacking in his exegesis in that he does not mention any particular doctrine that governs the principles of exegesis. For example, it could be said John Calvin always exegeted a text as being consistent with God's sovereignty.

### **3.7 The characteristic methods of his exegesis**

#### *3.7.1 The selection of the text*

The idea of selecting a text as the basis for spoken discourse is an ancient one. So we take it for granted that there must be a text, because preachers are not speculators, but expositors. But then the question arises: how we shall choose our text for a particular sermon. It is possible to do so, if one is fairly saturated with biblical concepts, without actually speaking from a specific text, just as it is possible, if one is not saturated, to employ a text and then preach a non-biblical sermon. Merely quoting the Bible is no guarantee of doing biblical preaching. Some of the most ignorant and misleading

preaching one hears is peppered with scriptural quotations. But normally the preacher who wishes to preach biblically will launch his sermon from a particular segment of Scripture (Daane, 1980:50; Vos, 1995:438). This has the advantage, if the segment is faithfully dealt with, of providing a biblical focus to the sermon; and it may unless the sermon is given as a mere exposition or running commentary on the text, provide valuable hints about the shape the sermon should assume (Killinger, 1985:14; Liefelt, 1984:6).

How, then, shall we make our selection? The choice of a text for a sermon can be influenced by numerous factors, for example, Bible Study, the situation in the congregation, circumstances in the country and the world, etc. It is important to make a sharp distinction here. Choice of the text can be determined by situation, but the elucidation of the text cannot be thus determined. A text must be allowed to say what it has to say and from there throw light on the situation - not the other way around (Venter, 1995:11). Ferguson (1986:196) says the following about it: "the first principle must be to recognize that the preacher operates with two horizons: (1) the text of Scripture and (2) the people of God and their environment in the world. He ought not normally to make his selection without consciously bringing these two horizons together".

Here Stott (1982a:214-219) concretely suggests four main factors which will influence our choice.

The first is *liturgical*. In general, one can assume that the periscopes which form the lectionary are legitimate preaching units. Therefore, large sections of Christendom (in particular, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Anglican) continue to observe the seasons of the Church year, which are set out in a calendar and supplied, Sunday by Sunday, with appropriate lections.

Since the set lessons (the Old Testament reading, the Epistle, the Gospel and others) are appropriate to the season in the Church's calendar, the preacher may sometimes, even often, take his text from one of these readings. A slavish attachment to the

prescribed lections can be an unnecessary bondage, however. It is better to regard them rather as suggestive pointers to the day's theme. To be sure, one must not be in bondage to the church calendar either. For then one would feel inhibited, for example, from preaching on the Incarnation except at Christmas or on the Resurrection except at Easter. At least two warnings are in order for users of lectionaries. One is the theological filter through which they are modified. The other is the cultural filter that omits passages which challenge comfortable, Western life-styles (Thompson, 1987:20).

Nevertheless, the value of the calendar is obvious. James Stewart (1946:110-111) who is one of the most popular contemporary preachers has commended 'a due observance of the Christian Year' in these words: "The great landmarks of the Christian Year - Advent, Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Whit Sunday, Trinity - set us our course, and suggest our basic themes. They compel us to keep close to the fundamental doctrines of the faith. They summon us back from the by-paths where we might be prone to linger, to the great highway of redemption. They ensure that in our preaching we shall constantly be returning to those mighty acts of God which the Church exists to declare".

The second factor which helps us to determine our text we will call *external*, by which we mean some event in the life of our nation (e.g. an election, the death of a public figure or a national scandal), some issue of public debate (e.g. the arms race, abortion, capital punishment, unemployment, homosexual practice, or divorce), a natural disaster (flood, famine or earthquake) or some other catastrophe (a plane or train crash). Preachers need to be sensitive to the momentous public questions and issues in people's minds (Greidanus, 1988:106,110-111).

Thirdly, there is the *pastoral* factor, that is, some discovered need in the congregation's spiritual pilgrimage. The pastor is aware of the ever-present needs of his congregation. The best preachers are always good pastors, for they know the needs and problems, doubts, fears and hopes of their people. Thompson (1987:21) says that "pastoral sensitivity should also lead the preaching pastor to examine with the

congregation just what needs they perceive in their individual and communal life and what life-style they would like to achieve as a result of hearing the gospel week after week".

The fourth factor to guide us in our choice of text is *personal*. Without doubt the best sermons we ever preach to others are those we have first preached to ourselves. Or, to put the same truth somewhat differently, when God Himself speaks to us through a text of Scripture, and it becomes luminous or phosphorescent to us, it is then that it continues to glow with divine glory when we seek to open it up to others.

To sum up, when Stott selects the portion of Scripture as the basic aspect of a sermon, he always considers these four factors - liturgical, external, pastoral and personal - which will help the expositor to choose his sermon text.

### 3.7.2 *The meditation of the text selected from Bible*

After the choice of the text, Stott deeply meditates on the selected passage he wants to preach on. He likes to meditate on the text for as long a time as he possibly can. Because he wants to understand the full meaning and attention of the author from the text. So Stott (1982a:220) calls the meditation as "a long period of subconscious incubation or maturation". He (1982a:220-224) asserts that when we have done meditation of the text there are some steps as follows:

- 1 Read the text : Re-read it, re-read it, and re-read it again.
- 2 Probe the text : Turn it over and over in your mind , like Mary the mother of Jesus who wondered at all the things the shepherds had told her, 'pondering them in her heart' (Lk. 2:18,19).
- 3 Ask two questions of the text : First, *what does it mean?* Perhaps better, what *did* it mean when first spoken or written, for Hirsch (1967:1) is right to emphasize that "a text means what its author meant". Second, *what does it say?* That is, what is its contemporary message? How does it speak to us today? This is a different question. It involves the further 'bridge-building'

discipline of relating the ancient Word to the modern world, and translating it into today's cultural terms.

- 4 Use an auxiliary aid: As we are addressing our two questions to the text, respecting its meaning and its message, we may well need to turn to a lexicon, concordance or commentary for help. They can save us from misinterpreting the passage, illumine it and stimulate our thinking about it. But they can never be more than aids.
- 5 Pray: All the time we shall be praying, crying humbly to God for illumination by the Spirit of truth. Christian meditation differs from other kinds in being a combination of study and prayer.

Stott always probes for the truth from the selected passage through using the above-mentioned method of meditation on the text. The task of asking questions is especially used as a fruitful method and treasured in the tradition of Biblical exegesis (Lenski, 1968:50; Pieterse, 1984:8-9).

### 3.7.3 *An inductive method*

What is the best approach of exegesis to the text? Traina (1982:53) answers this question by stating: "The genuine way of an inductive approach to Scripture is its open-ended, experimental nature ... It is neither *a* method nor *the* method. It is epistemology, a way of knowing truth".

How does Stott arrive at the message from the exegesis of his text? Between two possible procedures Stott prefers the inductive method to the deductive: "Biblical induction is the only safe way to begin theology, moving that is, from a wide variety of particular texts to general conclusions. But it presupposes a thorough knowledge of the diverse particularities of Scripture. it is in this way that the grand themes of Scripture emerge. Only then are we ready for a more deductive approach, as we view each part in the light of the whole" (Stott, 1982a:183).

His method of approaching the text harmonizes with Lloyd-Jones's emphasis on the exegetical approach. Lloyd-Jones (1975a:179) says that "the inductive method is undoubtedly the better way to be followed in any realm and department of thought. It is always right to listen to the evidence before you give a verdict. He is a very poor judge who starts with his verdict, and then proceeds to turn down everything that opposes it, instead of listening first to all the arguments, and giving them their full value. And any ordinary fair-minded man would follow the same procedure".

Stott consistently uses this inductive method. After first considering the various words in the text one by one, he ascertains the meaning of each from the text and catches the theme of the text. In other words, he does not fasten a meaning on the words of the text but grows it from the words of the text. He (1982a:185) urges that we have to transport ourselves back, by the use of both our knowledge and our imagination, into the biblical writer's context, until we begin to think what he thought and feel what he felt. Our responsibility is not to assimilate his views to ours, by reading our opinions back into what he wrote, but to assimilate our views to his, by struggling to penetrate into his heart and mind.

#### *3.7.4 His use of the lexical semantics*

Books of word studies are a valuable resource. While the richest and most extensive works cover the Greek of the New Testament and Septuagint, many valuable volumes are also available to provide insight into Old Testament Hebrew. The exegete can choose from a wide range of books, exhaustive, multi-volume works or relatively simple books designed for preachers (Craddock, 1985:107-109). Stott puts some valuable lexicons of Greek and Hebrew near him and always uses them.

When he exegetizes the portion of the text, his dominant method is to use the lexical semantics in order to come to a proper understanding of the meaning of individual words.

In his sermons he sometimes quotes definitions from the Greek/English Lexicon by Arndt and Gingrich explaining "the actual root meaning of the Greek word" (1987:42;164; 1973:30;37). For determining the meaning of Greek words John Stott uses not only diachronic linguistic but also synchronic linguistics. In his famous book, *The cross of Christ*, 'satisfaction for sin' in chapter 5 (1986a:126), it is found a good example of a proper diachronic study where Stott considers the total teaching of the Scriptures, not just a possible meaning of a word. In the latter case although Stott does not use these technical terms, his practice in this line is prevalent in his sermons. We can find a good example of the latter in his sermon on the Sermon on the Mount. He comes to an understanding of this one by looking at some other examples of the use of the same word in the New Testament: Worry (Mt. 6:25-30) is the meaning of the command 'μη μεριμνατε' in Greek. It is the word used of Martha who was "distracted" with much serving, of the good seed sown among thorns which was choked by the 'cares' of life, and by Paul in his injunction, 'Have no anxiety about anything' (Lk. 10:40; 8:14; Php. 4:6).

Furthermore, Stott (1986b:166) explains the meaning of the "not mocked" with its paradigmatic relation to 'sneer at' or 'treat with contempt' as well as its syntagmatic relations to 'fool' or to 'outwit'. Stott tries to discover the original meaning of a word in terms; its semantic relations of sameness or of opposition. It is the unique method of his exegetical approach to the text.

### *3.7.5 An effort to grasp the dominant thought of the text*

Stott does make a real effort to grasp the dominant thought when he proceeds to study one particular portion of a text. A final procedure in his exegetical approach is to find the dominant thought, i.e., a main theme of a particular text. Stott (1982a:224) says that "we should be looking for our text's dominant thought after we study and pray for the text". He continuously explains its reasons as follows: (1) because every text has a main theme. God speaks through what He has spoken, then it is essential to ask ourselves "What is He saying? Where does His emphasis lie?" (2) because one of the

chief ways in which a sermon differs from a lecture is that it aims to convey only one major message.

There can be several legitimate ways of handling a text, and several different lessons to learn from it (Robinson,1980:93), but Stott always asks which one is the main thrust of the text and asserts that every text has an overriding force. If the main drive of the text is found, his exegetical task is virtually completed.

In addition, we have to concentrate our attention on Venter's statement (1995:13): "After all methodological steps of exegesis, set the sermon text finally and determine the telos of the sermon text; in other words, answer the question: Why did the Holy Spirit have this text written in this place in this Bible book? The answer to this question brings us to what is the reader unique in the sermon text. The telos of the text has to be dealt with / accounted for in the sermon. Put differently: the preacher may not formulate a theme from a specific text for his sermon that does not comply with the aim of the Holy Spirit for this particular text!"

### *3.7.6 His analysis of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-7:29)*

For Stott (1972a:165) it is clear that the analysis in exegesis should be a natural, not artificial, outgrowth of the passage. And the analysis should be as detailed as one can make it without seeming forced or artificial. From this analysis Stott goes on to make observations about the overall structure.

Stott provides analyses everywhere in his sermons. The function of an analysis in his sermon is to furnish the background and the interpretative context of his text.

As to his procedure in exegesis, Stott recommends that it is always wise to make a general analysis before one proceeds to a particular analysis - firstly a general analysis of the whole, then a broad analysis of the section and lastly a detailed analysis of the section or sub-section. An example of his analyses on several levels is supplied:

## **1 A general analysis of the whole sermon**

1.1	Introduction: what is this sermon?	5:1-2
1.2	A Christian's character: the beatitudes	5:3-12
1.3	A Christian's influence: salt and light	5:13-16
1.4	A Christian's righteousness: Christ, Christian and the law, etc.	5:17-48
1.5	A Christian's religion: not hypocritical but real	6:-6,16-18
1.6	A Christian's prayer: not mechanical but thoughtful	6:7-15
1.7	A Christian's ambition: not material security but God's rule	6:19-34
1.8	A Christian's relationships: to his brothers, his father and false prophets	7:1-20
1.9	A Christian's commitment: the radical choice	7:21-27
1.10	Conclusion: who is this preacher?	7:28,29

## **2 A broad analysis of the section**

1.4	A Christian's righteousness	5:17-48
1.4.1	Christ, the Christian and the law	5:17-20
1.4.2	Avoiding anger and lust	5:21-30
1.4.3	Fidelity in marriage and honesty in speech	5:31-37
1.4.4	Non-retaliation and active love	5:38-48

## **3 A detailed analysis of the sub-section (1978:174-204)**

1.8	A Christian's relationships	7:1-12
1.8.1	Our attitude to our brother	7:1-5
1.8.1.1	The Christian is not to be a judge	7:1,2
1.8.1.2	The Christian no to be a hypocrite	7:3,4
1.8.1.3	The Christian is rather to be a brother	7:5
1.8.2	Our attitude to 'dogs' and 'pigs'	7:6
1.8.3	Our attitude to our heavenly father	7:7-11
1.8.3.1	The promises Jesus makes	

1.8.3.2	The problems men raise	
1.8.3.3	The lessons we learn	
1.8.4	Our attitude to all men	7:12

### 3.8 Stott's contribution to exegesis

3.8.1 From our study of John Stott's exegetical principles in general (3.2) it can be said that exegesis is the process of determining the original meaning of a biblical text and what the author was trying to convey to his readers. First of all, Stott always tries to find the intention of the author from the text by asking a question, i.e. what does it mean? Traditionally, exegesis focuses on the text itself in an effort to determine what the text said and meant in its own original objective. The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination (Kaiser, 1981:45). In other words, the aim of exegesis is to discover as precisely as possible what God meant by each of the words and sentences He included in the Scriptures.

Stott's contribution on this point is to persist in the traditional viewpoint of exegesis as the Reformers did. We can fully understand his principles of exegesis as being not to follow current tendency of interpretation circles, although he has lived in the end of the 20th century, in which all the traditional values are being questioned. There are some tendencies of *eisegesis* today, that is, "a reading into" a text what the reader wants it to say. In other words, It is *eisegesis* - bringing a meaning to the text. As Luther puts it: "The best teacher is the one who does not bring his meaning into the Scripture but gets his meaning from the Scripture" (Das ist der beste Lehrer, der seine Meinung nicht in die sondern aus der Schrift bringt) (Ramm, 1970:115). Calvin also stated that "it is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say" (Zuck, 1991:99). In the light of Stott's exegetical principles, he points out that many modern

exegetes fail in their task before really beginning it, because their very initial approach is at fault.

3.8.2 From our study of John Stott's exegetical task (in 3.3 and 3.7) it can be concluded that Stott never neglects to combine the exegesis and the hermeneusis. He emphasizes that we must ask both questions - what does it mean? and what does it say?, first being faithful in working at the text's meaning and then being sensitive in discerning its message for today. He insists not only on giving primacy to textual meaning in an exegesis, but also goes on to show its significance in the Christian life.

His faithful observation of these basic proceedings in exegesis helps him to be the famous preacher he is. Here again the strong point of Stott is not to list the basic methods, but to show how a preacher moves from exegesis to application in his preaching. For him the process of exegesis is the opening of the text to establish what an author wanted to communicate to his hearers (Ferguson, 1986:200).

3.8.3 From our study of Stott's use of the Bible as the foundation of exegesis (in 3.4) it can be concluded that John Stott insists that the Bible was the book for yesterday. Without doubt it will be the book for tomorrow. But for us it is the book for today. It is God's Word for today's world. The Bible is God's self-disclosure in speech and writing, the divine autobiography through the biblical authors. Scripture is God's written Word, the product of His revelation, inspiration and providence. Therefore, the understanding of the Bible is indispensable to exegetes and preachers.

3.8.4 From our study on Stott's characteristic principles of exegesis (in 3.6) it can be concluded that John Stott does not use new exegetical principles, but he reminds one afresh of the time-honoured principles of exegesis as follows:

- 1 Holy Scripture is its own interpreter. In other words, the Bible is its own expositor.
- 2 Before we begin to read the Bible, to interpret and to preach the message, we must pray to God for the Holy Spirit's illumination. "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Ps. 119:18).
- 3 Above all, we have to seek both the original sense according to the biblical author's intention, and the natural sense, which may be either literal or figurative, again according to the author's intention. These are respectively the principles of history and of simplicity.

Each of his basic principle is an axiom in Biblical exegesis. Nobody dares to refute its validity; however, what is characteristic in Stott's case is that he does apply them to the exegetical practice in his actual preaching.

3.8.5 From our study of the exegetical principles of John Stott's preaching in this chapter we can find his particular exegetical contributions as follows:

- 1 To John Stott it is very clear that a preacher needs to have confidence in the biblical text, that is, it is an inspiration and the inspired text is a partially closed text. If the aim of the task of exegesis is "to open up the inspired text", then it must be partially closed or it would not need to be opened up. No exegesis can take place without it (3.4.1; 3.4.2).
- 2 John Stott is convinced that the final goal of exegesis is not to read back our twentieth-century thought into the minds of the biblical authors (which is eisegesis), but to let an author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say, or to bring out of Scripture what is there. We must ask both questions, - what does it mean? and what does it say? - first being faithful in working at the text's meaning and then being sensitive in discerning its message for today (3.6.1; 3.7.2.(3)).
- 3 Consequently John Stott makes it clear that prayer is indispensable in the exegetical process. For him a humble hearing through prayer is God's normal channel to illuminate His recorded will to man (3.6.2; 3.7.2.(5)).

- 4 One of the most practical contributions made by Stott to a preacher is his inductive method, which he calls the art of discovering the original meaning from the text like a digger trying to dig gold from a mine (3.7.3).
- 5 Finally, from our study of this chapter as a whole we can learn that the sound exegetical principles and methods followed by John Stott are of great importance because they give us a means for discovering more accurately the truths we believe Scripture possesses. If a preacher gives enough time and attention to the exegetical principles and methods of John Stott, He will fearlessly stand in the pulpit with God's Word and God's people before his eyes, waiting expectantly for God's voice to be heard and obeyed without hesitation.

## CHAPTER 4: THE HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES AND THE PROCESS OF HERMENEUSIS IN JOHN R.W. STOTT'S PREACHING

### 4.1 Stott's hermeneutics in general

#### 4.1.1 Preamble

We turn now to consider Stott's principles and methods of hermeneutics, as well as the process of hermeneusis in his sermons. In this chapter, the content of his preaching will not be dealt with directly, because the theological content of a sermon cannot be guaranteed without taking the correct hermeneutical principles and methods into account. Today, John Stott is acknowledged as a scientific expositor of Scripture, and his work is acclaimed and has spread all over world, arguing his reputation of scholarship. He is essentially a minister of the Word of God, that is, a preacher of it: expository, didactic, faithful, clear, weighty, masterful, exemplary (Packer, 1991:198).

However, in contrast to his legitimacy as an expositor, there is a dearth of the hermeneutical evaluation of his sermons, because his hermeneutical principles and methods are embedded in his sermons and expository books. In order to evaluate his hermeneutical principles, the process of heremeneusis and his methods, an intensive study of his published sermons and his homiletical book - *I believe in preaching*, is necessary. It will be the main task of this chapter.

#### 4.1.2 The terms *hermeneutics* and *hermeneusis* in general

In our study of Stott's hermeneutical principles and methods, as well as the process of hermeneusis in his sermons, it is necessary to explain the general term of hermeneutics and hermeneusis as used in this research.

##### 4.1.2.1 The term hermeneutics

The term hermeneutics has been used most widely to describe the science of biblical interpretation. This word is derived from the Greek ἑρμηνεύω meaning 'to translate, interpret, or explain' (Packer, 1992:333). It is ultimately derived from Hermes, the Greek god who brought the message of the gods to the mortals, and who was the god of science, invention, eloquence, speech, writing, and art (Ramm, 1989:11; Sweazey, 1976:32).

Thus, literary interpretation can be defined as the way of reading documents that show their relevance to the reader. In line with this, hermeneutics has always been conceived as the way of reading the historical Scriptures - a way that make plain God's message being conveyed through them to the Christians and their church. Craddock (1989:147-8) defines hermeneutics as "the task of trying 'to translate' that meaning into the language, thought, forms and idioms of the interpreter's day, as far as possible, without adding to or subtracting from that original meaning". According to Vines (1985:3), "hermeneutics may be defined as the science of expounding or interpreting what a passage of Scripture says".

To sum up, hermeneutics is "a science in that it can determine certain principles for discovering the meaning of a document"; moreover, these principles are not a mere list of rules but bear an organic connection to each other (Sweazey, 1976:33).

#### 4.1.2.2 The term hermeneusis

Coetzee (1995a:3) points out that "by 'hermeneusis' we refer to the next step, the following-up step necessary after confined exegesis". He continues: "hermeneusis in the present times deals with the comprehension-problem and application level for today. So the original meaning of the text is transposed to and made applicable for the concrete reality of today". Venter (1995:14) strongly supports it: "In hermeneusis the text of the Word and the text of life meet in a process of interaction".

Therefore, 'hermeneusis' generally means to draw a connection between what the author meant originally and what the text communicates now. In this way these terms are used in our study. Stott's view on the process of hermeneusis will be dealt with in more detail in the later section (4.4).

#### 4.1.3 *His definition of hermeneutics*

In general, as a theological discipline, "the term most widely used to describe the science of biblical interpretation is hermeneutics" (Fair, 1986:31). It is a special application of the general science of linguistics and meaning. It seeks to formulate those particular rules which pertain to the special factors connected with the Bible.

Thompson (1987:39) thinks hermeneutics can be defined as an attempt at reconstructing the meaning of a biblical text, to give the hearer some clues as to how it might have been understood by the original reader and subsequent generations.

In Zuck's point of view (1991:19) "hermeneutics is the science and art of interpreting the Bible. Another way to define hermeneutics is this: It is the science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined".

As Terry (1964:8) writes: "Hermeneutics, therefore, is both a science and an art. As a science, it enunciates principles, investigates the laws of thought and language, and classifies its facts and results. As an art, it teaches what application these principles should have, and establishes their soundness by showing their practical value in the elucidation of the more difficult Scriptures. The hermeneutical art thus cultivates and establishes a valid exegetical procedure".

According to Stott (1972a:157), he firstly defines 'hermeneutics' as the technical name given to the science of interpreting Scripture, and it should be obvious that true biblical hermeneutics will be consistent with the nature of the Bible itself. Above all, the preacher has to seek both the original sense according to the biblical author's intention, and the natural sense, which may be either literal or figurative, again in line with the author's objective.

To sum up, the above-mentioned definition: 'hermeneutics' is an art that we apply mechanically but which involves the skill of the interpreter.

#### *4.1.4 The necessity of hermeneutics*

##### 4.1.4.1 Opening up the closed text

Stott (1992:209-212) has two important convictions about the Bible. The first is that it is inspired. The second one is that the inspired text is also partially closed. If to preach is 'to open up the inspired text', then it must be partially closed or it would not need to be clear up. So, the church needs 'pastors and teachers' to expound or open up Scripture, and the ascended Christ still gives these gifts to his church (Eph. 4:11). Stott (1992:161) uses the story of the Ethiopian eunuch to illustrate the art of interpretation. While he was sitting in his chariot, reading Isaiah 53, Philip asked him: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He said 'how can I understand unless someone explains it to me?' (Acts 8:26-39).

Here then is an incident described in the Bible which illustrates the practical value of scriptural interpretation. Therefore, in addition to the text, God gives the church

preachers to open up the text, clarifying it and applying it to people's lives. As a result, hermeneutics is necessary in order to teach partially obscure texts in the Bible.

#### 4.1.4.2 Two horizons

Together with Bultmann, most modern scholars (Simonian, 1970:99; Ricoeur, 1976:29-30) point out the difference between the context of the original authors and the situation of modern readers as the basic reason why hermeneutics is urgently needed today. Their general tendencies, as Marshall (1980a:9) points out, are to over-accentuate the difference between the two circumstances and to under-emphasize the elements of continuity between them.

Firstly, for example, Gadamer stresses the fact that a different "horizon" which has a limited viewpoint or perspective, has to be consisted of the fusion of horizons because there are some problems between the extreme cultural particularities of the ancient text and the modern interpreter in the process of interpretation. In this process the expositor's first task was called 'distancing' by Gadamer. That is, we have to acknowledge 'the pastness of the past', disengage ourselves from the text, and allow it its own historical integrity, without intruding ourselves into it or deciding prematurely how it applies to us. A careful interpretation of the text necessitates studying it in its own cultural and linguistic setting (Thiselton, 1992:315-317).

Secondly, for example, in his classic and comprehensive study '*The Two Horizons*', Thiselton (1980:102) says that "when two sets of horizons are brought into relation to each other, namely those of the text and those of the interpreter, understanding takes place". "There must be present engagement with the text", writes Thiselton, "as well as critical distancing from it" (1980:103). Since the interpreter also belongs to a specific and particular environment, completely different from that of the text, this is not easy. It requires a high degree of imagination, of empathy, if we are to enter that alien world. "Historical exegesis is essential, but it is not enough. We need both a distancing and an openness to the text which will yield process towards the fusion of horizons" (Thiselton, 1980:326).

Moreover, in the early 1960s several post-Bultmanns, notably E. Fuchs, G. Ebeling, J.M. Robinson, and also R.W. Funk, went beyond Bultmann's hermeneutics, particularly his adoption of the existentialism of the earlier Heidegger, criticizing Bultmann's understanding of the way language functions (Hasel, 1978:58). Rejecting objectivity as impossible, on the ground that we cannot jump out of our own

particularity into that of a biblical author, they stressed the need to let the text speak. According to their theory of language, its purpose is not so much to convey 'concepts' as to cause an 'event' (language event), in which the roles of text and interpreter are reversed (Dickinson, 1976:42).

Stott (1992:189) criticizes the above-mentioned theories and the approach to methods of interpretation as follows: "We cannot concentrate on the text as subject as the new hermeneutics does and on the text as object as the old hermeneutics did, but we have to concentrate on both of them because the object and subject are the same text and have the same meaning". Therefore, John Stott declares that hermeneutics is not shaped by the cultural and historical differences between the two contexts. Interpretation is needed, for the essential revelation in the text (what God is saying here) has to be re-clothed in an appropriate modern situation. And there is also the need for interpretation because we live in the twentieth century in which cultural and linguistic differences make the task of interpretation even more difficult. According to Liefelt (1984:23), "the expositor must also deal with the realities of different 'horizons' even in his own day". However, Stott does not distort the truth by over-stressing and under-stressing the difference between the two contexts. In Stott's book (1982a), *I believe in preaching*, the fourth chapter deals directly with our concern here, 'Preaching as Bridge-building'.

#### 4.1.5 *The aim of hermeneutics*

In a word, the goal of hermeneutics is firstly to understand the significance of the biblical contents in its original setting, that is, to have a satisfactory understanding of the text, in which is included an original meaning that the authors intended, before preachers apply it. After that, based on this understanding and using a process of induction, the preacher attempts to articulate the principles that continue to possess relevance for the contemporary believers. Stott (1992: 215) says that "the meaning of a text must be sought and found in the words themselves, the author's words, and not in the reader's thoughts and feelings". He means that we need to reflect on its contemporary message (how it applies to people today).

After the interpreter has come understanding of the text, he must apply its meaning to his own life in order to change himself. If he fails to do so, he will be separating the truth and its practice, abstract theoretical cognition and concrete application.

A truly Reformed interpretation of the aim of hermeneusis is to harmonize the understanding of the truth and its application to our lives. Calvin (1967a:39-40) says "what helps it, in short, to know a God with whom we have nothing to do? Rather, our knowledge should serve first to teach us fear and reverence; secondly, with it as our guide and teacher, we should learn to seek every good from Him, and, having received it, to credit it to his account...". A satisfactory understanding of the truth should affect the whole personality and life of the interpreter, including firstly his intellect, then his emotion and lastly his will.

According to John Stott the preacher who has penetrated deeply into his text, has isolated and unfolded its dominant theme, and has himself been affected by its message, will give his congregation a chance to respond to it, often in silent prayer, as each person is brought by the Holy Spirit to an appropriate obedience 1992:218).

## **4.2 The characteristics of his hermeneutical principles**

### *4.2.1 The three teachers for hermeneutics*

#### 4.2.1.1 Preamble

Having asserted his presuppositions about the Bible, Stott provides some rules for interpreting the text. He cautions his reader to remember that only the text itself is infallible, not the interpretations which are drawn from the text. He (1972a:156) says that God's Word is infallible, for what he has said is true. But no Christian individual, group or church has ever been or will ever be an infallible interpreter of God's Word. Human interpretations belong to the sphere of tradition, and an appeal may always be made against tradition to the Scripture itself which tradition claims to interpret. Stott's principle of interpretation involves the teachings of three teachers which will instruct us and guide us. He (1972a:156) explains why: God has made provision for us to grow in our understanding of the truth and to be protected from the worst forms of misinterpretation.

#### 4.2.1.2 The Holy Spirit

Stott firstly asserts that our foremost teacher is the Holy Spirit itself. The best interpreter of every book is its author, since he alone knows what he intended to say. Therefore, the best commentator on Scripture is the Holy Spirit who moved the authors to pen the words. In other words, the biblical authors were influenced by God,

not on their own impulse but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pe. 1:21). Stott makes it clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to an understanding of the Bible. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit one is enabled to see, comprehend and appropriate something of the precious truth which is beyond the realm of grammar and intellectual dexterity. So, we must accept the principle that only the Spirit of God knows the things of God, as Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 2:11, part of a rich portion of Scripture with broad implications (Kaiser, 1994:23-24). Lloyd-Jones (1977:327-8) is right in saying the following about it: "In the same way the Holy Spirit alone enable us to 'interpret' this Word. It is entirely the Spirit's work. Everything connected with this Word is always the result of an operation of the Spirit from beginning to end. However able a man may be in a natural sense, that ability does not help him to interpret Scripture... It must be interpreted in a spiritual manner. And nothing and no one can enable us to do that apart from the Spirit of God Himself".

Stott adds that the work of the Holy Spirit in communicating God's truth to man is now seen to have two stages. The first and objective stage is 'revelation', the disclosure of the truth in Scripture. The second and subjective stage may be called 'illumination', the enlightenment of our minds to comprehend the truth disclosed in Scripture. Each process is indispensable. Without revelation we have no truth to perceive; without illumination no faculty with which to perceive it (1972a:157). He suggests one example in the Bible; God ceased to speak to the Israelites in judgment upon his rebellious people in the days of Isaiah. His truth became like a sealed book, and His people like illiterate children. There were thus two barriers to their receiving His word: If you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, 'read this please', he will answer, 'I cannot; it is sealed'. Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, 'read this, please', he will answer, 'I do not know how to read' (Isa. 29:11,12).

This illumination, however, is restricted to regenerated, humble, obedient, and communicative people.

First, the Holy Spirit enlightens the regenerated, or born-again, person. It is important to begin with conversion, for rebirth is the fundamental prerequisite for the performance of any Christian service. An experience of or to be sure rebirth is essential before we are able to grasp the heavenly truth. 'Unless a man is born again', Jesus said, 'he cannot see the kingdom of God' (Jn. 3:3). This fact the apostle Paul echoed: The man without the Spirit [the 'natural' or 'unregenerate' man] does not

accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). In fact, powerful preaching is conceived in the new birth and sustained and enriched in communication with our Saviour Jesus Christ (Thomas, 1986:371).

Secondly, the Holy Spirit enlightens the humble. There is no greater hindrance to understanding than pride, and no more essential condition than humility. Jesus put the matter beyond dispute: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure" (Mt. 11:25-26). The 'wise and learned' from whom God hides Himself are the intellectually proud, and 'little children' are the humble and sincere. It is to such only that God reveals Himself. As Charles Simeon writes: "In the beginning of my enquires I said to myself, I am a fool; of that I am quite certain. One thing I know assuredly, that in religion of myself I know nothing. I do not therefore sit down to the perusal of Scripture in order to impose a sense on the inspired writers; but to receive one, as they give it to me. I pretend not to teach them, I wish like a child to be taught by them" (Stott, 1972a:158).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit enlightens the obedient. This is much emphasized, since God's purpose through Scripture is not merely to 'instruct' in strong general terms but specifically 'to make you wise for salvation' (2 Tim. 3:15). Kaiser and Silva (1994:25) say that the desire to keep God's commandment, the determination to do God's will - these are the great prerequisites for true biblical understanding. Thus Jesus promises that those who have a desire to do God's will, will know whether his teaching is true, and that he will show himself personally to those who have proved their love for him by their obedience (Jn. 7:17; 14:21).

Fourthly, the Holy Spirit enlightens the communication. The understanding he gives us is not intended for our private enjoyment alone; it is given to be shared with others. We hold it on trust.

#### 4.2.1.3 The discipline of study

If the Holy Spirit is our first and foremost teacher, there is a sense in which we ourselves, in our very dependence on the Spirit, must also teach ourselves. That is to say, in the process of divine education we are not wholly passive, but are expected to use our own reason responsibly. Vines (1985:51) emphasizes that "the preacher must take whatever steps necessary to develop the discipline of study". For in our reading

of Scripture divine illumination is no substitute for human endeavour. Nor is humanity in seeking light from God inconsistent with the most disciplined industry in study. The Spirit does move where He chooses (Jn. 3:8), but we are required to use every gift, every ability God has given us, as fully as we can (Logan, 1986:131).

We must set our minds to understand Scripture and think over what is written in it. As Simeon (1979:975) put it: "For the attainment of divine knowledge, we are directed to combine a dependence on God's Spirit with our own research. Let us, then, not presume to separate what God has thus united".

Sometimes our growth in understanding is inhibited by a proud and prayerless self-confidence, but at other times by sheer laziness and indiscipline. Those who would increase their knowledge of God must both degrade themselves before the Spirit of truth and commit themselves to a lifetime of study.

Thus John Stott (1982a:180-182) warns: "since the Christian pastor is primarily called to the ministry of the Word, the study of Scripture is one of his foremost responsibilities... The higher our view of the Bible, the more painstaking and conscientious our study of it should be. If this book is indeed the Word of God, then away with slovenly, slipshod exegesis! We have to make time to penetrate the text until it yields up its treasures. Only when we have ourselves absorbed its message, can we confidently share it with others".

To sum up, we are expected by God to use the minds which He gave us to submit to Scripture but at same time to wrestle with it and try to relate its message to contemporary society.

#### 4.2.1.4 The teaching of the Church

The third teacher is the Church, or, tradition. In the introduction of his famous book, *The cross of Christ*, Stott (1986:12) says that "To be disrespectful of tradition and of historical theology is to be disrespectful of the Holy Spirit who has been actively enlightening the church in every century". So he thinks that tradition is an important way of interpretation. He (1972a:163) points out that tradition is "the understanding of biblical truth which has been handed down from the past to the present". Accordingly, although the Holy Spirit's work of biblical inspiration was unique, His teaching ministry did not cease when the last apostle died. It changed from revelation to illumination. Gradually and progressively over the centuries of the church history,

the Spirit of truth enabled the Church to grasp, clarify and formulate the great doctrines of Scripture. The Reformers asserted ‘the right of private judgment’, or ‘competency of the believer’, against the claims of ecclesiastical authority.

Stott stands firmly within this Reformational tradition. Nevertheless, in rejecting every attempt to interpose the Church or any other authoritative teaching body between God and His people, we must not deny that the Church has a place in God’s plan to give His people a right understanding of His Word.

Stott notes it is still not wise to ignore the illumination given by the Spirit to others. He (1972a:162) says “the Holy spirit is indeed our teacher, but he teaches us indirectly through others as well as directly to our own minds. It was not to a single that he revealed the truths now enshrined in Scripture, but to a multiplicity of prophets and apostles; his work of illumination is given to many also. It is not merely as individual, but ‘with all the saints’ that we are given ‘power ... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ ... that surpasses knowledge’ ” (Eph. 3:18,19).

Therefore, we should respect the heritage of the past as well as the teacher of the contemporary Church. God has appointed teachers in His Church. It is our Christian duty to listen to them with respect, humility and eagerness, and to feed upon God’s Word from their lips when they faithfully expound it, at the same time ourselves ‘examining the Scriptures every day’ to see if what they say is true (Acts 17:11).

#### 4.2.1.5 Summary

Our three teachers whom we mentioned are the Holy Spirit, ourselves and the Church. It is by receiving the illumination of the Spirit, by using our own reason and by listening to the teaching of others in the Church that we grow in our understanding of Scripture. Stott (1972a:164-165) continued to urge that we must hold these three authorities or teachers in proper order: "I am emphatically not saying that Scripture, reason and tradition are a threefold authority of equal importance by which we come to know God’s truth. No. Scripture alone is God’s Word written, and the Holy Spirit its ultimate interpreter. The place of the individual’s reason and of the church’s tradition lies in the elucidation and application of Scripture. But both are subordinate to God Himself as he speaks to us through His word".

#### 4.2.2 *His basic principles of hermeneutics*

From the three teachers we turn now to examine the Stott's basic principles which are to guide us in our interpretation of the Bible. This part of study will be focused on Stott's hermeneutical principles.

##### 4.2.2.1 The original sense

The expositor must look for the original meaning from the whole passage instead of from the meaning of a single word. Stott (1972a:170) says that "the permanent and universal message of Scripture can be understood only in the light of the circumstances in which it was originally given ... So, as we read the Bible, we need to keep asking ourselves: what did the author intend to convey by this? What is he actually asserting? What will his original hearers have understood him to have meant?. If the interpreter understand the purpose of revelation, he cannot mislead to read back into Scripture the notions of a later age but can fully grasp the original intention of God from the text". For this the interpreter will need to know something about the historical, geographical and cultural background of the Bible. The steps of this 'grammatico-historical' method begin with using literary and historical data to reconstruct the setting.

Who wrote it and to whom? In what circumstances? For what reason? This step uses literary criticism to determine the genre of the text: prose, poetry, wisdom, apocalyptic, historical narrative, drama, letter, law, or prophecy. The interpreter must take into account the differences in cultures and the resulting differences in language. This step is necessary to relate the Scriptures to a contemporary setting (Stott, 1972a:170-75).

Therefore, we can sum it up in the words of Towner (1994:182), "Our correcting handling of the biblical text includes first understanding the original message in its original context, which requires knowledge of the biblical languages and historical-cultural-social setting that the author addressed (or depending on those who do have such knowledge)".

##### 4.2.2.2 The general sense

Stott's second basic principle of interpretation is to "look for the general sense. This is the principle of harmony" (Stott, 1972a:175). Here, Stott is not advocating a 'bend-

over-backward' method of 'harmonizing' contrasting passages from the gospels; rather, he is using Scripture to interpret Scripture (We treated this principle of exegesis in 3.6.1 of chapter 3). Is the interpretation of a text consistent with the message of the Bible?

Stott gives an example to show what he means. He accepts Adam and Eve in Gen. 3 as literal people. This interpretation is consistent with Rom. 5:12-21. The tree of life and the serpent, however, reappear in Revelation where they are both clearly symbolic. Thus the fall of humanity was literal but the actual sin was described in more general or symbolic terms (Stott, 1972a:178). Therefore we have to interpret each text in the light both of its immediate context in the chapter or book concerned and of its wider context in the Bible as a whole. The twentieth of the Anglican Church's Thirty-Nine Articles is wise to forbid the church to 'so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another'. Instead, we will be right to seek harmony by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture (Stott, 1991b:116).

In conclusion, we look for the original meaning because we believe that God addressed His word to those who first heard it, and that it can be received by subsequent generations only in so far as they understand it historically. Our understanding may be fuller than that of the first hearers (e.g. of the prophecies of Christ); it cannot be substantially different. We look also for the general meaning because we believe that God is self-consistent, and that His revelation is self-consistent as well.

Finally, Stott (1972a:182) emphasizes that the basic principles of biblical interpretation we have been considering are not arbitrary. But they are derived from the character of the Bible itself as God's Word written, and from the character of God as revealed in it. In other words, these principles arise partly from the nature of God and partly from the nature of Scripture as a plain, historical, consistent communication from God to men. They lay upon us a solemn responsibility to make our treatment of Scripture coincide with our view of it.

### **4.3 The characteristics of his hermeneutical methods**

#### *4.3.1 Preamble*

In this section we want to examine the characteristics of Stott's hermeneutical methods. First of all, we will investigate his critical attitude towards the principles and

methods of interpretation from which he differs; after that we will evaluate the characteristics of his hermeneutical methods. His hermeneutical methods are embedded in his vast amount of sermons and his homiletical books. To evaluate his hermeneutical methods, an intensive study of his published sermons and books is not only necessary but also imperative. It will be the main task of this section.

#### *4.3.2 His criticism of some principles and methods of interpretation*

Stott's characteristic principle of interpretation is to look for the original meaning of the text. He (1992:212) warns that what we can commit is to read back our twentieth-century thoughts into the minds of the biblical authors, to manipulate what they wrote in order to make it conform to what we want them to say, and then to claim their patronage for our opinions. Problems result when readers interpret a statement in a mode other than the one intended by the author. In such cases, Stott criticizes the problems of interpretation severely.

##### 4.3.2.1 His criticism of Bultmann's demythologization

According to Bultmann, the essence of the Gospel, the *kerygma*, can be determined only by stripping away or identifying every element of myth which adheres to the gospel record (Brown, 1991:52). Stott (1992:197-200) criticizes three points of Bultmann's demythologization programme. His argument may without too much distortion be reduced to three objects, relating variously to the biblical authors, their modern readers, and theological communicators.

First, the intellectual framework of the biblical writers was pre-scientific and therefore 'mythical'. For example, they envisaged heaven above and hell below in a three-decker universe, so that they imagined Jesus literally 'descending to hell' and 'ascending to heaven'.

Secondly, if modern scientific men and women are presented today with the gospel (*kerygma*) couched in terms of such an obsolete cosmology, they will reject it as frankly incredible. Thirdly, the task of theologians is therefore to strip away the mythical elements in the Bible, or 'demythologize the *kerygma*', because the purpose of myth is not to speak of historical events but of transcendent reality. In addition, the modern scholar must now unmask the myth and recover the original existential meaning of the myth.

Stott does not agree with Bultmann's theory of interpretation of the New Testament. On the contrary, he (1992:198,199; 1979b:274) criticises Bultmann's demythologisation. With regard to Bultmann's first point, he is not himself at all convinced that the biblical authors were the literalists he imagines. To be sure, they used the imagery of the three-decker universe, for it was part of their intellectual framework. But were they actually affirming it? He did not think so. Even though Old Testament authors used such imagery as the example of dramatic and poetic (e.g. the earth's pillars in Psalm 75:3), we do not need to interpret them literally. The Old Testament authors affirmed God's sovereign control of the world by saying that He held earth's pillars firmly, without committing themselves to a three-decker cosmology. They affirmed God's power over evil by referring to His destruction of the primeval monster Leviathan (Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1), without committing themselves to the Babylonian creation myth. This form of thought and speech, whether we call them 'imagery', 'poetry', or 'myth', were common currency in the ancient Near East. Old Testament authors used them to convey truths about God as Creator and Lord, without affirming the literal truth of the imagery or mythology they were using.

With regard to Bultmann's third point, Stott (1992:74) points out that "Bultmann attempts to reconstruct the *kerygma* (especially the death, resurrection and *parousia* of Jesus) by dissolving these historical events into a 'meaning' which is not historical". Thus, according to Bultmann (1941:38-42), when the apostles said that 'Christ died for our sins', they were not referring to any literal sin-bearing sacrifice, but affirming God's love and our own existential experience of being crucified with Christ. When they said that 'he rose', they were not referring to an event but to an experience, namely that he rose in their own revived faith. In other words, Easter was not an event, but an experience; not the objective, historical resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but a subjective, personal recovery of faith in the hearts and minds of his followers. And when they said that He is coming again to judge, they were not referring to a future event, but to a present challenge to make a responsible decision for Christ today.

The key question, however, is whether the affirmations that Christ died, rose and will return were deliberately mythical ways of referring to something other than historical events, or whether they were real happenings which were themselves part of the *kerygma* being proclaimed. The natural interpretation of the apostolic *kerygma* is that the apostles were intending to proclaim events in the career of Jesus which were both historically true and theologically significant.

Consequently, in a word, Stott's (1992:74) criticism is that "what is truly incredible is not the resurrection of Jesus, but the misunderstanding of Bultmann who confused it with a resurrection". Indeed, Bultmann's approach did not precisely involve rejecting the myths but translating them into modern myths. By this Bultmann meant primarily the categories of existentialist philosophy (Kaiser, 1994:231).

#### 4.3.2.2 A Roman Catholic interpretation

Stott (1986b:16) originally rejects the Roman Catholic's presupposition of the interpretation of the Bible. For example, (1) the ordinary peoples who have no knowledge of Hebrew or Greek or archaeology or of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, are not competent to interpret the Bible, (2) the Church who bears the true Tradition (oral and written) is thereby the only official interpreter of the Scriptures. Only that Church which bears the mark of apostolicity can know the real meaning of the written tradition, and (3) no passage of Scripture can be interpreted to conflict with the Roman Catholic doctrinal system.

They also teach that, since the Bible authors were churchmen, the church wrote the Bible. Therefore, they insist that 'the church is over the Bible and has authority not only to interpret it, but also to supplement it'. These kinds of trickery which emphasises the authority of the Church about interpretation without any for their true contextual meaning (historical and scriptural background) are outrageous.

Stott (1972a:177) also warns against a Roman Catholic method of interpretation which exploits a combination of words which has no original meaning of the text. He takes an example; in his instruction on the local church's responsibility to discipline an impenitent offender, Jesus said: "if he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you as a Gentile ..." i.e. let him be excommunicated (Mt. 18:17). Now during the Tractarian movement which sought to restore the Church of England's Catholic authority, its followers preached so often on the three words of this verse 'hear the church' that they provoked Archbishop Whately to retort with a sermon on the equally truncated text "if he refuses to hear the church, let him!".

In his famous book, *The cross of Christ*, Stott (1986:186-190) especially criticises Roman Catholic's viewpoint about the doctrine of justification. Roman Catholics find 'total depravity' a pessimistic view of the human condition, involving an inadequate doctrine of creation. They add that human beings have not lost their free will, and are therefore able to cooperate with grace and contribute to salvation. Therefore, Roman

Catholics are uncomfortable when we talk about 'total depravity' (that every part of our humanness has been twisted by the Fall), which lies behind our insistence on the need both for a radical salvation and for non-contributory grace.

But Stott stresses "the 'total depravity' through the instruction from the Word of God. We see the need to underline the New Testament antitheses regarding salvation. It is by His grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not by yourselves, it is the gift of God - not of works, so that no-one can boast", "We ... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ". Again, He has saved us, not because of any righteous things we may have done, but because of His mercy" (Eph. 2:8,9; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:5).

Stott (1986a:187) says that "we cannot avoid the stark alternative which such texts put before us. Not works, but grace. Not law ,but faith. Not our righteous deeds but His mercy. There is no co-operation here between God and us, only a choice between two mutually exclusive ways, His and ours. Moreover, the faith which justifies is emphatically not another work".

#### 4.3.2.3 The existential principle of interpretation

The modern liberation theologian claims that interpreters should read their own meaning into the text. In other words, the interpretative focus itself has changed: The scholars' question no longer was 'what is God saying in the text?' but rather 'what does the text tell me about the developing religious consciousness of this primitive Hebrew cult?' (Virkler, 1982:70). They (Brunner, Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Anderson, and Rehadson) assert that "the Bible is a book about existence, about life at its most comprehensive expression, about God. To understand it at this level one must read it existentially. By this existential reading the Bible may become the Word of God to the reader" (Ramm, 1989:76). Therefore, the interpreter is not looking for the divine revelation in Scripture and stating it in theological form, but he is looking for the 'Word within the words', for the existential stratum of Scripture, for the manner in which Scripture addresses man.

Speaking of this Grant (1972:162) says that "the deepest interpretation of Scripture is that concerned with 'existential' situation: life and death, love and hate, sin and grace, good and evil, God and the world. These are not matters of ordinary knowledge like the multiplication table or the date of the council of Nicea. There is ... no special

method for the attainment of these deeper insights; the historical method is not replaced but deepened".

This method of interpretation has profound influence on the credibility that interpreters give to the biblical text, and thus has important implications for procedures. So Stott criticises the existential interpretation of the Bible. He (1992:216) points out that "if we begin with the text's contemporary message, without first having accepted the discipline of discovering its original meaning, we surrender to existentialism, unrelated to the past realities of revelation". He also writes on his experience as an example of wrong interpretation and application. He was himself greatly disturbed that the World Council of Churches (which ought to have known better) should take as the text for their Fourth Assembly at Uppsala in 1967 God's great words in Revelation 21:5 (RSV), 'Behold, I make all things new', where the sentence applies to what He is going to do in the end when He makes a new heaven and a new earth, and should then proceed without any conceivable justification to apply it to the revolutionary political and social movements of today (Stott, 1972a:177).

Therefore, Stott (1982a:103) asserts that "God has spoken, that God speaks, and that his two messages are closely connected to one another, because it is through what he spoke that he speaks".

#### 4.3.2.4 The allegorical interpretation

It was one of oldest methods of approach for understanding the Bible. Allegorising is searching for a hidden or a secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text (Ramm, 1989:24). This method has been used in the history of the church since Origen (ca. 185-254) started doing it. Broadus, however, (1991:34) says that "a good and safe rule to follow is that, while probable allegorical or spiritual meanings may be adduced as probable, no allegorical meanings shall be made the basis of a sermon without a clear warrant in scriptural usage".

Even though allegorising had had a stranglehold on the church for centuries, it eventually became fraught with problems which led to the wrong application in a sermon. The interpreter using this method allegorises a given text to find in it a hidden meaning, buried not in the truth of this text but in his own mind, and then applies it to our lives.

Stott (1972a:167-169) criticises this method as follows: "Unfortunately, the fanciful allegorisation of Scripture has often brought serious Bible reading into disrepute". Stott rejects such allegorical interpretations which suggest the two denarii given to the innkeeper represent the two sacraments, etc. in the Good Samaritan of Luke 10, 'who is my neighbour'. He defines a parable as having one main lesson with additional material provided for 'dramatic effect'; allegory makes several points. Stott demonstrates one example of the so-called '*Epistle of Banabas*', an apocryphal work of the early second century AD, which contains some outrageous allegorisations. In one passage the author quotes the Mosaic regulation that the Jews might eat every animal that divides the hoof and chews the cud, and explains it thus: "Cleave unto those that fear the Lord ... with those who know that meditation is a word of gladness and who chew the cud of the word of the Lord. But why that which divides the hoof? Because the righteous man both walks in this world and at the same time looks for the holy world to come".

Stott plainly interprets this verse: "Now certainly to "chew the cud of God's Word is a very suggestive expression for the Bible meditation, and also the Christian is a citizen of two worlds. But equally certainly this is not what Moses had in mind when he wrote about cud-chewing, cloven-hoofed animals!".

Stott (1971:13-92) calls the good shepherd in Jn. 14, the vine and branches in Jn. 15, and the sower in Mk. 4 allegories. In his book, *The parables of Jesus*, Joachim Jeremias (1972:86) calls these examples parables, or metaphors with added allegorical interpretations. Stott's interpretation of these Johannine passages can be found in his Urbana 70 addresses on "The upper room discourse" (Jn. 13-17) in *Christ the liberator*.

His explanations do not follow the pattern of excess that made allegorical interpretation so distasteful to modern scholars, but rather follow the pattern of interpreting metaphors. Stott has found no hidden, secret meanings which only 'spiritual' people could discern. Instead, he uses other Scripture texts, Isa. 5 and Jer. 2 with which Christ was probably familiar, and Col. 1 and Gal. 5, to find out what type of fruit Christians are to bear (Stott, 1971:51-52).

Therefore, Stott (1992:215) excludes to thrust the reader's thought to the Bible, but keeps to get the meaning out of it. He declares that all of the Bible must not be interpreted allegorically and spiritually, but some parts of it can be interpreted literally and allegorically (1972a:168,169).

#### 4.3.2.5 Biblical criticism

In his message of the Sermon on the Mount, Stott (1978:22-23) criticises the biblical criticism, especially redaction criticism. Because many have denied that the Sermon on the Mount was ever in any meaningful sense a 'sermon' preached by Jesus on a particular occasion. We cannot mention all biblical criticism in this section, but will concentrate on the redaction criticism Stott has criticised in his preaching.

Redaction criticism represents a movement towards a more concentrated focus upon the text as a whole. A basic assumption underlining redaction criticism is that authors were guided in their adaptation, modification, and arrangement of their sources by the theological purposes. The theological purpose of an author can be discovered by examining how that writer uses his sources. Writers arrange and alter their sources and traditions according to their own theological purposes or those of their community. This, of course, means that sources and form criticism are presuppositions for redaction criticism. Sources and individual units of tradition must be available before an interpreter can determine to what extent and in what ways an author has adapted and reapplied the sources and traditions. It follows that redaction criticism inherently focuses on four concerns: (1) selection of traditional material and sources; (2) adaptation and modification of the material; (3) arrangement of the material; and (4) the extent of the author's own theological contribution to the text (Smalley, 1977:181-192).

As a result of such principles of criticism, commentators approach the text of the Sermon on the Mount. So Davies (1964:1,5) calls the Sermon "merely a collection of unrelated sayings of diverse origins, patchwork", and after a rehearsal of source criticism, form criticism and liturgical criticism, he concludes: "Thus the impact of recent criticism in all its forms is to cast doubt on the propriety of seeking to understand this section ... as an interrelated totality derived from the actual teaching of Jesus". He later concedes that the tide has turned towards so-called redaction criticism, which at least credits the evangelists themselves with being real authors who shape the tradition they preserve. Nevertheless, he remains sceptical as to how much original teaching of Jesus is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

Stott (1978:23) evaluates those who believe such redaction criticism as follows: "How one reacts to this kind of literary criticism depends on one's fundamental theological presuppositions about God himself, nature and the purpose of His revelation in Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and the evangelists' sense of truth".

Stott (1978:23) personally does not accept any view of the Sermon on the Mount which attributes its contents rather to the early church than to Jesus, or even regards it as the reason why both Matthew and Luke present their material as a sermon of Christ, and appear to convince their readers to understand it as such.

Finally, we may summarise the disadvantages of the biblical criticism: (1) The traditional criteria on which the redaction method normally depends are often to be questioned because of the assumptions involved in them. (2) It is too often presupposed that redaction on the part of an evangelist means 'composition', in the sense of invention. This is unwarranted. (3) Redaction critics are at times too subtle and subjective in their approach to the Gospels, and in their assessment of the evangelists' motives and methods. This is the reason for the wide variation in their results; although this need not surprise us with a discipline still in its infancy. Caution is obviously needed in the analysis of any editorial activity, particularly when, as in the case of the Gospels, we are not always sure who the 'editor' is, or the exact nature of his sources (Moule, 1971:50).

So when we stumble across some problems by ourselves about an apparent discrepancy or a question of the biblical criticism, what shall we do? Stott (1972a:155) suggests two solutions about it: (1) To begin with, it is essential that we wrestle honestly with biblical problems. (2) We shall maintain our belief in God's Word, just as we maintain our belief in God's love, in spite of the problems, ultimately for one reason and one reason only, namely that Jesus Christ taught it and exhibited it. It is no more obscurantist to cling to the one belief than to the other. Indeed, it not obscurantist at all. To follow Christ is always sober, humble and Christian realism.

#### 4.3.2.6 Rationalistic interpretation

Finally we will examine Stott's critical attitude about rationalistic interpretation. Rationalism in philosophy has not only laid the basis for liberalism in theology but, even more important, has had a profound effect on hermeneutics, thereby strongly affecting the twentieth century interpretation of Scripture (Virkler, 1982:70; Brown, 1991:71-72). As early as Hobbes and Spinoza, rationalistic views were held about the Bible. Rationalism, the philosophical creed of accepting reason as the only authority for determining one's opinions or action, is that view which claims that the human intelligence is capable of discovering whatever truth there is to know, or of adequately testing whatever claims to be truth (Ramm, 1989:33-34).

This school of thought held that reason rather than revelation was to guide our thinking and actions, and that reason would be used to judge which parts of the revelation were considered acceptable. So rationalism was best represented by the naturalistic interpretation of Scripture. This school refuses to accept all supernatural agencies in human affairs, consequently rejecting miracles or apparent divine intervention in history. For example, liberal commentators suggest that the 120 believers broke into unintelligible, ecstatic speech, and that Luke (who had visited Corinth with Paul) mistakenly supposed that it was literal language (Acts 2:1-13). Thus Luke got in a muddle and confused two quite different things. What he mistook for languages was in reality 'inarticulate ecstatic babbling' (Neil, 1973:71) or "a flood of unintelligible sounds in no known language" (Barclay, 1955 :15).

But Stott (1990:66) criticises this rationalistic method of interpretation by declaring that "those of us who have confidence in Luke as a reliable historian, let alone an inspired contributor to the New Testament, conclude that it is not he who is mistaken, but rather his rationalistic interpreters". He continues to insist that "the miracle (the tongue) on the Day of Pentecost was a supernatural ability to speak in recognisable languages".

Therefore, if we reject all reports of miracles in the classics as violating our scientific good sense, then we must reject miracles in the Scriptures as well. Miracles in the Bible are purely natural in origin. When miracles or the supernatural is found in Scripture it is treated as folklore or poetic elaboration (Adams, 1983:75).

Stott has never accepted any rationalistic interpretation, that is, the naturalistic, the mythical and the accommodation theory of interpretation, because the net results of the use of most of these interpretative keys has been to impart the reader's meaning into the text, rather than to read the author's meaning from the text. In other words, these methods have supplied interpretative keys growing out of their presuppositions about the origin and nature of Scripture.

### *4.3.3 His redemptive approach*

#### 4.3.3.1 Understanding the purpose of Scripture

Stott keeps in mind the basic purpose of the Bible when he approaches the text. He (1992:167) says that "its primary purpose is practical. It is more a guidebook than a textbook, more a book of salvation than a book of science. This is not to say that the

biblical and scientific accounts of the world are in conflict, but rather that they are complementary". Further, God's purpose in Scripture is not to reveal facts which can be discovered by the scientific method of observation and experiment, but rather to reveal truths which are beyond the scope of science, in particular God's way of salvation through Christ. Lloyd-Jones (1983:272) also says that "it is not a Book which gives us a little knowledge about encyclopedia. It is the textbook of life, the handbook of the soul. It is a manual dealing with one subject, the reconciliation of man with God".

The intention of Scripture is to guide man to the way of salvation and what is necessary for a godly life (2 Tim. 3:15-16). Stott (1982b:21) says that "we have considered how God spoke: Now, why did He speak? The answer is not just to teach us, but to save us; not just to instruct us, but specifically to instruct us "for salvation". The Bible has this severely practical purpose". What he emphasises is that we always have to approach the Bible for salvational purpose because we can find the salvation for sinners only in the Bible (Acts 4:12). Stott (1982b:22) explains it with these words: "Through the created universe God reveals His glory, power, and faithfulness, but not the way of salvation. If we want to learn His gracious plan to save sinners, it is to the Bible that we must turn. For it is there that He speaks to us of Christ".

#### 4.3.3.2 Some practical advantages

If we keep the redemptive purpose of the Bible in mind when we approach it, there will be some practical advantages to the interpretation of Scripture.

##### 4.3.3.2.1 The interpreter grasps the essential important message

It will ensure that an interpreter will not become so absorbed by the mere mechanics of Scripture and spend so much time on them as to miss the message, which is more important. Stott has no interest in the mere mechanics of the Bible, but in the stream of our salvation from Scripture. Stott thinks that we can carefully discuss and study trivial matters of the Scriptures but it will be dangerous if we are so deeply immersed in the mechanics of the Holy Scripture that we miss its message. One thinks, for example, of such questions as these: whether baptism should be administered only to adult believers or to the children of Christian parents as well, and whether candidates should be immersed in the water or have it poured over them....and whether the "millennium" (the reign of Christ for a thousand years) is intended to be understood literally as a future earthly event or symbolically as a present spiritual reality (Stott,

1972a:166). When equally biblical-minded Christians disagree in such matters, what should we do? He (1972a:166) suggests that "we respect one another with mutual Christian love and tolerance. Moreover, we should rejoice in the fact that in all the central doctrine (the salvation) of faith we remain agreed, for in these the Scripture is plain, clearly expressed and virtually self-interpreting".

#### 4.3.3.2 The interpreter grasps the aim of the revelation

As we have studied God's revelation, the nature of God wants to reveal Himself to us. Now God has revealed Himself chiefly by speaking through the Bible.

It is an indisputable fact that God has spoken in order to be understood, and that He has intended Scripture (the record of the divine speech) to be plain to its readers. Stott (1972a:165) comments that "the whole purpose of revelation is clarity, not confusion, a readily intelligible message, not a set of dark and mysterious riddles. If the interpreter understands its purpose, he can grasp that God's whole purpose in speaking and in causing His speech to be preserved is that He wants to communicate with ordinary people and save them".

Finally, in a certain sense, the matter treated in this sub-section (4.3.3.2) is self-evident. However, too often many fail here. Thus this redemptive or practical purpose of the Bible is emphasised by Reformed scholars (Ferguson, 1982:461-2; Gill 1982:477), but at the same time this emphasis has not yet been applied by all preachers in their actual process of hermeneutics.

#### 4.3.4 *The contextual approach*

##### 4.3.4.1 Preamble

Not only should the passage be placed within the broad unity of the book, but it must also be related to the immediate context. More clues to meaning come from a study of the surrounding context than from an examination of details within a passage (Robinson, 1980:58). Stott (1972a:176) admits the importance of contextual approach to a text and points out two ways that "the scriptural context of every text is both immediate (the paragraph, chapter and book in which it is embedded) and distant (the total biblical revelation)".

#### 4.3.4.2 The immediate context

Stott (1979b:61;157) understands the meaning of his text in the light of its immediate context. He notes carefully what precedes and what follows his text. If there is an alternative choice in interpreting a text, Stott decides it in terms of a close contact context. And if there is a word that has particular shades of meaning in various parts of Scripture, then Stott (1972a:177) considers the immediate context which will generally help him to find its precise aspect of meaning. Words cannot be interpreted by themselves, but only in context. First of all, Stott says that "the immediate context is the more obvious. But he points out that "to wrench a text from its context is an inexcusable blunder".

In his sermon on 1 Thessalonians, where Stott experiences difficulty to interpret some passages in the Bible, he (1991a:83-84) suggests three possibilities of interpretation of the words, 'vessel' (σκευος), 'acquire', and 'get' (κταομαι). The first one mentioned (vessel) is practised by 'the great majority of modern commentators', the second one relates to context. Since Paul's instruction is the positive counterpart to avoiding πορνεια, which usually means 'fornication' or 'adultery', the natural allusion is to marriage. Again, the contrast in Paul's phrase 'in holiness and honour, not in passionate lust' can readily be understood as presenting an alternative view of marriage; they can hardly be seen as some sort of self-control. Further, by his emphasis on what is 'holy and honourable' Paul seems deliberately to be purging σκευος of any dishonourable associations. Some commentators therefore suggest that εἰδεναι in verse 4 should not be translated 'should learn ...' but 'should respect his wife' as in 5:12. The last one relates to the analogy of Scripture.

Consequently, Stott (1991a:82) prefers to use the translation of the RSV in 1 Th. 4:4 that 'each one of you know how to take a wife for himself' to the NIV rendering that 'each of you should learn to control his own body'. Stott always try to interpret in order to get the true meaning from the immediate context when he meets ambiguous verses or words.

#### 4.3.4.3 Proximate context

What is going on in close proximity to the text often provides clues as to the text's meaning. We can sometimes find the same phrase and word recurring in the same context when we read and study the Bible. All of the same phrase and word in the same context does not bear the same meaning, but most of them can bear the same

meaning. Stott (1966:39) points out that "it is a fundamental principle of biblical interpretation that the same phrase recurring in the same context bears the same meaning".

He (1966:39-40) demonstrates one good example in the following: It is of great importance to observe that the phrase 'dead to sin' occurs three times in Rom. 6:1-11. Twice it refers to Christians (verses 2 and 11) and once it refers to Christ (Verse 10). When we interpret these phrases, we must find an explanation of this death to sin which is true both of Christ and of Christians. We are told that 'he died to sin', and that 'we died to sin'. So, whatever this death to sin is, it has to be true of the Lord Jesus and of us. This death to sin, whatever it is, is common to all Christians.

#### 4.3.4.4 The shorter passages are to be defined in the light of the longer text on the same topic

The writers of the Scriptures sometimes describe some issues briefly in a certain part of the Bible but wrote them in detail in some other part of the books in the Bible. If we cannot fully understand the short passages and verses, we have to interpret them in the light of the longer passage. Stott makes it clear in his following statement: "We shall be wise to take the two passages together and to interpret the shorter in the light of the longer". For example, Stott (1978:93) explains the divorce in Mt. 5:31,32 in the light of Mt. 19:3-9, in which is described divorce in greater detail .

Stott seems to think that Mt. 5:31,32 gives an abbreviated summary of Jesus' teaching, of which Matthew records a fuller version in chapter 19.

Therefore, Stott confirms that the longer and fuller passages can assist us to interpret the short passages. And then Stott's approach to the problems of the context and of going beyond the paragraph is accepted and modified in the hermeneutical tradition of Reformed theology.

#### 4.3.4.5 The whole canonical context

The text must be explained within its context, the part in relation to the whole, and the special in the light of the general (Stott, 1966:39).

Good hermeneutical procedure dictates that the details be viewed in the light of the total context. The final and largest circle of linguistic context in Stott's mind is

coterminous with the entire canon. Therefore he freely uses other portions of the Bible in order to reinforce his idea. So he asserts that Scripture should be interpreted in harmony with other Scripture, and that Scripture must be compared with Scripture. He (1990:12) says that "We have to look for teaching on the issue, first in the immediate context (within the narrative itself), then in what the author writes elsewhere, and finally in the broader context of Scripture as whole. For instance, the apostle Peter's plain statement to Ananias that his property, both before and after its sale, was his own and at his disposal (Acts 5:4), will prevent us from regarding all Christian possessions as being necessarily held in common".

Thus Stott stresses that the whole context should be coincided with the entire canon. And he also indicates the danger of the whole canonical context approach. In Stott's sermon about the tongue in Acts 2, he (1990:68) emphasises that although the tongue ( $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\omicron\lambda\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha$ ) is mentioned without explanation in several New Testament passages, Acts 2 is the only passage in which it is described and explained. Stott (1990:67) rejects Horton's statement that "the tongues here (sc. in Acts 2) and the tongues in 1 Cor. chapter 12-14 are the same", but does reject the liberal approach, which is to declare Corinthian  $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\omicron\lambda\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha$  to be unintelligible utterance and to assimilate the Acts phenomenon to it. Instead, Stott insists that it is better to make the opposite proposal, namely that the Acts phenomenon was intelligible language and that the 1 Corinthians experience must be assimilated to it. There is another good example of Stott about the whole canonical context approach in Eph. 5:21-33. As a result, Stott (1979b:216) says that 'so then, we must not interpret what Paul writes to wives, children and servants in his *Haustafeln* (house tables) about submission in a way which contradicts these fundamental attitudes of Jesus. Nor should we make Paul contradict himself, as some writers do, for to do this in biblical exegesis is the counsel of despair. No, we must set the *Haustafeln* squarely within the framework of the Ephesians letter, in which Paul has been describing the single new humanity which God is creating through Christ".

To sum up, even though a same word has been used in the Bible, we have to distinguish its meaning from first the immediate, proximate context and secondly from the whole context of the Scriptures.

#### 4.3.4.6 The historical context

If we are to establish accurately the author's intention, we must investigate the historical circumstances which are determinative to the authors' situation. Venter

(1995:13) believes firmly that interpreter has to “determine what light cultural-historical background might shed on this specific sermon text, the writer, first readers, etc.”

Stott (1994a:189) understands Scripture in its original historical context. As we have seen from his criticism in the previous section, Stott rejects the existential interpretation as Bultmann did. In his series of sermons on Thessalonians he (1991a:105) says that "we must resist the temptation of sophisticated ‘modernists’ to de-bunk Paul, to dismiss him as a child of his age, to deny that he was an inspired apostle, and to strip his statements of their ‘mythological’ clothing. We must insist that, however much imagery he may have used, he was referring to real events which belong to history, not myth".

We will examine two of his viewpoints concerning the historical situation of the biblical text.

#### 4.3.4.6.1 In general

When Stott interprets certain words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, he does it in the context of the original hearers’ thought-world. For instance, the phrase ‘warn those who are idle’ (1 Th. 5:14) is explained as follows: "In classical Greek the word ἀτακτος was applied to an army in disarray, and to undisciplined soldiers who either broke ranks instead of marching properly or were insubordinate. It then came to describe any kind of irregular or undisciplined behaviours" (Stott, 1991a:87). So Stott (1991a:88) concludes that "the context in each case (1 Th. 5:14; 2 Th. 3:6-7, 11) makes it plain that the ἀτακτοι had given up their work and needed to be exhorted to go back to it".

Stott (1972a:172) points out Luther’s mistake in that he rejects James’ letter as made of ‘straw’ because Paul and James are contradictory about faith and works. It was Luther’s mistake to misinterpret the historical background to the letters of Paul and James. Even though both of them quoted Abraham as an example in order to emphasise the faith and works according to their own accentuation, their positions are not mutually irreconcilable. Because Paul was tilting at legalists who believed in salvation by works, James as religionists who believed in salvation by orthodoxy. Both believed that salvation was faith and that a saving faith would manifest itself in good works. It was natural in their particular circumstances, however, that Paul should stress the faith which issues in works, and James the works which spring from faith.

Not only from the realm of the hearers' thought world but also from the context of their life situation does Stott (1991a:81) explain 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: "It is not surprising that the apostle begins with sex, not only because it is the most imperious of all our human urges, but also because of the sexual laxity - even promiscuity - of the Graeco-Roman world. Besides, he was writing from Corinth to Thessalonica, and both cities were notorious for their immorality. In Corinth Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sex and beauty, whom the Romans identified with Venus, sent her servants out as prostitutes to roam the streets by night. Thessalonica, on the other hand, was particularly associated with the worship of deities called the Cabiri, in whose rites "gross immorality was promoted under the name of religion". It is doubtful, however, whether Corinth and Thessalonica were any worse than other cities of that period in which it was widely accepted that men either could not or would not limit themselves to their wives as their only sexual partner".

Stott continues explaining the danger of immorality by stating: "in many cultures and countries today, even where monogamy is officially favoured, deviations from this norm are increasingly tolerated. Christians, by contrast, have a reputation for being 'puritanical' and 'prudish', and for having a generally negative attitude towards sex. These criticisms are sometimes just. But in self-defense we also claim to be realists. Although we recognise that sex is a good gift of a good Creator, we also know that it has become twisted and distorted by the fall, so that our sexual energies need to be rightly channelled and carefully controlled".

Therefore, much of the artistic in the work of the interpreter is to choose the limits of the historical context or the context as it relates to the meaning of the text at hand.

#### 4.3.4.6.2 In particular

Stott's consideration of the historical situation in which the text was framed also requires a knowledge of the circumstances of the author and the hearers. In his expository book, *The message of Acts*, Stott sets aside his first sermon for providing the background and introduction to the sermon of the Acts as a whole (Stott, 1990:21-37). Furthermore, in almost every other sermon, he explains his text in its special historical context, i.e. the historical situation of the author as a writer and of his hearers.

First of all, Stott (1990:21,22) sketches the background of the original hearer to whom Luke is writing as follows: "Before reading any book it is helpful to know the

author's purpose in writing it. The biblical books are no exception to this rule. So why did Luke write? He actually wrote two books. The first was his Gospel, which ancient and unassailed tradition attributes to his authorship and which is almost certainly the 'former book' referred to at the beginning of the Acts. So the Acts was his second book. The two form an obvious pair. Both are dedicated to Theophilus and both are written in the same literary Greek style ... To begin with Luke claims in his preface to the Gospel to be writing accurate history, and it is generally agreed that he intends this to cover both volumes. For 'it was the custom in antiquity', whenever a work was divided into more than one volume, 'to prefix to the first a preface for the whole'. In consequence, Luke 1:1-4 'is the real preface to Acts as well as to the Gospel'".

Stott (1990:25) confirms that Luke who is the author of Acts (we will forward use 'Acts' which is used by Stott, not 'the Acts') writes with a historical purpose as a quotation from Sherwin-White's book. Sherwin-White (1978:120-121) writes about Acts: "The historical framework is exact. In terms of time and place the details are precise and correct. One walks the streets and market-places, the theatres and assemblies of first-century Ephesus or Thessalonica, Corinth or Philippi, with the author of Acts. The great men of the cities, the magistrates, the mob and mob-leader are all there ... It is similar with the narrative of Paul's judicial experiences before the tribunals of Gallio, Felix and Festus. As documents these narratives belong to the same historical series as the record of provincial and imperial trials in the epigraphical and literary sources of the first and early second centuries AD". Here is his conclusion: "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming ... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted" (Sherwin-White, 1978:189).

Stott (1990:27) also stresses that Luke wrote Acts as a political apologetic to Theophilus: "He produced evidence to show that Christianity was harmless (because some Roman officials had embraced it themselves), innocent (because Roman judges could find no basis for prosecution) and lawful (because it was the true fulfilment of Judaism). And then Luke wrote the Acts in order to promulgate evangelism. So Marshall (1980b:17,18) writes 'salvation is the central motif in Lucan theology, both in the Gospel (in which we see it accomplished) and in Acts (in which we see it proclaimed)".

Stott (1990:31) always reminds the modern hearers to whom the biblical author is speaking: "Luke, the theologian of salvation, is essentially the evangelist. For he proclaims the gospel of salvation from God in Christ for all people. Hence his

inclusion in the Acts of so many sermons and addresses, especially by Peter and Paul. He not only shows them preaching to their original hearers, but also enables them to preach to us who, centuries later, listen to them. For as Peter said on the Day of Pentecost, the promise of salvation is for us too, and for every generation, indeed 'for all whom the Lord our God will call' (Acts 2:39). In Stott's sermon, *The Sermon on the Mount*, he first asks 'is the Sermon relevant?', and answers: "Whether the Sermon is relevant to modern life or not can be judged only by a detailed examination of its contents. What is immediately striking is that, however it came to be composed, it forms a wonderfully coherent whole ... Perhaps a brief analysis of the Sermon will help to demonstrate its relevance to ourselves in the twentieth century" (Stott, 1978:24).

The same is true with his consideration of the Old and New Testaments. Stott calls attention to the fact that often the misinterpretation of the teaching of the Bible happens when people fail to notice to whom the message was addressed: 'since the purpose of the Scriptures (or the purpose of the divine author who spoke and speaks through them) is to bring us to salvation, and since salvation is in Christ, they point us to Christ ... But their object in pointing us to Christ is not simply that we should know about him and understand him, nor even that we should admire him; but that we should put our trust in him. Scripture bears witness to Christ not in order to satisfy our curiosity but in order to draw from us a response of faith' (Stott, 1972a:22).

According to Stott, the general purpose of the Epistles are also noticed. They are written primarily because the Apostle was concerned to help people to achieve an actual enjoyment and practical participation in the Christian faith which they had believed and accepted. In his sermon on the Letters of John, Stott (1964:44) says that "John certainly exhibits a tender, pastoral care for his readers. His first concern is not to confound the false teachers, whose activities form the background of the letters, but to protect his readers, his beloved 'children', and to establish them in their Christian faith and life. Thus, he defines his own purpose in writing as being 'to make our joy complete', 'so that you will not sin, and so that you may know that you have eternal life' (1 Jn. 1:4; 2:1; 5:13). Joy holiness, assurance: these are the Christian qualities the pastor desires to see in his flock".

Consequently, it is not necessary to suppress our present context to understand the text. On the contrary, at times we need to approach Scripture with our problems and questions if we would truly appreciate what it says. We thus recognise that in order to value the text, the reader must have a commitment to it (Silva, 1994:245). Therefore,

this kind of historical interpretation is always needed in order to have a correct meaning of the text and a sound explanation of the text.

#### 4.3.5 *Grammatical approach*

##### 4.3.5.1 Preamble

The grand object of grammatico-historical interpretation is to ascertain the *usus loquendi*, that is, the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age (Terry, 1964:181). Stott makes full use of a time-honoured method in the interpretation of Scripture; the grammatico-historical method of interpretation. He (1992:212) says that "we have to accept the discipline of interpretation, that is, of thinking ourselves back into the situation of the biblical authors, into their history, geography, culture and language. This task has long been graced with the name 'grammatico-historical interpretation'. We have treated his historical approach in the previous section, so here our concentrations will be directed to his grammatical approach.

The aim of his grammatical approach is to determine the meaning required by the rules of grammar. Thus, according to Stott, the grammatical meaning means understanding of the simple, natural, plain, ordinary, normal and literal meaning of the words, phrases, clauses and sentences as we have studied that in his principles of interpretation. He emphasises that what every Bible student must look for is the plain, natural, general meaning of each text, without subtleties and allegorising - the meaning which the original writer intended (Stott, 1972a:167; 1992:213).

In his actual practice of this grammatical approach, the following considerations are conspicuous.

##### 4.3.5.2 The original text and the translation of the Bible

Stott's grammatical approach includes first of all his textual consideration. Textual items of evidence are usually accepted favourably, but although he recognises that the best manuscripts do not contain certain words, phrases, and even whole sentences found in other manuscripts, he sometimes thinks it best to accept the teaching expressed by those words, phrases and sentences because it is certainly found elsewhere in the New Testament (Stott, 1979b:199). However, the latter cases should be evaluated as his theological reading into the text (we will treat it in detail later). In

a certain case he frankly acknowledges that it is impossible to decide exactly on the grounds of textual criticism whether a certain phrase should be included or not.

In the actual process of his interpretation the original language is continually checked so that he can ascertain whether certain words are omitted or what words exactly are used in the Greek text (Stott, 1979b:116-117). For example, in his exposition of Ephesians 3:1-6, he points out that a mystery in English and μυστηριον in Greek have quite different meanings, that is, in English a “mystery” is something dark, obscure, secret, puzzling. What is ‘mysterious’ is inexplicable, even incomprehensible. The Greek word μυστηριον is different, however. Although still a ‘secret’, it is no longer closely guarded but open. Originally, the Greek word referred to a truth into which someone had been initiated. More simply, μυστηριον is a truth hitherto hidden from human knowledge or understanding but now disclosed by the revelation of God.

Along with his consideration on the original text he always checked various translations. He chiefly uses NIV (New International Version) but in his study he uses several other versions (the Septuagint, the Authorised [King James] Version, the Revised Version, the Revised Standard Version, the English Revised Version, the New English Bible, Jerusalem Bible, and some private translations: The Scofield Bible, Moffat, J.N. Darby and J.B. Phillips). He (1979b:133; 1986b:35) uses them for a better rendering of the original text, which explains its meaning more clearly. At times he (1966:34; 1986b:116) points out their omissions and their incorrect translations. Above all, he tries to look for the original meaning the author has intended in the text in comparison to other manuscripts and several translations.

#### 4.3.5.3 The function of grammar in Greek text

Stott usually likes to do some grammatical explanation in the Greek text and investigate the nuances of the Greek language in order to understand the original meaning of the text. He constantly pays attention to the gender (1978a:105), the number and the case (1979b;138) of Greek words and whole sentences. And then he continuously considers the tenses, as well as the voice (1979b:203) of Greek verbs very carefully. However, he rightly points out the danger of paying too much attention to this aspect exclusively.

We can easily find a few good examples in his sermons of his actual use of the above grammatical phenomena. In his expository of Ephesians, Stott points out with regard

to the case with these words: "... Paul prays that they may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). It is uncertain how this genitive should be understood. If it is objective, then God's fullness is the abundance of grace which he bestows. If it is subjective, it is the fullness which fills God himself, in other words his perfection. Staggering as the thought may be, the latter seems the more probable because the Greek preposition is εἰς, which indicates that we are to be filled not 'with'; so much as 'unto' the fullness of God. God's fullness or perfection becomes the standard or level up to which we pray to be filled. The aspiration is the same in principle as that implied by the commands to be holy as God is holy, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (1 Pe. 1:15-16; Mt. 5:48)".

In Stott's sermon, *The Sermon on the Mount*, he (1978a:77) mentions the following with regard to the tense: "There is the introductory formula, beginning 'you have heard that it was said to the men of old' (5:21,33), or 'you have heard that it was said' (5:27, 38, 43), or more briefly still, 'it was also said' (31). The words common to these formulae are 'it was said', which represent the single Greek verb ἔρρεθη. Now this was not the word which Jesus used when quoting Scripture. When he introduced a biblical quotation, both verb and tense were different, namely γεγραπται (perfect, 'it stands written'), not ερρεθη (aorist, 'it was said'). So the six antitheses that Jesus proclaimed were not Scripture but tradition, not God's word which they had 'read' but the oral instruction which was given 'to the men of old' and which they too had 'heard' since the scribes continued to repeat it in the synagogues".

Finally, Stott sometimes syntactically explains a Greek word. For example, in his expository sermon on Ephesians 5:18, he explicates 'be filled with Spirit' as the function of grammar with these words: "The exact form of the verb πληρουσθε is suggestive. First, it is in the *imperative mood* ... Secondly, it is in the *plural form* ... Thirdly, it is in the *passive voice* ... Fourthly, it is in the *present tense*". Therefore, we have to try to look for the accurate meaning through the rudiments of grammar as Stott does.

However, his views on the usefulness of a knowledge of the original languages must also be accentuated. He thinks that this is very important and necessary. He says that: "it follows that no serious Bible reader can escape the discipline of linguistic study. Best of all would be a knowledge of the original languages, Hebrew and Greek ... An analytical Concordance (like Young's or Strong) is another extremely valuable tool, for it not only groups the biblical words according to the English (AV) text but then subdivides them into original Hebrew and Greek words and give their meaning".

Robinson (1980:59) also insists on the importance of a knowledge of the original languages as follows: "... Some knowledge of the original languages becomes invaluable. While the message of the Scripture may be understood in English, an understanding of Hebrew or Greek resembles receiving a program on colour television. Both a black-and white and a colour set get the same picture, but colour adds a vividness and precision not possible in black and white".

#### 4.3.5.4 The syntactical aspects

In the syntactical aspect of interpretation, the accent falls on two key parts of the hermeneutical process. The first part stresses that syntax is one of the most important avenues for the interpreter to use in reconstructing the thread of the writer's meaning. The way in which words are put together so as to form phrases, clauses, and sentences will aid us in discovering the author's pattern of meaning (Kaiser, 1981:89).

Stott (1994a:320; 1979b:180) always considers the syntactical aspects to a text and gives particular attention to 'the question of the connection', thus specially to the conjunctions in grammar.

For example, when he interprets Ephesians 4:22-24, he indicates that the translation of RSV is seriously misleading. And then Stott (1979b:180) says that "it renders the infinitive verbs as if they were imperative, and thus represents Paul's written instruction as fresh commands to his readers: '*Put off your old nature ... and put on the new nature*' (Eph. 4:22-24).. But this cannot be right, for two main reasons ... Secondly, if they are commands in Ephesians 4:22,24, then the command of verse 25 becomes nonsense: Therefore, *putting away falsehood* ... Surely this 'therefore', which builds on what has just been written, can hardly base one command upon another, as if to say: 'Put off your old nature ... and put on the new... Therefore put away falsehood' ".

Consequently, Stott (1979b:180) suggests the following: "We should repunctuate these sentences, and replace the full-stop at the end of verse 21 with a colon or with the word 'namely', thus: 'You did not so learn Christ! -assuming that you ... were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, namely that you were to put off your old nature ... and put on the new...' ".

From his hermeneutical practice it can be said that conjunctions often act as an important key to understanding, for they join thoughts which are contained in words,

sentences or paragraphs. His consideration of conjunctions, that is of the syntactical aspects, is legitimate and useful in interpretation, for conjunctions often indicate the relationship of the thoughts they join (Virkler, 1982:98) .

John Stott considers the conjunctions as well as their logical connections. Stott (1979b:177) says that "if we put Paul's expressions together, noting carefully their logical connections (especially *because of* and *due to*, both translating  $\delta\iota\alpha$ ), he seems to be depicting the terrible downward path of evil, which begins with an obstinate rejection of God's known truth (Eph. 4:17-19). First comes *their hardness of heart*, then *their ignorance*, being *darkened in their understanding*, next and consequently they are *alienated from the life of God*, since he turns away from them, until finally *they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practise every kind of uncleanness*".

#### 4.3.5.5 Parallel passages

When the immediate context of associated words and sentences do not aid the interpreter in discovering the meaning of a passage, he may be able to utilise parallel passages which are found elsewhere in Scripture (Kaiser, 1981:125). Stott likes to use a verbal paralleled passage that makes use of the same word in a similar connection or with reference to the same subject.

Stott (1988:7) expresses his concern to compare the parallel sentences and passages in order to grasp the original meaning of the text. Stott (1979b:180) always considers how this sentence and passage have been used in the other sentence and passage. In his expository sermon on Ephesians, he (1979b:177-179) demonstrates two models of the logical parallel passages.

Firstly, one is to compare Ephesians 4:17-19 and Romans 1:18-32 as follows:

Romans 1:18-32

Ephesians 4:17-19

#### **Stage 1 : Obstinacy**

18 "Men ... by their wickedness  
suppress the truth"

18 "Due to their hardness  
( $\pi\alpha\rho\omega\sigma\iota$ ) of heart"

21 "Although they knew God they  
did not honour him as God"

28 "They did not see fit to acknowledge God"

### Stage 2 : Darkness

21 "They became futile in their thinking  
and their senseless minds were darkened"

17 "The futility of their minds"

8a "They are darkened in  
their understanding"

22 "They became fools"

18b "The ignorance that is  
in them"

28 "A base mind"

### Stage 3 :Death or judgement

24 "Therefore God gave them up"

18 "They are ... alienated from  
the life of God"

26 "For this reason God gave them up"

28 "God gave them up"

### Stage 4 : Recklessness

God gave them up to -

24 "Impurity"

26 "Dishonourable passions"

27 "shameless acts"

28 "Improper conduct"

29-31 "All manner of wickedness ... "

19 "They have become callous

and have given themselves

up to licentiousness ( ασελγεια,

meaning public indecency of

a shameless kind), greedy to practise

every kind of uncleanness"

The other example is Ephesians 20-21. Paul sets up a whole process of Christian moral education. He uses three parallel expressions which centre on three verbs, all in the aorist tense, meaning to 'learn', to 'hear' and to 'be taught', with a final reference to 'the truth as it is in Jesus'.

First, "you learned Christ" (Verse 20, εμαθετε).

Secondly, "you heard Him" (Verse 21a, ηκουσατε).

Thirdly, "you were taught in Him" (verse 21b, εδιδαχθητε).

Here Stott (1979b:179) sums up three instructions from the logical parallel expressions (Eph. 4:20-21), that is, according to the first one, Christ Himself is the substance of Christian teaching ... Secondly, Christ who is the substance of the teaching ("you learned Christ") is himself also the teacher ("you heard him") ...

Thirdly, they had been taught in him. That is to say, Jesus Christ, in addition to being the teacher and teaching, was also the context, even the atmosphere, within which the teaching was given".

Kaiser (1981:125) states as follows: "A verbal parallel passage makes use of the same word in a similar connection or with reference to the same subject. The word "mystery" may be baffling in one passage of Paul, but in one of his nineteen other usages of the word, it may be explained in a much clearer way. There is a danger in supposing that every reference including the word is parallel to all the others. Or in supposing that there is a connection just because the word reoccurs in the same context".

But if the interpreter is careful, parallel passages will supply a small, but helpful, bit of assistance when a word is ambiguous or the context sheds very little light on the subject.

#### *4.3.6 The verbal approach*

##### 4.3.6.1 The stylistic aspects

The literary form of a piece of writing influences the way an author meant it to be interpreted. A writer composing poetry does not use words in the same way that he does when writing prose. This fact takes on significance when we realise that one-third of the Old Testament is written in the form of Hebrew poetry. To interpret these passages as if they were prose, a practice which has often been applied, is to misinterpret their meaning (Virkler, 1982:96).

In his interpretation of a text, Stott always considers the style. He (1972a:172) says the following about that "It is important to take note of the literary genre of each biblical book. Is it prose or poetry, historical narrative or wisdom literature? Is it law, prophecy, psalm or apocalyptic? Is it a drama, or a collection of the words and deeds of Jesus which bear witness to him? How we interpret what we read, not least whether we take it literally or figuratively, will depend largely on its form and style".

Lloyd-Jones (1975b:159; 1983:193) also emphasises style with these words: "Our view of inspiration must allow for such variations in the styles of the different writers, otherwise it would be mechanical dictation. We believe in the absolute control of the Spirit over the minds and thinking and style and everything else of the writers. He so

controlled them that they were kept from error, but the Holy Spirit did not dictate to them mechanically, otherwise there would be no variation in the style".

Stott (1982b:50) emphasises: "we fully recognise that the biblical authors used many different literary genres, each of which must be interpreted according to its own rules - history as history, poetry as poetry, parable as parable, etc.". So, often the key to the use and the function of the textual language is the literary form in which it was cast. The literary form may also reflect the setting in which that particular text was given its shape and to a lesser extent determine some of the stereotyped expressions or vocabulary in its content (Kaiser, 1981:94).

#### 4.3.6.2 The language

Stott (1992:215) emphasises the importance of the language that has been used in the Bible. He says that "it is the language of the text which determines what meaning God intends for us to have". He quotes David Well's essay as follows: "This is because "words have meaning ... No language allows meaning to float free of the words used ... Unless words and their meaning are joined in hermeneutical practice, we can have no access to revelation in anything but a mystical sense" (Stott, 1992:215). He (1972a:172) continues: "all human language is a living, changing thing. The meaning of words alters from century to century, and culture to culture. We cannot read the word 'love' in Scripture and immediately suppose we know what it means. Four different Greek words are used in the New Testament, all translated 'love' in English. But each has a distinctive meaning, and only one expresses what Christians mean by love, which is poles apart from the erotica of twentieth-century glossy magazines".

Stott (1972a:173) does not only express his concern about the language, but also about the actual practice of interpretation one can find something like this: "In his two letters to the Thessalonians Paul several times refers to those he describes as ἀτακτοί. In classical Greek the word was commonly used of soldiers who broke rank, of an army in disarray. So the AV translates the word 'disorderly', and it was assumed that there was an undisciplined group of some kind in the Thessalonian church. But two or three apprenticeship contracts were discovered among the papyri which contain an undertaking that should the boy play truant from work or exceed his annual holiday, the lost time would be made good. And the word for playing truant is ἀτακτοί, or rather its cognate verb. So the NIV renders it not 'disorderly' but 'idle'. It seems probable that some Thessalonian Christians, believing that the Lord's return was imminent, were playing truant from work. It is these idle Christians whom Paul

commands to mind their own affairs, work with their own hands and earn their own living, adding that if a man will not work, he shall not eat (1 Th. 4:11; 5:14; 2 Th. 3:6-12)".

#### 4.3.7 *The theological approach*

Recent trends have emphasised theological interpretation - the effort to understand the essential truths of a passage of Scripture. Those who seek to interpret the Bible theologically range from those who see it simply as a necessary but imperfect vehicle to portray truth to those who take it seriously, as well as the truths that it presents. While the first group gives little attention to historical and literary interpretations, the second group is concerned about both in order to discover the theological truths of the passage. In this sense, theological interpretation is an essential part of grammatico-historical interpretation. True interpretation seeks to understand the truths of a passage of Scripture by careful grammatical analysis against its historical background (Brown, 1991:54).

In spite of its importance, unfortunately, the missing ingredient in most sermon preparation is the theological approach to the text. For successful interpretation, there must be some procedure for identifying the centre or core message of the passage being examined. Only when the core of that text and the assemblage of books which were available in the canon up the time of the writing of that text have been identified, will the interpreter be enabled to determine God's normative Word.

##### 4.3.7.1 The analogy of faith [*analogia fidei*]

Before we examine Stott's method of the analogy of Scripture, it will be useful to study what the analogy of faith means and the how it is used in the history of interpretation.

The concept of 'analogy of faith' comes from a phrase in Romans 12:6 - "WE have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it *in proportion to his faith* [κατα την ἀναλογία τη πιστεω]" Two other pages are usually cited: Romans 12:3, where Paul says that one is not to think of one's self more highly than one should; rather each is to think "so as to have sound judgement, as God has allotted to each *a measure of faith* [μετρον πιστεω]"; and 2 Timothy 1:13 - "What you have heard from me, keep as *the pattern of sound teaching*" (Kaiser, 1994:194).

So we can understand Paul as requiring the prophet to speak in accordance with the previously revealed truth found in the Word of God. This view would support the often-used rule that a true prophet was never to contradict existing revelation (Deut. 13:1-5; Acts 17:11 1 Jn. 4:1-6) (Morris, 1988:441).

Henri Blocher (1987:28) nicely summarises the situation in commenting: "The apostle, when dictating Romans 12:6, barely thought of the technical 'comparing Scripture with Scripture'; yet, he concerned himself with the agreement of Christian discourses with the whole body of teaching given by the inspiration of God, in its main emphases and overall balance (*ἀναλογία*), all parts included. Substantially, his point was not far removed from our conception of the analogy of faith".

Horne (1983:342) defines the analogy of faith to be the constant and perpetual harmony of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice, deduced from those passages in which they were discussed by the inspired penmen either directly or expressly, and in clear, plain, and intelligible language".

The basic assumption here is that there is one system of truth or theology contained in Scripture, and therefore all doctrines must cohere or agree with each other. That means that the various interpretations of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture on a point. In other words, the analogy of faith gathers verses from throughout the canon into a bouquet that is truly biblical in its derivation. The doctrines that are affirmed and the support that is claimed for each doctrine from the assemblage of the verses cited is only as useful and valid as the exegesis that underlies this work of assembling the texts and definitions (Kaiser, 1994:195).

In general, the term apparently was first employed in this connection by the early Church father Origen. The Reformers made extensive use of the analogy of faith, which in their time became established with a meaning that related to a very distinct set of circumstances (Kaiser, 1981:134). Perhaps, *analogia fidei* as used by Reformers seems to be used as a relative expression especially aimed at the tyrannical demands of tradition.

Therefore, Stott (1982b:20) emphasises: "the analogy of faith sets limitations to the interpretation of the whole Bible in the same way". In other words, the analogy of faith is not a hermeneutical tool that is an 'open [theological] sesame' for every passage of Scripture. Stott (1994a:171) warns that "the popular misunderstanding well illustrate the danger of arguing from an analogy. In every analogy we need to consider

at what point the parallel or similarity is being drawn; we must not press a resemblance at every point".

But Stott (1982b:20) insists that even though "this analogy, which was developed quite early in the history of the church, is often criticised today, the analogy of faith remains helpful, provided that we remember its limitations".

In Stott's (1992:212) view, every Biblical text has within it some facet of theology expressed in such a way as to be part and parcel of the fabric of its contents. While that theology cannot be torn from that text, it, nevertheless, often has roots which were laid down antecedent to that text. So the theology must be objectively derived from the text; it is not to be subjectively imposed on the text by the interpreter. For example, it is fashionable nowadays to regard the story of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27-31) as 'myth', not history. But the Scripture itself will not allow us to do this. The best argument for the historicity of Adam and Eve is not scientific (e.g. the homogeneity of the human race), but theological. The biblical Christian accepts Adam And Eve as historical not primarily because of the Old Testament story, but because of New Testament Theology. In Rom. 5:12-19 and 1 Cor. 15:21,22, 45-49 the apostle draws an analogy between Adam and Christ which depends for its validity on the historicity of both. Each is presented as the head of a race - fallen humanity owing its ruin to Adam, and redeemed humanity owing its salvation to Christ (Stott, 1966:24; 1994a:152-153).

#### 4.3.7.2 His consideration of the theological view in the history of interpretation

When Stott is faced with a difficult passage, he firstly considered the theological point in the history of the interpretation of that text. In fact, it is a useful solution whenever we are confronted by a statement in the Bible which we find to be difficult and perplexing, to consult authorities, to consult the history of the Church, to consult the experience and their theological perspectives in the interpretation of those who have gone before us.

When Stott (1979b:267-272) interprets the '*principalities and power*' in Ephesians 6:12, he investigates four theological perspectives about its interpretation by contemporary theologians, Gordon Rupp, Hendrik Berkhof, Markus Barth and G.B. Caird. Stott firstly admires the ingenuity displayed in their attempted interpretation. But he accepts attempted interpretation according to the perspective of biblical theology, that is, principalities and power means not structures, institutions and

traditions but the supernatural things. Stott (1979b:273) mentions it as follows: "Turning now from exegetical to theological considerations, nobody can deny that Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels believed in both demons and angels. It was not inevitable that he should have done so, because the Sadducees did not. But exorcism was an integral part of his ministry of compassion and one of the chief signs of the kingdom. It is also recorded that he spoke without inhibition about angels. So if Jesus Christ our Lord believed in them and spoke of them, it will become us to be too embarrassed to do so. His apostles took this belief over from Jesus".

We can easily find his considerations of grammatico-historical interpretation and theological interpretation as well. For example, when he interprets the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Eph. 5:18, he (1979b:203-204) pays attention to two considerations of interpretation as follows: "Grammatically speaking, this paragraph consists of two imperatives (the commands not to get drunk but to be Spirit-filled), followed by four present participles (speaking, singing, thanking and submitting). Theologically speaking, it first presents us with our Christian duty (to avoid drunkenness but to seek the Spirit's fullness) and then describes four consequences of this spiritual condition, in terms of our relationships".

Therefore, Stott definitely does not accept the method of interpretation in which the liberal interpreters have an *a priori* assumption or are influenced by some philosophy or other but follows the way of the Reformed lines of the biblical theology. Stott (1986b:60,181; 1979b:134,247) always alludes to the commentaries of famous persons who observe the Reformed theology and tradition when he interprets Scriptures. He seems to believe that sound commentaries supply a fund of information about the accurate meaning of words, the background of passages, and the argument of a writer. In his great book, *The cross of Christ*, he (1986a:12) concludes with these words: "... in seeking to understand the cross, one cannot ignore the great works of the past. To be disrespectful of tradition and of historical theology is to be disrespectful of the Holy Spirit who has been actively enlightening the church in every century".

#### 4.3.8 *His views on the cultural setting*

In this section, the major concern is Stott's understanding of the cultural background from which the human authors of the scriptures wrote and their social setting the readers who are influenced by.

Stott especially pays particular attention to the general cultural context, because "every writer of the Bible writes within a given cultural and hence a vital part of the context of any passage is the cultural background of the writer of the passage" (Ramm, 1989:136).

Noting the cultural background of a piece of writing helps us to understand what that document meant to the people who first read it. For example, reading Great Britain's *Magna Charta* makes more sense when we understand the cultural environment of Britain in the 13th century. Therefore, the principal purpose for studying the cultural elements in the Holy Scripture is that this aids the interpreter to know what are the original things referred to in Scripture.

Stott (1992:186) insists that "our sense of incongruity when we read the Bible, and the consequent difficulty we often experience in receiving meaningful communication from it, are due primarily neither to the passage of time in itself (from the first century to the twentieth) nor to the mere distance (from the Middle East to the West), but to the cultural differences which remoteness of time and place have caused".

Therefore, since a cultural gap exists between our day and the biblical times - and since our goal in Bible interpretation is to discover the original meaning of the Scriptures when they were first written - it is imperative that we become familiar with the biblical culture and customs. As Sproul (1986:102) has written: "unless we maintain that the Bible fell down from heaven on a parachute, inscribed by a celestial pen in a peculiar heavenly language uniquely suited as a vehicle for a divine revelation, or that the Bible was dictated directly and immediately by God without reference to any local custom, style or perspective, we are going to have to face the cultural gap. That is, the Bible reflects the culture of its day".

Stott points out two arguments which influence our interpretation of Scripture, that is, firstly the problem of our own cultural imprisonment, and the secondly that of the cultural conditioning of the biblical authors. In other words, both the writers and the readers of Scripture are culture-creatures, the products (and therefore to some degree the prisoners) of the particular cultures in which they were brought up. Consequently, in all our Bible reading there is a collision of cultures between the biblical world and the modern world (Stott, 1992:186).

Thus, in order to interpret and apply a passage accurately, Stott understands the meaning of the culture and the two cultural problems in the interpretation of the Bible. We will consider each of his statement separately.

#### 4.3.8.1 His definition of culture

In general, 'culture' is not all that easy to define. In its broadest sense, it usually means the patterned way people do things together. So Webster defines 'culture' as "the total pattern of human behaviour [that includes] thought, speech, action, and artifacts," and as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits ... of a racial, religious, or social group" (Zuck, 1991:79) Thus culture includes what people think and believe, say, do, and make. It contains their beliefs, forms of communication, customs and practices, and solid substances objects such as tools, dwellings, weapons, and so forth. As Eugene Nida (1954:28) defines it, "culture is all learned behaviour which is socially acquired, that is, the concrete and nonmaterial traits which are passed on from one generation to another".

To sum up, Stott (1992:189) defines "'culture' as the complex of beliefs, values, customs and traditions which each generation receives from its predecessor and transmits to its successor, and which binds a society together"

#### 4.3.8.2 Our own cultural imprisonment

We have learnt all things in our cultural inheritance from childhood. That is, the way we think, judge, act, talk, dress, eat, work and play are all to a large extent determined by our culture, and we usually do not realise how much our cultural upbringing has enslaved us. Our whole upbringing and background affect the way we read the Bible. Therefore, it is so difficult, almost impossible, for us to read the Bible with genuine objectiveness and openness, and for God to break through our cultural defences and to say to us what He wants to say, because our spectacles have cultural lenses (Stott, 1992:190).

Stott emphasises that we have to humbly recognise that our culture blinds, deafens and dopes us, and also how strong a barrier to His communication with us our customs can be. After that, we need to allow God's Word to confront us, disturbing our security, undermining our complacency, penetrating our protective patterns of thought and behaviour, and overthrowing our resistance. Then if we do so, God will open our eyes, unstop our ears, and stab our dull consciences awake, until we see, hear

and feel what God has been saying to us through His Word all the time (Stott, 1992:193,194).

#### 4.3.8.3 The Bible's cultural conditioning

Not only Bible readers, but also the biblical authors are the products of a particular culture. When God wanted to communicate with the biblical writers, He humbled Himself to speak in the languages of His people (classical Hebrew, Aramaic and common Greek-Koine), and within the cultures of the ancient Near East (the Old Testament), Palestinian Judaism (the Gospels) and the hellenized Roman Empire (the rest of the New Testament). The Word of God was not spoken in a cultural vacuum; every Word of God was spoken in a cultural context (Stott, 1992:194). In other words, the Word of God comes to us in the specific cultural and historical language of the pre-Christian period and the first Christian century.

Therefore, we must be able to recognise the cultural aspects of the Bible. These usually are the passages that tend to give us problems when we try to apply them directly to our day.

When we are faced with a biblical passage, therefore, whose teaching is obviously clothed in ancient cultural dress (because it relates to social customs which are either obsolete or at least alien to our own culture), how shall we react? According to Stott (1992:195, 196), we have three options in solving this problem: "the first possibility is *total rejection*. The second and opposite possibility is *wooden, unimaginative literalism*. There is a third and more judicious way, which is called *cultural transposition*".

Consequently, Stott (1992:206) sums it up as follows: "If we go in for total rejection, we certainly cannot obey God's Word. If instead we embrace a position of wooden literalism, our obedience becomes artificial and mechanical. Only if we transpose the teaching of Scriptures into modern cultural dress does our obedience become contemporary. Not disobedience, but meaningful obedience, is the purpose of cultural transposition".

Therefore, according to John Stott, the understanding of two definite horizons which are the recognition of reader's (interpreter's) cultural limitation and the cultural condition of the Bible, is the important key in considering the impact of cultural matters on biblical interpretation.

## 4.4 The process of hermeneusis in his sermons

### 4.4.1 *Definition of the process of hermeneusis*

While hermeneutics can be considered as a theological science, *hermeneusis* should be viewed as a process by which the interpreter seeks an answer to the question: What does God say through this text of ‘then and there’ to us in our concrete situation, here and now. In other words, after the preacher has grasped the meaning of the text, he should reflect the original meaning of the text in a contemporary context. Therefore, interpretation is the process of the fusion of the original meaning of the text and the text of life. Secondly, although Stott does not use the term ‘hermeneusis’ as such, he (1992:213) seems to understand that hermeneusis is more than an interpretation. The interpreter expounds the original meaning of the text; hermeneusis goes further and applies the meaning to the contemporary world. Venter specifies the above viewpoint in these terms: "the process of hermeneusis wants to deal with the meaning of the text then and there in the process of bridging the gap to today. By the process of hermeneusis is thus understood the crossing of the bridge of the sermon text, which is from a world thousands of years ago (then, there), to today (now, here) for people in their concrete life situation (1995, Class Lectures, unpublished) ". Coetzee (1995a:17) also says that “when we have clearly determined the relation with the original time, then we can carefully unwind it from that relation to bring the same Word of God across in another relation here in our times and apply it”.

Consequently, according to Stott, he does not clearly make a distinction between the hermeneutics and hermeneusis; he prefers using these two terms interchangeably with an extensive meaning.

### 4.4.2 *The task of hermeneusis*

Every preacher must be an interpreter of Holy Scripture technically speaking. His task involves two steps, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Even though it is important to understand what the text meant to its original hearers, it is equally necessary for him to grasp what the text conveys to the existential believer today. Stott (1992:215) says: "having discerned its original meaning, we need next to reflect on its contemporary message (how it applies to people today). Even though the terms exegesis and interpretation are used interchangeably by some modern theologians (cf. Lloyd-Jones; Carson; Kaiser; etc.), John Stott distinguishes between those two stages, as we have already mentioned in chapter 3.

In this sense, hermeneusis is considered even "more demanding than bare exegesis" (Dunn, 1982:113). The task of hermeneusis, according to John Stott, is to seek an answer to the question: What does God say through this text of 'then and there' to us today in our concrete situation, 'here and now'? Stott (1992:215) states that "if we grasp the original meaning of a text, without going on to grapple with its contemporary message, we surrender to antiquarians, unrelated to the present realities of the modern world". Zuck (1991:13) also declares that "if we fail to apply the Scriptures, we cut short the entire process and have not finished what God wants us to do".

Ultimately, Stott (1982b:69) concludes that "we must wrestle with the text, with both its meaning and its application, because Scripture does not give us slick answers to complex twentieth century problems". Here we have the charge of interpreting the Scriptures, although the task of hermeneusis is difficult.

#### *4.4.3 The essential elements in his process of hermeneusis*

##### 4.4.3.1 Indicative, imperative, and promise

In the process of hermeneusis three important elements are required for bridge-building. Coetzee (1985:18-21) declares: "there is a growing consensus in homiletics and exegetical circles that in Christian biblical preaching there must be two essential elements, that is, the proclaiming of God's indicative and His imperative, and a serious plea to make the intrinsic addition of a third element in biblical proclamation and therefore in the authentic preaching, namely the element of promise".

In 1982 Stott wrote *'You can trust the Bible'*, a book which addressed God and the Bible, Christ and the Bible, The Holy Spirit and the Bible, The Church and the Bible and The Christian and the Bible. He paid particular attention to the process of hermeneusis in the last chapter, the Christian and the Bible. Stott (1982:81-82) illustrates: "all the teaching of the Bible can be divided into these three categories, requiring these three responses. For throughout Scripture there are revelations of God demanding our worship, promises of salvation demanding our faith, and commandments about our duty demanding our obedience"

Therefore, the preacher must inquire about the indicative, the imperative and the promise in the text, because hermeneusis deals with the meaning of the text 'then' in bridging the gap to 'today'.

#### 4.4.3.1.1 The indicative

By the “**indicative**” is meant everything that God (Jehovah) did for us, over us, and with regard to His creation presented to His earthly life and eternal life (Coetzee, 1985:18). God makes Himself, His will, His deeds and His works, known throughout the whole Bible. Stott (1982:82) elaborates on God’s self-disclosure in the Bible: as the Creator of the universe and of human beings in His own image, the climax of His creation; as the living God who sustains and animates everything He has made; as the covenant God who chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants to be His special people; and as a gracious God who is slow to anger and quick to forgive, but also as a righteous God who punishes idolatry and injustice among His own people as well as in pagan nations.

So, as regards the biblical indicative to be handled in the sermon, it ought to include creation, maintenance and merciful redemption and rightful judgement in time. Especially, it has to deal with the salvation of the person, i.e., the ministry of salvation of the triune God, that One and same God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. God reveals Himself as the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who sent Him into the world to take our nature upon Him, to be born and grow, live and teach, work and suffer, die and rise, occupy the throne and send the Holy Spirit. Venter (1995:14) suggests what the question should be asked; Where does the indicative lie in this sermon text?

We can find this fact in Stott’s hermeneutics, that is, the indicative as one element or the process of hermeneusis, offers the explanation (*explicatio*) from the text for the bridge-building. For example, just as human artists disclose themselves in their painting, sculpture, or music, so God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible and especially in Christ in order that we may glorify Him. Moreover, God imparts His will to us as a standard for our lives in order that we may serve Him in the right manner. The majestic revelation of God (Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit), which unfolds from the creation to the consummation, moves us to worship. When we catch these glimpses of the greatness of God, of His glory and grace, we fall down on our faces before Him to bring Him the homage of our lips, our hearts, and our lives. The Word of God evokes the worship of God (Stott, 1982b:83).

What is the purpose of the disclosure of God as *explicatio* in the indicative? The answer is not just to teach us, but to save us; not just to instruct us, but specifically to

instruct us "for salvation" ( 2 Tim. 3:15). In the other words, it deals especially with the salvation of the person in the preaching.

#### 4.4.3.1.2 The imperative

By the '**imperative**' is meant the demands that God makes. Stott (1982b:86) says that when choosing a people for Himself, God told them what kind of people He wanted them to be. As they were a special people; He expected a special level of conduct from them. So He gave them the Ten Commandments as the summary of His will, which Jesus underlined in His Sermon on the Mount, uncovering their disturbing implication. We are under the obligation to keep His law, and we want to do so (Stott, 1982b:87). Thus, our Christian freedom, is freedom to obey, not to disobey. As Jesus said several times, if we love Him we shall keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21-24; 15:14).

According to Coetzee(1985:19), the demands are based on three foundations: (1) God is the Creator - (He created everything perfectly; consequently, He demands that we obey His words every time); (2) God is the merciful Supporter and must therefore receive thankful and obedient service, and (3) God is a merciful and infinitely loving Father who has the right to expect spontaneous service and worship from His converted peoples.

Therefore, all preachers are to ask a question, such as: Where is the imperative in the sermon text? The imperative in the Bible is based on the indicative and comes forth from the indicative. What demands are set to us in this text, based on God's indicative? What must we as believers do practically on the grounds of God's grace and equipment in our lives? (Venter, 1995:15).

#### 4.4.3.1.3 The promise

By the '**promise**' is meant the holy, merciful and just God's trustworthy promises of blessing and punishment, for now, for tomorrow and for ever (Coetzee, 1985:21). The promise contains blessings as well as threats. Stott (1982b:85-86) declares that you have a key in your bosom called Promise, for God has given it to you in the Scriptures. We have to learn to abide in perplexity on the promise of His guidance, in fear on the promise of His protection, in loneliness on the promise of His presence. God's promises of salvation can strengthen our hearts and minds.

On the contrary, Stott (1991a:173) affirms the above-mentioned as follows: "finally will come the time of *retribution*, in which the Lord Christ will defeat and destroy the Antichrist, and those who believed the Antichrist-lie will be condemned. This is God's programme".

In consequence, if we believe in Jesus Christ who has saved us from sin and death and if we obey Him, we will receive His promised blessing, that is, salvation and our inheritance of Heaven from God, the Father. But if we do not believe in and obey His words, we will be punished.

Therefore, the aspect of the sound promise often leads to the eschatological dimension in the text (Venter, 1995:15). So we have to ask the question: does a promise emerge from the text of this sermon?

To sum up, the preacher also should inquire about the indicative, the imperative and the promise in the text, because hermeneusis deals with the meaning of the text 'then' in bridging the gap to 'today' as John Stott does. A sound system of homiletics is constituted by the totality of the given text through hermeneusis.

#### 4.4.3.2 The revelation of God (Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit)

##### 4.4.3.2.1 Preamble

In the process of hermeneusis, the expositor must primarily try to find that which the author reveals of God, in other words, what the particular text reveals about God, i.e., His will, His mercy, His wrath, etc., and about His grace in Christ, about His work within us. Venter (1995:14) says that "the entire Bible is centred on being God's revelation. If this centre qualifies the entire Bible, it also qualifies a sermon text. A sermon text must contain the revelation of God". So, he suggest that we ask: "What does God make known of Himself, His will, deeds, works? And than ask: "How does the grace and redemption of God come to the fore in this sermon text?" and "What is God working in this person? Does he work with this sermon text in us: conversation, perseverance, happiness, love, new life, etc.?".

##### 4.4.3.2.2 The revelation about Father, God

Stott (1972a:14) points out that "God reveals Himself by both works and words as the same way that we reveal or disclose ourselves to one another by things we do and

say". The "God-disclosure's principle" binds the Old and New Testament together as a unity of Promise (O.T) and Fulfillment (N.T). Firstly, God made Himself known to Israel in their history (O.T), and so directed its development as to bring down them alternately blessing His salvation and condemning His Judgement. Thus, He rescued the people from their slavery in Egypt; He brought them safely across the desert and settled them in the promised land; He preserved their national identity through the period of judges; He gave them kings to rule over them, despite the fact that their demand for a human king was in part a repudiation of His own kingship; His judgement fell upon them for their persistent disobedience when they were deported into Babylonian exile; and then He restored them to their own land and enabled them to rebuild their nationhood and their temple. Above all, for us sinners and for our salvation, He sent His eternal Son, Jesus Christ, to be born, to live and work, to suffer and die, to rise and to pour out the Holy Spirit. Through these deeds, first in the Old Testament story but supremely in Jesus Christ, God was actively and personally revealing Himself (Stott, 1972a:18). At the same time, God has revealed His activity and Himself in the written Word and in Christ as a climax in the completion of the revelation.

Therefore, the interpreter should try to find God's self-disclosure in His activity and words, and then in the works of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Because it pleased God to reveal Himself within our history gradually with more clarity until He made known Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word (the Logos), finally and sufficiently and fully (Heb. 1:1) (Coetzee, 1995a:14).

#### 4.4.3.2.3 The revelation about the Son, Jesus Christ

In the Old Testament the revelation of Christ is not always clearly distinguishable. But there are several God's picture of Christ. For example, the sacrifices in the Old Testament foreshadow that perfect sacrifice for sin made once for all upon the cross - the sacrifice of Christ for our redemption. Another example is the teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament who foretell the coming of the Messiah. They speak of Him as a king of David's line, during whose kingdom there will be peace, righteousness, and stability. They write of Him as 'the seed of Abraham' through whom all nations of the world will be blessed. They depict Him as the 'suffering servant of the Lord' who will die for the sins of His people, and as 'the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven', whom all peoples will serve. All this rich imagery of Old Testament prophecy bears witness to Christ (Stott, 1972a:30).

The revelation-historical lines should be noted in order to recognise Christ in the Old Testament. If a preacher does not do his hermeneusis carefully with a view to the Christ-revelation, every sermon from the Old Testament will be 'concluded' with a simultaneous reference to 'Christ on the cross'. However, this type of reference should flow organically from the text and account for the fullness of the fulfilment in Christ (Van der Walt, II 1996:1).

We should trace in a revelation-historical way how God in His self-disclosure in the Old Testament works towards the coming of the Christ in the New Testament. In this way the unity between Old and New Testament will be acknowledged and maintained. In Luke 24:27 Christ Himself speaks in His educational words to the men of Emmaus: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Van der Walt, II 1996:3-4). Stott mentions that "It was the consistent teaching of Jesus that Old Testament Scripture was God's Word bearing witness to Him, for example, He said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day' (Jn. 8:56. AV). Or here in John 5:46 He says, 'Moses ... wrote of me'. Again, 'the Scriptures ... testify of me'(v.39)"

Revelation of God in His grace in Christ is the act of God's wonderful love. Through Him the revelation of God's salvation has been fulfilled in our present dispensation.

#### 4.4.3.2.4 The revelation about the Holy Spirit

Van del Walt (I 1996:11) points out that "the Holy Spirit is the presenter of Christ". What Spirit does a continuation of the work of Christ (1 Cor. 2:13); He continues the work of Jesus Christ and develops (unfolds) it, as is typical of the nature of the Spirit's work (Gen. 1:2). This is the guarantee to the apostles that they will be able to fulfill their task as witness of Christ. Stott (1972a:34) says that "He (Jesus) promised them (Disciples) the Holy Spirit to reminded them of His teaching and supplement it, leading them into all the truth" (Jn. 14:25-26; 16:12-13). In order to clarify it, Stott (1992:370) cites in the word of *The Manila Manifesto*, "The Spirit of God ... sends us out in our turn to be Christ witnesses. In all this the Holy Spirit's main preoccupation is to glorify Jesus Christ by showing him to us and forming him in us".

In fact, The Holy Spirit works with the fruit of the work of Jesus, therefore He glorifies Christ. The Spirit brings to the foreground the meaning of Jesus' work. For this Spirit disposes of the entire treasure of Father and Son.

Consequently, in the process of hermeneusis we can find the revelation of the trinity God as the essential element of hermeneusis, that is, God is the author of the revelation that has been given, Jesus Christ is its principal subject, and the Holy Spirit is its agent. So, the expositor must always consider the revelation of God Himself in the text of the Bible which is the witness of the father to the Son through the Holy Spirit.

#### 4.4.3.4 Conclusion

In the process of Stott's hermeneusis, we can find some important elements; the act of hermeneusis should naturally expose the revelation of God that the author has in the text, because the entire Bible is centred on being God's revelation which leads us to serve and worship, the promise which includes that salvation and punishment today, tomorrow and for ever. This will stimulate our faith so that we will obey His commandments which express His will and demand our obedience. And then, the indicative, imperative and promise are found throughout the Holy Scripture and must be incorporated in the sermon. There must also be a balance between the indicative and the imperative.

### 4.5 Stott's contribution to hermeneutics

4.5.1 From our study of John Stott's hermeneutical principles in general (4.1) we can find a distinction between the term *hermeneutics* and the term *hermeneusis*, that is, the hermeneutics is the sub-discipline which theoretically researches, tests and determines the principles and rules for the practical exegesis. And then the hermeneusis is the process of determining the original meaning of the text in the contemporary context after the preacher has grasped the meaning of the text. Stott (1992:214-215) always tries to apply the original meaning of the text to the situation of today. After he has found the intention of the author from the text by asking a question, i.e. what does it mean?, he also asks the other question; what does it say? That is, having discerned its original meaning (which is fixed by its author), we need next to reflect on its contemporary message (how it applies to people today). In recent decades, a number of influential writers, as we have discovered in Stott's critical field of interpretation (4.3.2) - not only in the field of theology but also in philosophy and literary criticism - have protested that this distinction does not hold. It has been argued, for example, that if we do not know how to apply a command of Scripture to our daily lives, then we cannot really claim to know what that

passage means. To reject the distinction between meaning and application seems an extreme position, but there is no doubt a measure of truth in it.

4.5.2 From our study of Stott's characteristics of the hermeneutical principles (in 4.2) it can be concluded that Stott does not use new hermeneutical principles, but he reminds one afresh of the time-honoured principles of hermeneutics as follows:

- 1 His principles of hermeneutics are not arbitrary. They are derived from the character of the Bible itself as God's written Word, and from the character of God as revealed in it.
- 2 He looks for the *natural* meaning because he believes that God intended His revelation to be a plain and readily intelligible communication to ordinary human beings.
- 3 He looks for the *original* meaning because he believes that God addresses His word to those who first heard it, and that it can be received by subsequent generations only in so far as they understand it historically.
- 4 He looks for the *general* meaning because he believes that both God and His revelation is self-consistent.

Therefore, his three principles of hermeneutics (simplicity, history and harmony) arise partly from the nature of God and partly from the nature of Scripture as a plain, historical, consistent communication from God to humanity.

Each of his characteristic principles of hermeneutics is not only common but also an immutable rule in the biblical interpretation. Nobody dares to refute its validity; however, what is characteristic in Stott's case is that he does apply them to the hermeneutical practice in his actual preaching.

4.5.3 From our study of Stott's criticism about some wrong principles and methods of interpretation (in 4.3.2) it can be learnt that Stott never accepts the principles and methods of liberal circles but maintains those of the Reformation.

4.5.4 From our study of the hermeneutical principles (4.2) and methods (4.3) of John Stott's preaching in this chapter 4, we can find his particular hermeneutical contributions as follows:

- 1 Stott's hermeneutics of Scripture is remarkably clear and simple. In fact, it almost appears that he has no use for or need of the modern liberal doctrine and practices of hermeneutics, he rather criticises them. Stott deals with the Bible with integrity, attempting to let Scripture judge him rather than he judges Scripture. He attempts to find the message of the writers, and does not inject his message into the text (4.1.4.2).
- 2 One of the most practical contributions by John Stott to the modern art of preaching is his redemptive approach. In Scripture there is a message from God. Scripture contains all that is necessary to know for our salvation (4.3.3).
- 3 For John Stott it is very clear that the only originality or creativity shown is in the terminology, "three teachers, the basic principles of interpretation", and the dual definitions of each principle. His description of his method is well organised and defined; it reflects his keen, analytical mind and seasoned practical of trying to clear up complicated truths in a simple manner. All of this critique is to his credit (4.2.1; 4.2.2).
- 4 Stott uses an acknowledged and consistent method of interpretation: namely, the historical and grammatical method. He makes the most of it, considering the imperfect resources at his disposal. He strives to place each passage in its historical and cultural setting. He knows how to take into account the distinct characteristics of each book of the Bible. He looks for the original meaning of the text in its context, and then in the special sense that the sentences, the phrases and the words assume, under the pen of the different sacred authors (4.3.4; 4.3.5; 4.3.6).
- 5 According to Stott, the issue of cultural relevance is an important one because of the two tasks of the interpreter: to determine what the text mean to its immediate readers in that cultural setting, and to determine what the text means to us now in our context (4.3.8). His principle of the cultural transposition is useful in determining which cultural practices and situations, commands and precepts in the Bible are transferable to our culture.
- 6 To John Stott it is very clear that the order of first employing the analogy of (antecedent) Scripture as we have seen in 3.6.1 of chapter 3, and then using the analogy of faith in the summary of each of the main points of a sermon, is of primary importance. He often resorts to proof drawn from an analogy of faith (4.3.7.1).
- 7 Finally, from our study of this chapter as a whole we can learn that the sound hermeneutical principles and methods used by John Stott does are of great importance because they give us a method not only for discovering the

accurate meaning of the text but also for applying the message concretely to the contemporary situation. If the preacher follows John Stott's hermeneutical principles and methods, he will fearlessly stand in the pulpit with God's Word and God's people before his eyes, expects God's voice to be heard and obeyed without hesitation.

#### **4.6 Stott's contribution to hermeneusis**

4.6.1 From our study of the task of John Stott's hermeneusis (4.4.2), it can be concluded that Stott never neglects his concern about bridging the gap between the biblical world and the contemporary situation. Stott (1961:31-32) stimulates us to make greater efforts as follows: "Even when the text is understood, the preacher's work is only half done, for the elucidation of its meaning must be followed by its application to some realistic modern situation in the life of man today". So the preacher has to listen humbly to Scripture and critically to modernity in order to relate the one to the other. Such listening (Stott calls it 'double listening') is an indispensable preliminary to preaching (Stott, 1992:216).

His faithful observation of these basic proceedings in hermeneusis helps him to be the well-known preacher he is. Here again the sound principle of Stott is not only to teach the basic methods, but also to demonstrate how a preacher moves from interpretation to application in his preaching.

But Stott's contribution on this point is to insist in the traditional opinion of hermeneusis as the Reformers did. Traditionally, interpreters always ask a question; what the passage means to us?, that is, the present significance of the passage as emphasising our need to see the relevance of the 'then' passage in our own context today.

4.6.2 From our study of Stott's essential elements in the process of hermeneusis (in 4.4.3) it can be concluded that the preacher must consider the indicative, the imperative and the promise in the text, because hermeneusis deals with the meaning of the text 'then' in bridging the gap to 'today'.

4.6.2.1 In the process of hermeneusis (4.4.3.2), Stott considers the Father, the God who makes known His Self-disclose, His sovereignty, His plan for our redemption, His will, His deeds and His works. He also proclaims

Jesus Christ who is the Redeemer and Saviour, as well as the Holy Spirit who is working in the believers' lives in the process of hermeneusis. In other words, He deals with the ministry of salvation of the Trinity of God, that One and same God, Father , Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the revelation of the Triune God in an expository sermon should be stressed one as the important elements.

4.6.2.2 Stott (4.4.3.1) explains that there is a growing consensus in the process of hermeneusis that in the Biblical preaching there must be two essential elements, i.e. the proclaiming of God's indicative and His imperative. Coetzee (1985:18-21) adds: "There is a serious plea to add the intrinsic third element in Biblical proclamation, and therefore in authentic preaching, namely the element of promise".

- 1 Stott (4.4.3.1.1) stresses that the interpreter must consider the biblical indicative in which includes His creation, maintenance and merciful redemption in time as well as rightful judgement in time in process of hermeneusis.
- 2 Stott (4.4.3.1.2) emphasises that the preacher should find the demands God makes as imperative in the process of hermeneusis. We are under an obligation to keep His law, and want to do so.
- 3 Stott (4.4.3.1.3) declares that God will give us His blessing as the sincere promise by the way our faithfully keeping His law and commandments. On the contrary, if we do not obey His statutes and His Word, God will punish us now, tomorrow and for ever.



## CHAPTER 5: THE HOMILETICAL PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF JOHN R.W. STOTT'S PREACHING

### 5.1 His homiletics in general

#### 5.1.1 Preamble

As we have already studied two processes of the action of writing a sermon (3.1), we now turn to the third step, the process of Stott's homiletics, which here means the building of the sermon, using the building blocks provided by the exegesis and hermeneusis. In the third step, characteristic principles of his preaching, we will deal with the whole question of the relationship of exposition to the sermon. In this chapter we will pay particular attention to his homiletical principles and methods by analyzing his own sermons, and then evaluate the basic constituents of his expository sermon. We will research the homiletical principles and methods through a deeper study of his theory and practice from his homiletical books and his own sermons.

Therefore, in concrete, in the first section the following issues will be examined:

- \* His general view on preaching
- \* His definition of expository sermon
- \* The theological foundations of his preaching

#### 5.1.2 His general view on preaching

##### 5.1.2.1 The importance of preaching

Preaching is a fundamental element of Christian practice which has played an integral role during the history of the Church. The Judeo-Christian tradition has been full of notable apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-preachers, and the most important spiritual turning points in modern history have occurred in conjunction with great preaching.

John Stott is deeply aware of the fact that we are living in an age in which everything is questioned, and among these things are the place, value, importance and the purpose of preaching. Stott (1982a:92) points out that expository "preaching is extremely rare in today's Church. Thoughtful young people in many countries are

asking for it, but cannot find it. Why is this? The major reason must be a lack of conviction about its importance".

Stott has an extremely high view of preaching. He maintains that historical issues of the greatest magnitude are decided by preaching. He says the fact that "preaching is central and distinctive to Christianity has been recognised throughout the Church's long and colourful story, even from the beginning" (Stott, 1982a:16). Spurgeon also supports it: "The pulpit is the thermopylae of Christendom. It has not done everything; it is not intended to do everything; but it has done a great deal" (Pike, 1992: III:184). Lloyd-Jones (1982:9) puts a wholly uncompromising emphasis on the fact that "the most urgent need in the Christian church today is true preaching, and as it is the greatest and most urgent need in the church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also". Packer also underscores this aspect of the importance of preaching as follows: "the preaching of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit is the activity that brings the Father and the Son down from heaven to dwell with men" (Packer, 1986:2).

In his book, *I believe in preaching*, Stott (1982a:47) points out two points in the portion on 'the glory of preaching': 'A historical sketch': "First, it demonstrates how long and broad the Christian tradition is which accords great importance to preaching ... Secondly, ... the Christian consensus down the centuries has been to magnify the importance of preaching".

Stott thinks that preaching is one of the most important and essential factors in Christianity. Thus, he puts preaching in the centre of his pastoral ministry and has spent his whole life in order to feed His people through the Word of God, that is, the expository sermon. Stott (1982b:68) stresses that "the church needs constantly to hear the Word of God. Hence the central place of preaching in public worship". And then the aim of all preachers must be to study and to expound the Word of God, to relate it to the modern world. Whenever he has an opportunity to speak in meetings and conferences, he does not hesitate to preach the Word of God. Of course, the purpose of Stott's preaching is the glorification of God. This objective of preaching provides a foundation and purpose for Stott's preaching which is not based on man's response. It is also closely related to his deepest beliefs about the nature of sermon.

### 5.1.2.2 Preaching as a divine activity

Stott views preaching as a divine activity. This indicates where a sermon comes from, that is, the message of the preacher is always based on the Word of God and comes from God. Stott (1961a:30) says that "in the ideal sermon it is the Word itself which speaks, or rather God in and through His Word". Stott's greatest service to preaching is the restoration of the biblical understanding of preaching - God speaking. Preaching is not merely a discourse by a human being but it is God Himself speaking to individuals through preachers. Cobin (1989:18,19) says that "preaching is not religious discourse to a closed group of initiates, but an open and public proclamation of God's redemptive activity in and through Jesus Christ".

Stott likes to preach the gospel of God's grace. He (1961a:34,35) says that "the Christian preacher is both steward and herald. In fact, the good news he is to herald is contained within the Word of which he is the steward, for the Word of God is essentially the record and interpretation of God's great redemptive deed in and through Christ. The Scriptures bear witness to Christ, the only Saviour of sinners".

Therefore, a good steward of the Word is bound to be also a zealous herald of the good news of salvation in Christ. When Jones (1946:19) emphasised the importance of preaching, he mentioned that "preaching is a means to begin God's work of the redemption in the heart of His people". Dr. Mounce (1960:153) writes "preaching is that timeless link between God's great redemptive Act and man's apprehension of it. It is the medium through which God contemporizes His historic Self-disclosure and offers man the opportunity to respond in faith". So we can sum it up in the words of Stewart (1946:5), "preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God".

In fact, Stott preaches the message of God with power because he preaches it with this conviction, that is, God saves sinners by means of His great grace through preaching. He says (1961a:29) that "this is real authority. True, it is an indirect authority. It is not direct like that of the prophets, nor like that of the apostles, who issued commands and expected obedience (e.g., Paul in 2 Th. 3), but it is still the authority of God. It is also true that the preacher who declares the Word with sovereignty is under that Word and must submit to its supremacy himself".

Stott's own conversion resulted from his hearing preaching. As we have seen in chapter 2, when studying Stott's career, he was converted by Mr. Nash's preaching

when he was seventeen years old in 1938 (2.1.2.1). Stott was really converted and overwhelmed by the power of God to change men's lives through the Word of God (preaching). This fact imprinted upon him the importance of the human and divine elements in preaching.

Consequently, the true preacher is careful first to make a thorough and thoughtful proclamation of God's great deed of redemption through Christ's cross, and then to issue a sincere and earnest appeal to men to repent and believe (Stott, 1961a:58).

### 5.1.2.3 Preaching as a human activity

Stott emphasises that preaching is a divine activity, as well as a human activity. It is most important that both the preacher and the congregation should be aware that, in His work of communicating with people, God uses human beings as fellow-workers. God has sought the co-operation of human beings in carrying on His work of salvation which He has completed through His son Jesus Christ. God has chosen to use people for the task of spreading the Gospel to the whole world. The preacher is God's agent who brings His message to the people. God encounters human beings through the preaching activity. Stott (1992:211) says that "the church needs 'pastors and preachers' (Eph. 4:11) to expound or open up the Scriptures, and the ascended Christ still gives these gifts to His church". Stott recognises that God speaks to His people by Himself through the written Word, as well as by His servants, the preachers through their preachings. Therefore, in addition to the text, God gives the teachers (preachers) the ability to open up the text, explaining it and applying it to people's lives (Stott, 1992:212). Simeon (1959:188) says that "ministers (preacher and teacher) are ambassadors for God and speak in Christ's stead". He continues by stating: "If they preach what is founded on the Scripture, their word, as far as it is agreeable to the mind of God, is to be considered as God's. This is asserted by our Lord and his apostles. We ought therefore to receive the preacher's word as the Word of God Himself" (Simeon, 1959:189).

Stott's view that God continues to communicate through the Word, proclaimed by His preachers, as found in the Scripture which is the Word of God, reflects his high regard for the preacher's role in the church.

Stott (1961a:70-76) also acknowledges the significance of the personal element in preaching. He pays great attention to preparing himself. He believes the secret of great preaching is in a great theme, born out of personal experience. He seems to preach

nothing which he has not personally apprehended. Stott (1961a:70,71) says that "by 'experience' I do not mean experience of the preaching ministry or experience of life in general, necessary as these are to the preacher. I mean rather a personal experience of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the first and indispensable mark of the Christian witness (preacher)".

Therefore, Stott (1961a:74) insists upon the importance of personal experience for effective preaching: "In our preaching, we do not just expound words which have been committed to our stewardship. Nor do we only proclaim as heralds a mighty deed of redemption which has been done. But, in addition, we expound these words and proclaim this deed as witness, as those who have come to a vital experience of this Word and Deed of God".

This stance enables Stott to preach with bold authority and directness. The preacher's message, however clear and forceful, will not ring true unless he speaks with the conviction of experience.

Finally, in the task of preaching Stott has a place for human imagination and talent as long as everything is done in subjection to the Word of God and as long as the preacher is aware that with all the talent used in preaching, he is only giving voice to the Word which is not his own. Because the sermon is not only meant to speak to the understanding but also to the heart.

Thus, for Stott preaching is both God's activity by His speaking through the preacher and man's activity taking place through persons, preaching to other persons. God's activity and man's activity in the process of preaching belong together and they cannot be separated from each other. When God speaks through human beings it does not reduce the signification of His message or Word. God is gracious enough to continue to communicate on the human level, through human beings and through human words.

### *5.1.3 His definition of expository sermon*

Generally speaking, preaching is a living process involving God, the preacher, and the congregation. In this regard Stott was not first author to attempt to define preaching or to define expository sermon more closely. There have been several types of preaching throughout the history of the Church. For example, in his famous book, *The craft of the sermon*, Sangster (1954:2) distinguishes between three main kinds of sermons and

assigns a chapter to each, although he adds that 'the range of combinations is almost infinite'. The first is defined 'according to subject matter', the second 'according to structural type' and the third 'according to psychological method'. Apart from these distinctions, there are other classifications of preaching - topical, textual, evangelistic, apologetic, prophetic, ethical and doctrinal sermons.

The term 'expository preaching' is heard more frequently now than in previous years. Consequently, so many preachers have attempted to define this term.

In general, the term expository sermon means that a preaching text is taken from Scripture, interpreted and unfolded by sound, acknowledged exegetical methods in its context, through a process of hermeneusis, and homileisis is applied to the hearers in their concrete circumstances.

Chapell (1994:129) mentions clearly that "the technical definition of an expository sermon requires that it expound Scripture by deriving from a specific text main points and subpoints that disclose the thought of the author, cover the scope of the passage, and are applied to the lives of the listeners".

According to Robinson (1986:20), "expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers".

Barnhouse (1963:XI) says that "expository preaching is the art of explaining the text of the Word of God, using all the experiences of life and learning to illuminate the exposition".

Liefelt (1984:112) indirectly defines: "the true expository sermon will combine a faithful explanation of the passage in proper balance with and relationship to its application".

Vines (1985:7) defines 'expository preaching' as "one that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it round a central theme and main points, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners".

Stott believes that a sermon should always be expository. He (1982a:125) says that "it is my contention that all Christian teaching is expository preaching". In support of his

emphasis on preaching as bridge building, the author describes the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world.

John Stott (1982a:125) states that "I cannot myself acquiesce in this relegation (sometimes even grudging) of expository preaching to one alternative among many". He (1982a:125) continuously emphasizes that "all true preaching is expository. Of course, if by an 'expository' sermon is meant a verse-by-verse explanation of a lengthy passage of Scripture, then indeed it is only one possible way of preaching, but this would be a misuse of the word. Properly speaking, 'exposition' has a much broader meaning. It refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary)" (Stott, 1982a:125).

Stott insists that if it is to be authentically Christian, it must be expository, but in his famous homiletic book, *I believe in preaching*, he does not exactly define expository preaching. In an other publication, *The contemporary Christian*, he defines an expository sermon as "opening up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and God's people obey him" (1982a:135; 1992:208). Although Stott gives this a simple definition of expository preaching, he includes two important elements of preaching in his elucidation. The first one is an explanation of the text, the other one is an application. So Liefelt (1984:6) succinctly defines that "expository preaching is explanation applied. Without practical application, exposition is mere description". In fact, the pastor makes a serious and sincere attempt to unfold the actual grammatical, historical, contextual, and theological meanings of a passage. He should then seek to make the meaning of that passage relevant to the lives of his hearers. To do that he must properly organize, adequately illustrate, and forcibly apply its message.

For this reason, Stott stresses that an expository sermon includes the interpretation of the Bible and the application. To preach is to connect the unchangeable Word of God to the kaleidoscope of life in the modern world. In a word, according to Stott, expository preaching is to make plain what the Bible passage says and to give a sound application to the lives of the hearers. In addition, Stott (1961a:53) says that "God not only confronts men through the preacher's proclamation; He actually saves men through it as well". Here he emphasizes the function and the role of a sermon.

Therefore, Stott (1992:286) finally enforces the necessity of the expository sermon: "Nothing is more necessary today, either in the tired churches of the West or in the

vibrant churches of many Third World countries, than a faithful and systematic exposition of Scripture from the pulpit".

#### *5.1.4 The advantages of the expository sermon*

According to Liefelt (1984:10-12), it can be summarized by the following statements: (1) "The first advantage is that we can be more confident of preaching God's will when we preach His Word; (2) The second is a corollary of the first. Expository preaching we are confined to biblical truth. Subjectivism is minimized; (3) The third is that as we preach through Scripture we proclaim the 'whole counsel of God' rather than ride our favorite 'hobby horse'; (4) Fourth, the context of a passage usually includes its own application; (5) A fifth is that Scripture often provides a literary structure that can form the basis for a sermon outline. (6) A sixth and very helpful advantage of expository preaching is that we can include touchy subjects in the course of sequential exposition without being obtrusive; (7) Finally, it is true that expository preaching gives the preacher a fine opportunity to model Bible study.

Stott (1982a:315) emphasizes that a preacher can get three benefits when he follows the practice of systematic exposition, that is to say, of working steadily through a book of the Bible or a section of a book, either verse by verse or paragraph by paragraph.

The first advantage of this scheme is that it forces us to take passages which we might otherwise have overlooked, or even deliberately avoided. In other words, it covers a variety of subjects and needs without suggesting that the preacher is singling out individuals. Moreover, it breaks the bonds of preachers preference. It has a built-in variety, particularly when consecutive expository preaching is done from a book or number of chapters (Baumann, 1978:103).

The second asset of an expository sermon is that people's curiosity is not aroused as to why we take a specific text on a particular Sunday. Stott (1982a:315, 316) shows this clearly by giving an example. He has never previously preached on the subject of divorce, although he has been in the pastoral ministry for twenty-five years. He had steered clear of the topic because it is a burning contemporary issue, as well as a difficult and complex subject. But when he led his congregation through the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5: -7:), here staring him in the face was Matthew 5:31,32. He could not possibly skip those verses and so began his sermon about the topic of divorce. He recalls that "if I had suddenly, out of blue, preached on divorce, my congregation would inevitably have wondered why. But as it happened, their

attention was not distracted by such questions. They knew that I was seeking to expound Matthew 5:31.32 only because they were the next consecutive verses in the sermon series" (Stott, 1978a:92-99).

The third one is that the thorough and systematic opening up of a large portion of Scripture broadens people's horizons, introduces them to some of the Bible's major themes, and shows them how to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Alexander (1988:230-250) supports this matter by saying the following: "Expository preaching ensures the highest level of Bible knowledge for the flock, ... allows for handling broad theological themes, and ... guards against misinterpretation of the biblical text".

Therefore, Stott has sincerely expounded the Bible, since he started his preaching ministry at All Soul's Church.

#### *5.1.5 The theological foundations of his preaching*

John Stott's approach to the pulpit ministry begins with his theology of preaching: "The essential secret (for effective preaching) is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions. In other words, theology is more important than methodology" (Stott, 1982a:92). For all that, he does not focus on preaching theology but he certainly preached theologically and his text is always applied to the conscience of sinners as well as saints.

Stott limits his discussion of the theology of preaching to five presuppositions concerning *the doctrines of God, Scripture, the Church, the pastorate, and the nature of preaching* as exposition. His intention is to marshal five theological arguments which underlie and reinforce the practice of preaching.

Therefore, in this subsection we will investigate the five arguments of his homiletical theology.

##### 5.1.5.1 The doctrines of God

While much can and should be said about the doctrine of God, three affirmations about His being, His action, and His purpose are particularly important. Stott's reason for his first mention of the conviction of God is that the kind of God we believe in determines the kind of sermons we preach (Stott, 1982a:93). Stott mentions the above

three elements to prove that the revelation about God is an important doctrine for all Christians and especially for preachers.

#### 5.1.5.1.1 God is light (I Jn. 1:5)

Stott uses the Johannine metaphor, 'God is light', to describe God as pure, true, and self-revealing. In fact, God is perfect in holiness, for often in Scripture light symbolizes purity. In the Johannine literature light more frequently stands for truth, as when Jesus Christ claimed to be 'the light of the world' (Jn. 8:12); he also told his followers to let their light shine on human society, instead of concealing it (Mt. 5:14-16). We may say then that just as it is the nature of light to shine, so it is the nature of God to reveal Himself.

Therefore, Stott (1982a:94) asserts that every preacher needs the strong encouragement which this assurance brings. Seated before us in the church are people in a wide variety of states, some estranged from others, perplexed, even bewildered, by the mysteries of human existence; yet others enveloped in the dark night of doubt and disbelief. We need to be sure as we speak to them that God is the light and that He wants to shine His light into their darkness (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4-6).

#### 5.1.5.1.2 His action

God's actions reveal Him to us not only as creator but also as redeemer, a God of grace and generosity. In the Old Testament the actions of God are revealed to save His people from their sins and enemies. But the New Testament focuses on another redemption and a new covenant, which it describes both as 'better' and 'eternal'. For these were secured by God's most mighty acts, namely the birth, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ (Stott, 1972:123; 128-130).

Therefore, the God of the Bible is a God of liberating activity, who came to the rescue of oppressed mankind, and who thus has revealed Himself as the God of grace and generosity (Stott, 1982a:94).

#### 5.1.5.1.3 God has spoken

Further, God has interpreted His actions to humanity verbally in Scripture (Stott, 1972b:19). Unfortunately, the modern theological tendency is to lay much emphasis on the historical activity of God and to deny that He spoke; to say that God's self-

revelation has been in deeds not words, personal not presuppositional; and in fact to insist that the redemption is itself the revelation. But this is a false distinction, which Scripture itself does not disclose. Instead, Scripture affirms that God has spoken both through historical deeds and through explanatory words, and that the two belong indissolubly together. Even the Word made flesh, the climax of God's progressive self-revelation, would have remained enigmatic if it were not that He also spoke and that His apostles both described and interpreted Him (Stott, 1981f:12,14).

The deeds should not be proclaimed apart from the words which explain them. Here then is a fundamental conviction about the living, redeeming and self-revealing God. It is the foundation on which all Christian preaching rests. We should never presume to occupy a pulpit unless we believe in this God. How dare we speak, if God has not spoken? (Stott, 1982a:96).

Consequently, to address a congregation without any assurance that we are bearers of a divine message would be the height of arrogance and folly. It is when we are convinced that God is light (and so wanting to be known), that God has acted (and thus made Himself known), and that God has spoken (and thus explained His actions) (Stott, 1976b:40).

#### 5.1.5.2 The Scriptures

We have mentioned in chapter 3 Stott's doctrine of Scripture as the foundation of exegesis. The relationship between this doctrine and the preacher needs to be noted. He points out three arguments to show a very firm and sincere belief (conviction) of all preachers in the Bible.

##### 5.1.5.2.1 Scripture is God's written Word

Stott emphasizes (1976:9) the Bible as 'God's Word written' which is an excellent definition of Scripture. Because it is one thing to believe that God has acted, revealing Himself in historical deeds of salvation, and supremely in the Word made flesh. It is another to believe that 'God has spoken', inspiring prophets and apostles to interpret his deeds. It is yet a third stage to believe that the divine speech, recording and explaining the divine activity, has been committed to writing. Yet only so could God's particular revelation become universal, and what he did and said in Israel and through Christ be made available to all people in all ages and places. Thus the action, the speech and writing belong together in the purpose of God.

Stott (1982a:98) insists on the relevance of this doctrine of the Bible to our ministry of preaching. The task of the preacher is to “relay with faithfulness to the twentieth century ... the only authoritative witness there is, namely God’s own witness to Church. Furthermore, all preachers need to keep together in their preachings the saving acts and the written words of God. The true preacher is both a faithful steward of God’s mysteries (who is dutifully guarding and dispensing His Word, 1 Cor. 4:1,2) and a fervent herald of God’s good news (who is proclaiming good news of salvation)”.

Finally, the task of all preachers is to lift up their voices and make God’s mysteries and good news known to others, and also themselves to enter ever more deeply into an understanding and experience of these truths

#### 5.1.5.2.2 God still says today what He has spoken throughout the ages since Creation

Stott (1982a:100,102) emphasizes that Scripture is a living word to living people from the living God, a contemporary message for the contemporary world. Once we have grasped the truth that ‘God still speaks through what He has spoken’, we shall be well protected against two conflicting errors. The first is the belief that, though it was heard in ancient times, God’s voice is silent today. The second is the claim that God is indeed speaking today, but that His Word has little or nothing to do with Scripture. The first leads to Christian antiquarianism, the second to Christian existentialism. Safety and truth are found in the related convictions that God has spoken, that God speaks, and that His two messages are closely connected to one another, because it is through what He spoke that He speaks. We believe Dr. Packer is right to express that the most satisfactory model is to describe it thus: "The Bible is God preaching" (Stott, 1982a:103).

Therefore, Stott grasps both Scripture and preaching in the same theological pattern of thought. According to the Reformers, God is *Deus Loquens*, a speaking God. How does God speak? Answer: Preaching is the Word of God. The Reformers celebrated the oral character of the gospel. Reinhold Seeberg sums up the Reformation insight: “The Reformation ... laid its emphasis on the word ... By Word of God was meant primarily not the language of the Bible, but the orally proclaimed biblical truth” (Buttrick, 1994:21). We are suggesting that, for the Reformers, preaching was the Word of God and that, in a way, Scripture was also the Word of God insofar as it proclaimed the same gospel message. Finally, we mention ‘*The second Helvetic*

*Confession*' about the reformer's views on preaching: "The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good" (Cochrane, 1965: 1).

#### 5.1.5.2.3 God's Word is powerful

Stott (1982a:103) believes that God does continue to speak through what He has spoken, but also when God speaks He acts. His Word does more than explain His actions; it is active in itself. God accomplishes His purpose by His Word; it prospers in whatever He sends it forth to do (Isa. 55:11).

Forsyth (1967:3, 15, 56) says "the gospel is an act and a power: it is God's act of redemption... A true sermon is a real deed... The preacher's word, when he preaches the gospel and not only delivers a sermon, is an effective deed, charged with blessing or with judgment". This is because it brings dramatically into the here and now the historic redemptive work of Christ.

Therefore, we have to enter the pulpit with the powerful Word of God in our hands, heart and mouth. We expect results. We look for conversions. As Spurgeon puts it in one of his addresses to pastors: "so pray and so preach that, if there are no conversions, you will be astonished, amazed, and broken-hearted. Look for the salvation of your hearers as much as the angel who will sound the last trumpet will look for the waking of the dead! Believe your own doctrine! Believe your own Saviour! Believe in the Holy Spirit who dwells in you! For thus shall you see your heart's desire, and God shall be glorified" (Spurgeon, 1960:187).

Yet to believe in the explosive power of God's Word should be enough in itself to make an effective preacher out of every person who is called to this privileged ministry.

#### 5.1.5.3 The Church

First of all, "the Church, Stott (1982b:63,64) defines, is the 'new humanity', the vanguard of a redeemed and renewed human race ... In reality, however, the Church is

us - a disheveled rabble of sinful, fallible, bickering, squabbling, stupid, shallow Christians, who constantly fall short of God's ideal, and often fail even to approximate to it".

Stott (1982a:109.114) links his ecclesiology to preaching at one point: the Church was created by the Word of God and remains dependent upon the Word. He agrees with Lloyd-Jones who says any decline in the Church is always linked with a decline in the quality of preaching. Both men draw the conclusion that the decline in preaching caused the decline in the church, though neither adequately proves this sequence (Lloyd-Jones, 1971:24). But Dargan (1985:13) confirms this view: "Decline of spiritual life and activity in the churches is commonly accompanied by a lifeless, formal, unfruitful preaching, and this partly as cause, partly as effect. On the other hand, the great revivals of Christian history can most usually be traced to work of the pulpit, and in preachers' progress they have developed and rendered possible a high order of preaching".

We will now investigate in more detail Stott's confidence in the Church as the theological foundation for his preaching.

#### 5.1.5.3.1 The Word of God created the Church

Stott (1982a:110; 1982a:66,67) stresses that "the Bible may be said to have created the church. Or, more accurately, the Word of God (which is now written in the Bible) created the church". Because the people of God may be said to have come into existence when his Word came to Abraham, calling him and making a covenant with him. Similarly, it was through the apostolic preaching of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost that the people of God became the Spirit-filled Body of Christ (1990:60).

God's Word (the combined witness of prophets and apostles), proclaimed in the power of the Spirit, created the church. It still does. The church is built on that foundation. And when the canon of the New Testament came to be determined, the church did not confer authority on these documents, but simply acknowledged the authority they already possessed. Why? Because they were 'apostolic' and contained the teaching of the Lord's apostles.

For these reasons, we may truthfully say that the Bible (that is, the Word of God now written in the Bible) created and maintains the church.

#### 5.1.5.3.2 The Word of God sustains the Church

The Creator always sustains what He has created, and since He has brought the church into existence, He keeps it in being. Moreover, having created it by His Word, He sustains and nourishes it by His Word. If it is true "that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3, quoted by Jesus in Mt. 4:4), it is also true of churches. They cannot flourish without it. The church needs constantly to listen to the Word of God. Hence the central place of preaching is public worship. Preaching is not an intrusion into it but rather indispensable to it. For the worship of God is always a response to the Word of God. First God speaks His Word (in Scriptural sentences, readings, and expositions), and then the congregation responds in private and personal confession, creed, praise, and prayer. The Christian congregation grows into maturity in Jesus Christ only as they hear, receive, believe, absorb, and obey the Word of God (Stott, 1982b:68). Because the church has a place in God's plan to give His people a right understanding of His Word (Stott, 1972a:162).

Finally, Stott (1991:179) says that "it is the Bible in the church which can develop our Christian stability, and so strengthen us to withstand the pressures of persecution, false teaching and temptation". In fact, God's people live and flourish only by believing and obeying His Word.

To sum up: a major reason for the Church's decline in some areas and immaturity in others is the weakness of the pulpit. So if the church which was created by the Word of God is to flourish again, there is no greater need than a revival of faithful, powerful, biblical preaching.

#### 5.1.5.4 The pastorate

The link between the Scriptures and the Church is a pastoral one. Stott (1982a:116) points out that "these are some of the trends which have contributed to the contemporary loss of clerical morale", that is, the professional Christian ministry was taken over by the state (e.g. in medicine, education and social welfare) and every member of the church has a gift and therefore a ministry. This being so, some think a professional ministry is no longer necessary.

In this situation, Stott (1982a:116,117) emphasizes most strongly that "it is urgent to reassert the New Testament teaching that Jesus Christ still gives overseers to his

Church and intends them to be a permanent feature of the Church's structure (1 Tim. 3:1)". Moreover, in seeking to reestablish this truth, it would be helpful simultaneously to revive for these overseers the New Testament designation of 'pastor'. Because the Lord Jesus Christ called himself 'the Good Shepherd' even city-dwelling Christians will always think of him as such, and his pastoral ministry (with its characteristics of intimate knowledge, sacrifice, leadership, protection and care) remains the permanent model for all pastors.

Pastors are shepherds whose task it is to feed the sheep, i.e., to teach the Scriptures to the people. Jesus recommissioned Peter with the repeated instruction 'feed my lambs' and 'feed my sheep' (Jn. 10:9; 21:15,17). This command the apostles never forgot. 'Tend the flock of God that is your charge' Peter himself wrote later, while Paul addressed the elders of the Ephesian church with the words, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians (or overseers), to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood" (1 Pe. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

If today's pastors were to take seriously emphasis of the New Testament on the priority of preaching and teaching, they would not only find it extremely fulfilling themselves, but it would also undoubtedly have a very wholesome effect on the church.

Stott acknowledges C. H. Dodd's word which separates preaching (Kerygma) from teaching (Didache), but he says Dodd pushed the distinctions too far. Three Bible texts were offered where it was said of Jesus or Paul that they both preached and taught. Stott's conclusion is the pastor must also do both functions (Stott, 1982a:118, 122).

#### 5.1.5.5 Preaching

As we have previously mentioned in our study of his definition of preaching (5.1.3), he has always been keen on expository preaching. The major contribution of Stott's theological chapter in *I believe in preaching* (the other name: *Between two worlds*) is his discussion of the expository sermon.

#### 5.1.5.5.1 Exposition sets us limits

Exposition sets limits by restricting the preacher to the points made within the text, since expository preaching is a biblical sermon. The preacher's text is invariably taken from God's Word. Killinger (1985:14) says that "normally the preacher who wishes to preach biblically will launch his sermon from a particular segment of Scripture". Stott quotes the words of Coggan in order to emphasize it: "The Christian preacher has a boundary set for him. When he enters the pulpit, he is not an entirely free man. There is a very real sense in which it may be said of him that God Almighty has set him his bounds that he shall not pass. He is not at liberty to invent or choose his message: it has been committed to him, and it is for him to declare, expound and commend it to his hearers ... it is a great thing to come under the magnificent tyranny of the Gospel" (Coggan, 1978:46,48).

#### 5.1.5.5.2 Exposition demands integrity

The preacher must study the text faithfully in order to grasp the original meaning the author has meant in the text. Killinger (1985:16) stresses that "... it is important that he (the preacher) studies each text carefully before attempting to organize a sermon on it".

Much preaching fails at this initial stage because preachers often assume that they know the meanings of texts they have read and used before. So Stott (1982a:127) says that "not everybody is persuaded of this (demanding of integrity). It is commonly said that the Bible can be made to mean anything one wants - which is true only if one lacks integrity".

Stott (1982a:127,128) takes a lesson from the sixteenth-century Reformers: "They emphasized that what every Bible student must look for is the plain, natural, obvious meaning of each text, without subtleties. What did the original author intend his words to mean? That was the question" (Stott, 1982a:127,128). Finally, Stott emphasizes this point as two quotations from John Calvin and Charles Simeon. Calvin said to the pastors of Geneva that "I have not corrupted one single passage of Scripture, nor twisted it as far as I know, and when I might well have brought in subtle meanings, if I had studied subtlety, I have trampled the whole lot underfoot, and I have always studied to be simple ... " (Cadier, 1960:173-5).

And Simeon wrote that "the author ... is no friend to systematizers in theology. I have endeavoured to derive from the scriptures alone my view of religion; and to them it is

my wish to adhere, with scrupulous fidelity; never wresting any portion of the Word of God to favour a particular opinion, but giving to every part of it that sense which it seems to me to have been designed by its great Author to convey" (Simeon, 1828: Vol. 1. 4-5).

#### 5.1.5.5.3 Exposition identifies the pitfalls

Exposition avoids the pitfalls we must at all costs, namely straying away from the text into other issues or twisting the text to say something alien to the author's intention. On the contrary, biblical expositors bring out of Scripture what is there; they refuse to thrust into the text what is not there. They pry open what appears closed, make plain what seems obscure, unravel what is knotted, and unfold what is tightly packed. In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a conventional introduction to a sermon on a largely different topic, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragtag of miscellaneous thoughts, but a master which dictates and controls what is said (Stott, 1981e:26).

Therefore, only the resolve to be a painstaking expositor will enable us to avoid these pitfalls.

#### 5.1.5.5.4 Exposition gives us confidence to preach

The preacher is not expounding his or her own opinions but rather God's Word. If we are expounding God's Word with integrity and honesty, we can be very bold. The true exposition increases that confidence and the sense of authority that grows out of it (Liefelt, 1984:10). This is not because we presume to regard our own words as an oracular utterance, but because like the ancient Jews we have been 'entrusted with the oracles of God' (Rom. 4:2), and because our overriding concern is to handle them with such scrupulous fidelity that they themselves are heard to speak, or rather that God speaks through them (Stott, 1982a:132).

Wingren (1960:201-3) expresses this admirably when he writes: "The expositor is only to provide mouth and lips for the passage itself, so that the Word may advance ... The really great preachers ... are, in fact, only the servants of the Scripture. When they have spoken for a time ... the Word ... gleams within the passage itself and is listened to: the voice makes itself heard ... The passage itself is the voice, the speech of God; the preacher is the mouth and the lips, and the congregation .... the ear in which the voice sounds ... Only in order that the Word may advance - may go out into the world,

and force its way through enemy walls to the prisoners within - is preaching necessary".

When we have done so with integrity, the voice of God is heard , and the Church is convinced and humble , restored and reinvigorated, and transformed into an instrument for His use and glory (Stott, 1982a:133).

#### 5.1.5.6 Summary

We have studied Stott's theological foundation of the ministry of preaching in this section. Such are the five major convictions that reinforce the practice of biblical preaching. To sum up, God is light; God has acted; God has spoken; and God has caused His action and speech to be preserved in writing. Through this written Word He continues to speak powerfully with a living voice. And the Church needs to listen with close attention to His Word, since its health and maturity depend upon it. So pastors should expound it; it is for this purpose that they have been called.

Therefore, these foundations for the ministry of preaching need to reinforce our trembling convictions. Then the current objections to preaching will not deter us. On the contrary, we will give ourselves to this ministry with fresh zeal and determination.

#### 5.1.6 *His preaching is pointing to Christ*

The central theme of the New testament is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Luther's preaching and theology we can see this theme which dominates throughout them. All of his preaching and books, especially *The cross of Christ* (1986a), centered around Christ's death on the cross and resurrection. Stott says (1982b:29-30) that "The Bible is God's picture of Jesus ... the Old Testament sacrifices foreshadow that perfect sacrifice for sin made once for all upon the cross - the sacrifice of Christ for our redemption ... When we move into the New Testament, Jesus Christ comes yet more clearly into focus. The Gospels are full of Him. They speak of His birth and of His public ministry, of His Words and works, of His death and resurrection, and His ascension and gift of the Holy Spirit".

He (1990:80) continues by saying the following: "They (apostles) concentrated on the cross and resurrection, both as historical happenings and as significant saving events ... They did not proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus in a vacuum, but in the context of Scripture and history". So making Christ the centre of preaching and

preaching the centre of worship is Stott's most lasting contribution to the theology of preaching.

According to Stott, preaching is distinct from any other form of public speech primarily because of its content. The content is the Word of God as found in the Bible- the written Word. The written word is the content of preaching because it is the prime witness, as well as the Apostles' testimony to the Christ-event. That is why preaching based on the Bible is able to make the Christ of history live for people.

For Stott preaching finds its significance in our union with Christ and in our participation in His righteousness. Stott (1990:81; 1975b:48) says that "It is not enough to 'proclaim Jesus'. For there are many different Jesuses being presented today. According to the New Testament gospel, however, He is historical (He really lived, died, rose and ascended the arena of history), theological (His life, death, resurrection and ascension all have saving significance) and contemporary (He lives and reigns to bestow salvation on those who respond to Him). Thus, the apostles told the same story of Jesus at three levels - as a historical event (witnessed by their own eyes), as having theological significance (interpreted by the Scriptures), and as a contemporary message (confronting men and women with the necessity of decision). We have the same responsibility today to tell the story of Jesus as fact, doctrine and gospel".

Christ, the *logos* (the Word - Jn.1:1) is the true revelation of God. As Christ He is the revelation, the centre and the heart of the Bible, He should be the sole content of preaching (Stott, 1982a:95; 1992:167). So, as we have seen in chapter 4, Stott's interpretation is governed by the redemptive approach (Christological) to the Scripture. That is why he can say very clearly, the Scripture contains nothing else than Christ and to have the Scripture without recognising Christ means to have no Scripture (Stott, 1985:73; 1989:323). Allmen (1962:24) supports Stott's argument by stating the following "The heart of the Scripture (what sums it up and makes it live) or the head of the Scripture (... what explains it and justifies it) ... is Jesus Christ. To read the Bible without meeting him is to read it badly, and to preach the Bible without proclaiming Him is to preach it falsely". This is what Stott expects from all modern preachers.

The Christ-centred sermon should be proclaimed through all preachers' obedience to the eternal, incarnated Word. This message has to be continually proclaimed and

heard until the Parousia; and the church will only be able to do this when it sees Christ as the crux of the Scripture and thereby the centre of preaching.

Moreover, the preacher's appeal is never that men should accept a theory about the cross but that they should receive a Person who died for them. To this end the preacher shall continue to preach Christ crucified, because what is folly to the intellectualist and a stumbling-block to the moralist, remains the wisdom and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24) (Stott, 1956:37).

Therefore, according to Stott the expository sermon must centre on the cross of Jesus Christ and the one who is called to preach must proclaim Christ because there is no other message from God.

#### *5.1.7 His preaching depends on the Holy Spirit*

We have already mentioned the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in his preaching (in 1.1.3.3 and 4.2.1.2). Stott always depends on the Holy Spirit when he has Bible study, in the whole process of the formulation of a sermon, and while he preaches the sermon, because the Holy Spirit is working by and with the Word in our hearts.

Since the ultimate aim of preaching is not to provide information (Piper, 1992:42), but to present people to the living God, Stott (1982a:329) believes firmly that "the greatest need of a preacher is to be clothed with the power" of the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim the Word of God strongly. In fact, the supreme need of our times is the proclamation of the message of God through the power of the Holy Ghost. He (1982a:285) also says that "Fire in preaching depends on fire in the preacher, and this in turn comes from the Holy Spirit. Our sermons will never catch fire unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our own hearts and we are ourselves' aglow with the Spirit" (Rom. 12:11).

A true response to the Word of God when preached is impossible except by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In his famous homiletic book, *I believe in preaching*, Stott (1982a:335) quotes the never-to-be-forgotten words of Spurgeon: "...We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were mysterious power going with it - the Holy Ghost changing the will of man. O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls

preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the word, to give it power to convert the soul”.

Stott (1982:140) also believes that the preaching is particularly applied by the Holy Spirit in specific cases. He states “if we are called to account for our practice of exposition without application, we piously reply that our trust is in the Holy Spirit to apply his Word to the realities of human life”. Actually, the application of the truth of the Word is always made by the Holy Spirit.

Stott (1982a:113) realises that the people are able to accept the message when the Holy Spirit moves them. In other words, when a message is transmitted in the power of the Holy Ghost, “the Holy Spirit is able to make it a living and powerful word in the hearts of our hearers”. So, the sermon in the power of the Spirit changes the audience’s mind from depravity and corruption into life and into newness of living. Unless the Holy Spirit is at work in our preaching, we cannot expect to convince our listeners of their sins and to humble them in the presence of God. When we present the light of God’s Word, His Spirit performs God’s purpose of warming, melting, and conforming hearts to His will. Chapell (1994:24) says that “when we proclaim the Word we bring the work of the Holy Spirit to bear on others’ lives”.

Venter (1995:11) emphasises that “the absolute requirement for the writing of a sermon is prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit inspires the Word of God. Therefore it is also the Holy Spirit that has to open the Word for the preacher and the preacher for Word. Also, it is the Holy Spirit that has to open the Word for the congregation and has to render the congregation receptive to the Word”. Therefore, Stott (1982a:88) earnestly exhorts us: “We need to pray more persistently and expectantly for grace from the Holy Spirit of truth. Because Christian understanding is not possible without His enlightenment nor is Christian assurance without His witness”.

For Stott the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit should be the power in the preacher and in the preaching. Thus, Stott has emphasised the power of the Holy Ghost in his sermon throughout his preaching career. That is why he has been such a brilliant preacher all his life. His good example has challenged all preachers to approach their task with a deep sense of dependence on the Spirit of God.

## 5.2 Stott's views on the preacher, his qualities and his attitudes

### 5.2.1 Preamble

We cannot divorce the preacher from his preaching. In a very real way the *man* is his *message*: the *preacher* is his *proclamation* and the *speaker* is his *sermon* (Gibbs, 1967:28). It is the man behind the message that determines its weight for in this, as in everything else, quality is to be preferred to quantity. It was this fact that Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). So, even though each of preachers is different their own characters and styles, "the individuality of preaching must be contextualized in holiness of life" (Robinson, 1994:vii).

First of all, Stott regards as the important ingredient of authentic preaching the involvement of the whole personality of the preacher. He seems to agree with the well-known definition of preaching given by Brookes that preaching is "truth mediated through personality". Lloyd-Jones's view of the same was put in this way: "In preaching all one's faculties should be engaged, the whole man should be involved"(Lloyd-Jones, 1982:81,82).

Stott stresses that it is more important to understand the identity and personality of the preacher, rather than to learn the skills and methods of the preaching. So he wrote a book, *The preacher's portrait*, which deals with the quality and the task of the preacher, that is, the essential preacher's portrait in the Bible. The composite picture of the preacher is built up from fragment or examples found throughout whole the Scriptures. Stott's guiding images of the preachers as a whole will prompt them to emphasise certain tasks of ministry and to minimise others. As Sproul (1986:122) urges all preachers: "We are all students, as well as teachers and preachers. Our own preparation must include the drive for understanding - remembering that we cannot teach what we don't first learn ourselves".

To sum up, the basic quality of a preacher has to be a good character because he cannot preach the Word of God without having an essentially pure personality when conveying God's truth to his congregation. In other words, the preacher must set a good example with no dichotomy between his preaching and his practice (Stott, 1992:285). As Bounds (1978:11) puts it, "the man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes

twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make a man". The famous preacher, Forsyth (1967:22) also stresses that "the sincere sermon is the true action of the preacher, so the personality of the preacher should show within his deeds".

Therefore, we can ask Stott: Which are the most important qualifications a preacher must possess before he can fulfil his role as a preacher adequately? We shall devote some time to Stott's consideration of the pre-requisites which are necessary to one who seeks to preach the Word of God.

### *5.2.2 The preacher who is portrayed in the New Testament*

#### *5.2.2.1 The preacher as a steward*

Through the metaphor of a steward, Stott wishes to describe the preacher's message and his authority. First of all, Stott negatively answers the important question which confronts the preacher, that is, "what shall I say, and whence shall I derive my message?"

Firstly, the Christian preacher is not a prophet. That is, he does not derive his message from God as a direct and original revelation (Stott, 1961a:11).

Secondly, the Christian preacher is not an apostle. Of course, the Church is 'apostolic', both in being built on the foundation of the apostolic doctrine and in sending his people into the world to preach the gospel (Stott, 1961a:13).

Thirdly, the Christian preacher is (or should be) neither a false prophet nor a false apostle. Although there are, strictly speaking, no prophets or apostles today, we fear that there are false prophets and false apostles. They speak their own words instead of God's Word. Their message originates in their own mind (Stott, 1961a:15).

Fourthly, the Christian preacher is not a 'babbler'. The essential characteristic of the babbler is that he has no mind of his own. The babbler trades in ideas like second-hand merchandise, picking up bits and pieces wherever he finds them. His sermons are a veritable ragbag (Stott, 1962:16,17).

Stott, however, emphasises that the Christian preacher is a steward as Paul has said (1 The. 2:3-4). Stott (1961a:23-32; 1992:38) points out four important facts about the

preacher in the stewardship metaphor: Firstly, the source of the preacher's incentive is that God commits His mysteries to him, that is, the preacher is a trustee of the secrets of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Secondly, the content of the preacher's message should come from God. So the preacher is not to provide and does not supply his own message by his own ingenuity but to proclaim a message which has been given to him by the householder, i.e., the God. Greidanus (1970:168) also points out that "the preacher must transmit the specific message of the preaching-text, because every preacher so easily adds his own thoughts to the text or encases it in his own framework". In the third place, the stewardship metaphor teaches us the nature of the preacher's authority. As Schippers (1944:17) says: "A steward never comes with his own authority or with his own message. He is backed by a higher power; he is the mouth-piece of his Lord. In like manner Christ stands behind the preachers of His Word with his authority".

When the preacher preaches the living Word of God, the living authority of God will be given to him. Only if the preacher has spoken to his congregation with the authority of God which he receives, they will hear the voice of God through his preaching. Here, then, is the preacher's authority. In the fourth place, the stewardship metaphor has a practical lesson to teach us about the necessity of the preacher's discipline. That is, the preacher needs the dogged discipline of Bible study day by day, as well as day after day. In other words, the preacher must spend time studying his text with painstaking thoroughness, meditating on it, wrestling with it, worrying at it as a dog with bone, until it yields its meaning.

Therefore, no secret Christian ministry is more important than its fundamental God-centredness. The stewards of the gospel are primarily responsible neither to the church, nor to its synods or to its leaders, but to God Himself (Stott, 1991a:50).

#### 5.2.2.2 The preacher as a herald

According to Stott, there are some metaphors for the preacher as a steward, as well as a herald in the New Testament. He (1961a:33; 1991a:54) says that "if the only New Testament metaphor for preaching were that of the steward, we might gain the impression that the preacher's task was a somewhat dull, prosaic and routine affair. But the New Testament is rich in other metaphors, and the chief among them is that of the herald charged with the solemn yet exciting responsibility of proclaiming the good news of God". Long (1989:25,26) emphasises that "what becomes truly important about preaching, viewed as an act of ministry, is the message, the news the herald

proclaims. A herald has but two responsibilities: to get the message straight and to speak it plainly".

Stott points out that the essential task of the preacher consists of two things, namely the proclamation and the appeal. The task of the preacher as a herald is to make the proclamation, the announcement of what God has done in order to reconcile us to Himself. The proclamation of which the preacher is a herald, is His deed which is gloriously done and absolutely finished, as well as His gift which may now be freely received. What the other duty of the preacher as a herald is to make the appeal by which he beseeches men to be reconciled to God. So the true herald of God is careful first to make a thorough and thoughtful proclamation of God's great deed of redemption through Christ's cross, and then to issue a sincere and earnest appeal to men to repent and believe (Stott, 1961a:58; 1982a:100). So the preacher must proclaim what Christ declares in the Word of God without any additions.

Stott (1961a:54) concludes by stating the following: "The great lesson the herald metaphor can teach us, as it is used in the New Testament, is that the proclamation and appeal belong together. We must not separate them".

### 5.2.2.3 The preacher as a witness

The third image for the preacher used in the New Testament is that of a 'witness'. Stott (1961a:60) asserts that "the concept of 'witness' in Scripture is considerably wider than either of these two ideas ( which include 'witness' and 'testify' added by writer), and it is important to think of the preacher as a 'witness' against the background of the whole scriptural teaching on the subject". Lloyd-Jones (1982:89) also insists that "the preacher is witness. That is the very word used by our Lord Himself, 'Ye shall be witness unto me'; and this is what the preacher must always be at all time. Nothing is so fatal in a preacher as that he should fail to give the impression of personal involvement".

It is essential for the witness to possess the basic quality of the Christian preacher, namely individual experience and humility. Because he must be able to speak from his own personal experience and not from hearsay, and then he as the witness will be used only as an agent of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Stott (1961a:74) stresses that "in our preaching , we do not just expound words which have been committed to our stewardship. Nor do we only proclaim as

herald a mighty deed of redemption which has been done. But, in addition, we expound these words and proclaim this deed as witnesses, as those who have come to a vital experience of this Word and Deed of God".

#### 5.2.2.4 The preacher as a father

This metaphor implies the important quality of the preacher as those of father, i.e. his gentleness and his love. In fact, they are indispensable to the preacher as portrayed in the New Testament (1 Th. 2:9-12).

Stott (1961a:80) emphasises that "in the 'father' metaphor the preacher becomes concerned about his family, about the people to whom he is ministering the word, and about his relationship to them".

Stott (1961a:82-99) infers the two remarkable characteristics of the preacher from the metaphor of the father. Firstly, *a father's authority is forbidden*. In other words, even though the preacher has authority over his congregation, this authority must not be used in order that his congregation should depend upon him, the same as the attitude of dependence which a child has towards his father. The preacher should help his congregation to achieve an independent, adult, spiritual maturity in Christ, but should not require them to be or become spiritually dependent on him. Secondly, *a father's relationship and affection*. That is, the preacher has to relate properly and rightly with his congregation and love them. The love is the chief quality of the father to which Paul refers when he uses the metaphor to illustrate his ministry to the Thessalonian Church; not a soft or sickly sentimentality, but a strong, unselfish love which cares and which is not incompatible with discipline (1 Th. 2:11-12) (Stott, 1991a:52-54).

According to Stott (1961a:87), a father's love will make us understanding in our approach. In the same way, it is when the preacher loves his people that they are likely to say of him, 'he understands us'. A father's love will make us gentle in our manner. Indeed, the preacher will need to be so tender that he seems more like a nurse with her babies than a shepherd with his lambs (Isa. 40:11; 1 Th. 2:7). The father's love will also make us simple in our teaching. Likewise, the preacher preaches his sermon easily and simply to his whole congregation. A father's love will make us earnest in our appeal. As Richard Baxter (1950:106, 145), wrote: "whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest ... Such a work as preaching for men's salvation should be done with all our might - that the people can feel us preach when

they hear us". A father's love will make us consistent in our example. Uniformly, the preacher must be an example to the flock (1 Pe. 5:3), because his congregation is bound to take a lead from him, not only as they listen to his sermons but as they look at his life.

Finally, a father's love will make us conscientious in our prayers. The preacher should pray systematically for his people, like the father for his children (1 Th. 2:11). Preachers will only make time for this hard and secret work if they love people enough (Rosscup, 1992b:78). "Because it is secret and therefore unrewarded by men, we shall only undertake it if we long for their spiritual welfare more than for their thanks ..." (Stott, 1961a:98,99). Praying and preaching go hand in hand.

To sum up, if His unfathomable and unquenchable love for people as Paul says in Php. 1:8 ('with the affection of Christ Jesus') could fill us, we could love our congregation with His love. And such love will make us care for our people, as a father cares for his children. Such love also will make us understanding and gentle, simple and earnest, consistent in our example and conscientious in our prayers.

#### 5.2.2.5 The preacher as a servant

Stott appears to accentuate the metaphor of the 'servant'. That is, the preacher is the servant through whom you believe, the agent through whom God works, or instruments by which He rouses faith in the hearers of the Word. Each preacher has a different task assigned to him, but the Lord works through each (Stott, 1961a:104,105).

It is only proper that the preacher should faithfully proclaim the message which has been entrusted to him and preach God's kerygma, which is Christ crucified, in the power of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the preacher as a servant must not preach his own message with divine power as it is to preach God's message (Stott, 1961a:119).

#### 5.2.2.6 Summary

The most important issues emphasised by Stott in his book, *The preacher's portrait*, are not the craft, communication and delivery of the sermon, but even more basic things - the preacher and his task itself.

Stott is concerned about the preacher's message and his authority, the character of the proclamation he is called to make, the vital necessity of his own experience of the Gospel, the nature of his motive, the source of his power, and the moral qualities which should characterise him, notably humanity, gentleness and love.

### *5.2.3 Stott's viewpoint about the qualifications of a preacher*

#### **5.2.3.1 The experience of regeneration**

We find that Stott has considered the qualifications required by the man who will stand as a preacher in the church's pulpit.

First of all, the preacher must be a truly regenerated believer in Jesus Christ. He should be a part of God's redeemed family (Jn. 1:12-13). If a man is to deliver a personal message from the heavenly Father effectively, he must be a legitimate spiritual son or the message will inevitably be distorted (Mayhue, 1992:14,15).

According to Stott, it is so important that the preacher has a conviction born of experience, as well as a personal experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Because these experiences are "the first and indispensable marks of the Christian witness. He cannot speak from hearsay ... He must be able to speak from his personal experience" (Stott, 1961a:71). Nederhood (1986:45) also says that "conversion is the fundamental prerequisite for the performance of any Christian service". Stott (1961a:76) continues by stating: "The preachers' words, however clear and forceful, will not ring true unless he speaks from the conviction born of experience. Many sermons which conform to all the best homiletical rules, yet have a hollow sound".

Therefore, before a preacher can confidently preach to people he must follow a personal way of life by which his faith is constantly regenerated. Ideally he should also go through the vital experience of Jesus Christ Himself, as well as of the Words and deeds of God.

#### **5.2.3.2 The calling of God**

The preacher should be a person with a calling from God for the ministry. In other words, the preacher has to be appointed and gifted by God to the preaching ministry (Eph. 4:11-16) (Lloyd-Jones, 1982:100-120). All Christians are saints by calling, but not all are preachers by calling (1 Cor. 1:2). Nederhood (1986:34) says that the

preacher “should know what the call is, and should be sure that he has it; else he should get out of the ministry ... A minister who is sure of his calling is among the most poised, confident, joy-filled, and effective of human beings. The obvious fact in a calling from God is that the ministers are not only ‘men of God’, but all Christians should be that (women as well)”. For the preacher of today is really nothing more than an ordinary member of the church of Jesus Christ who is called to express His nature as man of God in an especially high degree.

Stott (1992:136, 137) insists that the preacher (pastor) must be called by God for his ministry. In the same way all Christians are set apart in order that each does the work and performs the task set him by God. Because God is interested in the whole life, and to be a farmer, craftsman, magistrate or housewife, etc. is just as much a divine calling as to be a ‘priest’ or ‘pastor’. Baumann (1978:34) also says that "it is true any follower of Christ is called to sonship and discipleship". Stott (1992:136) agrees with the Reformers and Puritan’s insistence that every Christian man and woman has a divine calling, but rejects the teaching of medieval Catholicism that bishops, priests, monks and nuns have a superior, because a ‘religious’, calling.

The following statement regarding the way the concept of a calling operated during the puritan period is enlightening: “The call was to the individual, but it was to serve in a social institution. God’s calling to an individual to be a magistrate, for example, had meaning only insofar as the office of magistrate in the divinely ordained state served the commonwealth. The calling of a minister was to accept the office to preach the gospel in the church of God, and the calling of a father only had meaning as it related to an office in the family” (Spykman, 1981:55).

According to Stott, the calling must not distinguish between the layman’s and the pastor’s, but the particular ministry to which God calls us is likely to be determined by our gifts.

Therefore, the preacher is called to proclaim the Word of God, his life is an expression of obedience to this one central task. Paul declares that he is "called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). And so it has been with every true preacher. The impulse to preach comes from God.

#### 5.2.3.3 Holiness

Holiness is the very purpose of our election, as well as one of the very important qualifications which equip the preacher for his life task. The preacher must lead a holy life, because the practice of preaching can never be divorced from the person of the preacher (Stott, 1982a:265). Moreover, his effectiveness and power as a preacher will be directly connected to his piety, i.e., his holy life.

Bonar (1966:281) asserts this matter positively as a quotation from McCheyne's statement: "In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, the preacher will be the success. It is not great talents which God blesses so much as a great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God".

Stott (1961a:120) asks a question: "How can we become channels for the power of the Holy Spirit?" And then he answers: "I believe there are two essential conditions: holiness and humility". Consequently, he (1961a:120) accentuates that "if any man covets the honour of being 'a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work', then he must see to it that he 'purifies himself from what is ignoble' (2 Tim. 2:21). None but holy vessels are employed by the Holy One of Israel".

However, Christian holiness is not an artificial human accretion, but a natural process of fruit-bearing by the power of the Holy Spirit (Stott, 1970:143). So Stott (1961a:119) exhorts all preachers to entrust themselves utterly to the Holy Spirit so that they may become holy as God is holy.

#### 5.2.3.4 Humility

If the holiness is the one indispensable mark of the true Christian preacher, humility is the other. Stott (1961a:77) points out the preacher's danger: "Every preacher knows the insidious temptation to vainglory to which the pulpit exposes him. We stand there in a prominent position, lifted above the congregation, the focus of their gaze and the object of their attention. It is a perilous position indeed". Baumann (1978:41) also points out that "one of the occupational hazards of the preacher is pride". It is only proper that the preacher (Pastor) should humble himself before God and men. Because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Pe. 4:5; Pr. 3:34).

Stott notes three elements required by the preacher's humility. First of all, the preacher needs humility to submit himself to the Word of God. An essential element in Christian humility is the willingness to hear and receive God's Word. Perhaps the greatest of all our needs is to take our place again humbly, quietly and expectantly at the feet of Jesus Christ, in order to listen attentively to His Word, and to believe and obey it. For we have no liberty to disbelieve or disobey Him" (Stott, 1992:184). Such a receptive and expectant attitude before God's revelation is not only proper: it is also productive. For, as Jesus plainly stated, God hides His secrets from the wise and the erudite, and reveals them instead to little children, that is, to humble, open-hearted seekers of the truth (Mt. 11:25). Secondly, the preacher is vulnerable at the very moment when in the pulpit he is exalting the glory of Christ, because in reality he can be seeking his own glory. In other words, when the preacher is exalting the congregation to praise God, and is even ostensibly leading them in praise, he can be secretly hoping that they will spare a bit of praise for him (Stott, 1982a:321). In fact, the chief effect of every sermon should be to unveil Christ, and the chief art of the preacher is to conceal himself (Tizard, 1958:40,41).

All preachers need humility to remain quietly in the background. Then the Lord will speak, and the people will hear Him; the Lord will manifest Himself, and the people will see Him; and, hearing His voice and seeing His glory, the people will fall down and worship Him. Thirdly, the ultimate humility of the effective preacher is a complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Every preacher desires to be effective but many rely on themselves. Spurgeon (1973:122) says that "it is better to speak six words in the power of the Holy Ghost than to preach seventy years of sermons without the Spirit". Stott (1982a:330) persuades us: "In order to be exalted and used by God, we have first to humble ourselves under His mighty hand (1 Pe. 5:6). in order to receive his power, we have first to admit, and then even to revel in, our own weakness. Therefore, our greatest need as preachers is to be 'clothed with power from on high' (Lk. 24:49)".

In summary, a humble mind (being submissive to the written Word of God), a humble ambition (desiring an encounter to take place between Christ and His people), and a humble dependence (relying on the power of the Holy Spirit) - they are essential elements of which a preacher's humility should consist.

#### 5.2.3.5 Sincerity

Stott (1982a:262) emphasises that all preachers should be sincere because they are personally committed to their message. He (1982a:262) points out that "the sincerity of a preacher has two aspects: he means what he says when in the pulpit, and he practises what he preaches when out of it. In fact, these things belong inevitably together since, as Richard Baxter (1950:162) put it, 'he that means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks'".

Brooks (1969:5;28) supports this matter as follows: "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching ... Preaching is the bringing of truth through personality ... The truth is in itself a fixed and stable element; the personality is a varying and growing element".

According to Stott, as Brooks mentions above, the sincerity must be proved by the preacher as having the balance between his personality and message, and the coincidence with his life and preaching. Baxter (1950:162) first indicates what the preacher has mistaken and then persuades him as follows: "It is a palpable error in those ministers that make such disproportion between their preaching and their living, that they will study hard to preach exactly and study little or not at all to live exactly ... We must study as hard how to live well as how to preach well".

Consequently, all preachers must lead their lives and perform their tasks in all sincerity. In addition, the practice of preaching must not be divorced from the personality of the preacher.

#### 5.2.3.6 Earnestness

Stott (1982a:273) defines both the sincerity and the earnestness as follows: "To be sincere is to *mean* what we say and to *do* what we say; to be earnest is, in addition, to *feel* what we say". Earnestness is a deep feeling, and is indispensable to preachers. The preacher must maintain his mind and emotion. We must not be polarised between the mind and feeling. He (1992:123) says: "It is the combination of truth and tears, of mind and emotion, of reason and passion, of exposition and appeal, which makes the authentic preacher". Lloyd-Jones (1982:97) shares his conviction that truth and passion (earnestness) are essential ingredients of Christian preaching. In his moving book, *Preaching and preacher*, he also says that "logic on fire! Eloquent reason! Are

these contradictions? Of course they are not. Reason concerning this truth ought to be mightily eloquent, as you see it in the case of the Apostle Paul and others. It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology, or at least the man's understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire".

Therefore, Stott (1982a:285) says that "Fire in preaching depends on fire in the preacher, and this in turn comes from the Holy Spirit. Our sermons will never catch fire unless the fire of the Holy Ghost burns in our own hearts and we are ourselves 'aglow with the Spirit' (Rom. 12:11)".

#### 5.2.3.7 Courage

Stott (1982a:299) emphasises that "there is urgent need for courageous preachers in the pulpits of the world today, like the apostles in the early Church who 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness' (Acts 4:31)". Accordingly, Stott (1979b:286) says that clarity and courage remain two of the most crucial characteristics of authentic Christian preaching. For they relate to the content of the message preached and to the style of its presentation. Some preachers have the gift of lucid teaching, but their sermons lack solid content; their substance has become diluted by fear. Others are bold as lions. They fear nobody, and omit nothing. But what they say is confused and confusing ... What is needed in the pulpits of the world today is a combination of clarity and courage". Brooks (1969:59) also stresses this matter by stating: Courage "is the indispensable requisite of any true ministry ... If you are afraid of men and a slave to their opinion, go and do something else. Go and make shoes to fit them. Go even and paint pictures which you know are bad but which suit their bad taste. But do not keep on all your life preaching sermons which say not what God sent you to declare, but what they hire you to say. Be courageous. Be independent".

As Stott has studied the faithful men of God who were courageous in the history of the Church, he realises that God uses the man who proclaims the Word of God without being afraid, in spite of the opposition to the gospel and the betrayal and the persecution of Christian minister by forces of evil (Stott, 1982a:300-305).

Therefore, all preachers need to be courageous men in order to declare boldly the message of God to unbelievers.

### 5.3 His characteristic form of preaching

#### 5.3.1 *The biblical text of a sermon*

##### 5.3.1.1 A prerequisite for preaching

As we have seen in Stott's selection of the text for exegesis in Chapter 3 (3.7.1), Stott thinks that by definition expository preaching should begin with the explanation of a text itself in the Bible. For him the text is not merely the starting point from which he may proceed to proclaim his own ideas, but it is the sole source of his preaching (Keith, 1975:252). If the preacher is to speak for God, he must of necessity go to the place where God has spoken most clearly, i.e., the text of the Bible. Stott (1982a:213) stresses that "we shall have a text, for we are not speculators, but expositors". Karl Barth (1963:9) has caught this relationship: "Preaching is the Word of God which He Himself has spoken; but He makes use, according to His good pleasure, of the ministry of a man who speaks to his fellowmen, in God's name, by means of a passage from Scripture.

From the beginning to the end what he preaches comes out of the specific text in the Bible, for Stott (1982a:323) believes that it alone is the origin of the authority and the power of his sermon. Morgan (1980:40) supports Stott's claim: "Why have a text? Three reasons: First, the authority that is in the text as being a part of the Word of God; second, the definiteness which it must give, when properly dealt with, to the Christian message; and finally, the maintenance of variety".

Therefore, according to Stott, all preachers will avoid, either adding to Scripture according to their own speculations, or subtracting from the Bible in compliance with their own predilections. Although a sermon may be a right and good one, it may have this weakness in that it does not start with a subject or a thought. The theme or the doctrine in a sermon must come from the text and its context.

Stott (1982a:322,323) says that "some preachers find the Bible flat, so they try to freshen it up with their own effervescence. Other find it insipid, so they try to season it with a little of their own relish. They are unwilling to take it as it is; they are forever trying to improve it with bright ideas of their own. But this is not the preacher's task". In fact, a sermon should start with a text of the bible which has in it a doctrine or a theme. At same time that doctrine should be dealt with in terms of this particular setting (Lloyd-Jones, 1982:72). Spring (1986:127) sums it up, in a word, "the

preacher's subject is never a bad one, so long as it is taken from the Bible. Hoekstra (1976:219), too, affirms: "The source for the material of the ministry of the Word is Scriptura sola et Scriptura tota".

Consequently, the preacher who wants to prepare an expository sermon must select the text for a sermon from the Bible before anything else. The whole concern of Stott's sermon is to make people concentrate upon the message which his text contains. Dargan (1985, III:459) states that Stott is one of the strongest preachers at heart of the twentieth century by expository preaching: "To Stott the Bible is the textbook for the pulpit, and in the context of liturgical worship such expository preaching complements and endorses what the worshipper confesses increedal statement. This is where authority is found and made articulate in modern dress, for the preacher has no other source of power".

#### 5.3.1.2 Selecting the text for a sermon

How is a preacher to choose texts? Texts are sometimes chosen out of our regular reading, sometimes in order to deal with some special need, sometimes in order to definite doctrinal teaching, and sometimes because of their revelation of great things. Morgan wrote: "From my own experience I may say that in the regular reading of the Bible devotionally, there will constantly be discovered some one text, some one statement, some one verse, which grips". Stott and Lloyd-Jones seem to be followed Dr. Morgan's method of selecting the text.

Stott (1982a:183) himself reads the whole Bible through every year, the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice by McCheyne's '*Bible Reading Calendar*'. Stott's pattern of reading the Holy Scripture has been to take three chapters each morning, if possible reading two and studying the third, and to keep the fourth chapter for the evening. The above mentioned McCheyne schedule was recommended to Stott by Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd-Jones (1982:172) has subsequently written in *Preaching and preacher*, "I would say that all preachers should read through the whole Bible in its entirety at least once every year ... that should be the very minimum of the preacher's biblical reading". Such study should be open-minded; one's own prejudices should be put aside to receive what the Scriptures are really saying. It should also be expectant; the Bible can freshen the reader and banish spiritual stableness (Catherwood, 1985:36).

All preachers must not read the Bible to find the text for their next sermon, but read it to get the food that God has provided for our soul. Lloyd-Jones (1982:172) emphasises that “one of the most fatal habits a preacher can ever fall into is to read his Bible simply in order to find texts for sermons... Do not read the Bible to find texts for sermons, read it because it is the food that God has provided for your soul’s nourishment and well-being”. When he reads and studies the Bible in this way, he will easily find as he is reading and studying that a particular statement stands out and, as it were, touches him, and speaks to him and immediately suggests a sermon to him.

Brooks (1969:159,160) also says that the preacher "must not be always trying to make sermons, but always be seeking truth, and out of the truth he has won the sermons will make themselves". Stott (1982a:182) says that "we have to make time to penetrate the text until it yields up its treasures. Only when we have ourselves absorbed its message, can we confidently share it with others". Daane (1980:61) supports this matter by noting the following: "Having heard the message of the text selected, a minister will be ready to go, eager to construct a sermon, free to submit to, and to bend to the purpose of the sermon"

Consequently, if we are regular Bible students, and keep notes of our study, then our memory becomes like a well-stocked food cupboard, and biblical texts are lining up, asking to be preached on (Stott, 1982a:214). So a preacher should be in touch with the real world; the best preachers are always diligent pastors.

### 5.3.1.3 The memorandum of a sermon is based on the biblical text

Lloyd-Jones emphasises his experience that put the memorandum of a sermon down on paper by stating: “For many years I have never read my Bible without having a scribbling-pad either on my table or in my pocket; and the moment anything strikes me or arrests me I immediately pull out my pad”. Stott also likes to write some senses and ideas from the chosen text of the Bible in his notebook and a ‘common place book’ when he reads and studies it. And then he tries to formulate on his own the meaning of the text. Because when God Himself speaks to him through a text of Scripture, and it becomes luminous or phosphorescent to him, it is then that it continues to grow with divine glory when he seeks to open it up to others (Stott, 1982a:219). In other words, sermons which emerge from deep personal conviction have a rich self-authenticating quality.

Stott also never loses the opportunity to apply his life experiences to the text, so he has a confidence that the “blood-streak of experience”( called by Stalker) can apply in our daily lives as the basis of his sermon. He (1982a:219) says that "I wonder if your experience resembles mine. My mind is usually enveloped in a fairly thick fog, so that I do not see things at all plainly. Occasionally, however, the fog lifts, the light breaks through, and I see with limpid clarity. These fleeting moments of illumination need to be seized. We have to learn to surrender ourselves to them, before the fog descends again. Such times often come at awkward moments, in the middle of the night, when somebody else is preaching or lecturing, while we are reading a book, even during a conversation. However inconvenient the time, we cannot afford to lose it. In order to take fullest advantage of it, we may need to write fast and furiously".

Therefore, for Stott the importance of putting some senses and its idea from the text in writing is to stimulate his mind yet further and it comes in handy in the formulation of his sermon.

### *5.3.2 The introduction of the sermon*

The main body of the discourse being prepared, in order to its delivery, two very important matters require attention: First, introduction, that is, how to call the attention and prepare the mind of the hearers to the consideration of the theme; second, conclusion, that is, how to fasten the truth upon the conscience so as to produce the results which it is intended to produce (Morgan, 1980:80).

John Stott does not treat the introduction and the conclusion of his sermon lightly, on the contrary, he regards them as of great importance. In fact, the introduction and the conclusion have a significance in a sermon out of proportion to their length. So in the introduction of Stott’s sermon we can find certain basic methods and essential principles he usually follows and recommends.

#### 5.3.2.1 The length of the introduction of a sermon

It is sufficient that an introduction is completed in "one or two minutes" (Davis, 1977:188), for the sermonizer cannot expect an audience to be interested in a sermon unless he knows how to say what he has to say quickly, briefly, plainly and to the point. A lengthy introduction tires the people. Daane (1980:74) says that "if it is too long, it will upstage the sermon". So it is enough for an introduction to introduce the theme (Evans, 1979:71; Vines 1985:139), to capture the hearers’ attention, and orient

the audience to the theme. According to Stott (1982a:244), an introduction should be "neither too long nor too short". He adds: "A really lengthy introduction detracts from the sermon itself and transgresses against symmetry" (Stott, 1982a:244). At the same time, to shorten the introduction too drastically is unwise: people like a gradual approach rather than abruptness (Sweazey, 1976:97).

#### 5.3.2.2 The necessity of the introduction of the sermon

Preachers use introductions because the hearers are, before the sermon begins, far enough afield from the sermon to need the prodding or rousing a good introduction provides (Daane, 1980:73). In the introduction, particularly, the opening sentence is crucial (Blackwood, 1978:99), because it is the only one everyone will hear. Stott (1982a:244) says that "the traditional way of introducing a sermon is to announce one's text. The value of this beginning is obvious. It declares from the start that we accept the Christian preacher's responsibility to expound God's Word, rather than ventilate our own opinions".

Therefore, Stott emphasises that the introduction has to lead the congregation to listen to the message from the Word of God. How then, can the preacher orient a congregation to God's message by arresting and then holding their attention? According to Adams (1982:60), the first factor is to begin with the congregation itself. The reason is that the congregation may be inattentive, may not know what the passage means, what to look for in it, or may not see its relevance to anything that is taking place in their lives. Stott (1982a, 244,245) also says that "so at least sometimes we shall be wise to begin situationally instead of biblically, with our topic instead of our text, for then we start where people are, rather than where we hope to take them". However, it is not always true. The preacher must lead his people to have a concern for the Word of God itself at the beginning.

#### 5.3.2.3 The purpose of the introduction to his sermon

Stott (1982a:244) points out two aspects of the purpose of the introduction in the sermon.

First, the introduction arouses interest, stimulates curiosity, and whets the appetite for more. In fact, the introduction is to develop interest in what is to follow, and to capture the minds of the congregation (Kroll, 1984:160). Braga (1981:103) also says that "the introduction is the process by which the preacher endeavours to prepare the

minds and secure the interest of his hearers in the message he has to proclaim". At the same time, in order to arouse their interest, the preacher must preferentially know that the people who are in the church have their own different situations. Accordingly, with all their different matters the whole of the introduction will arouse interest (Robinson, 1980:161). That is, the introduction constitutes authentic humanness, the universal quest for transcendence, the hunger for love and community, the search for freedom, or the longing for personal significance (Stott, 1990:232).

Stott (1982a:244) declares that "the right but hard way is to introduce the topic and arouse interest simultaneously, and so dispose people's minds and hearts towards our message". Packer (1971:270) emphasises this matter as a citation of Lloyd-Jones's statement: "not by the often frivolous devices of anecdotes, jokes, or a quaint use of words, which would only gain casual attention at surface level anyway, but by opening up an inquiry which all thinking persons must see is immensely relevant and important to them. The initial invitation, in other words, is to be serious about our own humanity, and to be willing to use our minds on our problems. Therefore, gripping or getting the attention of the hearer is very important to the introduction of the sermon (Baumann, 1978:135).

Secondly, the introduction will help the hearer to understand the theme. Stott (1982a:244) says that "it genuinely 'introduces' the theme by leading the hearers into it". When the people are familiar with the sermon's theme from the beginning, they have a reason for listening to the Word of God (Sweazey, 1976:96). Braga (1981:104,105) says: "the purpose of the introduction is to arouse the attention of the people and to challenge their thinking to such an extent that they will become actively interested in the subject". If the preacher does not link their actual lives up with his theme, he may lose the congregation's attention immediately when his introduction is over.

Therefore, to help the people to understand the direction in which the sermon will move, the introduction should be a statement of the central idea of the sermon, the introduction of the text (Brown Jr., Clinard and Northcutt, 1991:127), and the presentation of the theme as it concerns the outcome of their lives. So, the introduction of a sermon should clearly introduce the theme to the hearers so that their minds and hearts are turned to the Word of God as the foundation of their lives..

Consequently, according to Stott, the purpose of the introduction is to awaken the interest of the audience in the theme, i.e., the truth of the text. We will be helped to

understand the sermon better if we follow his introduction which concentrates the listeners' attention, by its practical example. In his sermon on Ephesians 2:11-22, he begins as follows: "'Alienation' is a popular word in contemporary society. There are many people, especially young people in the so-called 'developed' world, who are disillusioned with 'the system', critical of 'the technocracy' and hostile to 'the establishment', who describe themselves as 'alienated'. Some work for reform, others plot revolution, others drop out. In no case can they accommodate themselves to the *status quo*" (Stott, 1979b:89).

### 5.3.3 *The development of the body of the sermon*

#### 5.3.3.1 Shaping the prominent ideas within the text

According to Stott (1982a:228), the preacher has to knock the material which he has gathered from his text into shape, and particularly into such as will best serve the dominant thought. The purpose of the preacher at this stage is not to produce a literary masterpiece, but rather to enable the text's main thrust to make its maximum impact.

According to Stott (1982a:228), in order to achieve this purpose (chiselling and shaping the main ideas of the text), all sermonizers have to use both negative and positive approaches. Negatively, we should be ruthless in discarding the irrelevant that we come across in the numerous thoughts and scintillating ideas during our hours of meditation on the text. This is because irrelevant material will weaken the sermon's effect. They can come in handy on some other occasion. Positively, we have to subordinate our material to our theme in such a way as to illumine and enforce it.

#### 5.3.3.2 The structure of the body of a sermon

First of all, in order to reinforce our thoughts on the theme of our sermon, Stott considers the importance of the outline and the organic divisions in a sermon. Knecht (1986:287) stresses that divisions in a sermon are important, for they convey the content of the idea of the sermon in manageable units. Stott thinks that there are organic divisions corresponding to the purpose of the text in the Bible, which the Holy Spirit has given to achieve the particular goal of the very words. While the ideas constituting the sermon body should not be forcibly arranged, they must be there within the text, and they must arise naturally out of it (Lloyd-Jones, 1972:207).

Stott (1982a:229) stresses that "the golden rule for sermon outline is that each text must be allowed to supply its own structure". He points out two main risks when developing a sermon structure:

The first is that the skeleton obtrudes, like the ribs of the a skinny human being. In other words, we are not consistent enough in dividing our sermon into subdivisions and so our preaching becomes too complicated. If we do that the danger arises that the force of the message loses its impact and is squandered into three disparate teachings (Knecht, 1986:287).

The second danger to which we are exposed when structuring our sermons is that of artificiality. Stott objects to the practice of some preachers who distract from the force of their preachings by paying too much attention to the form of the sermon. If outlines intrude themselves manifestly into the sermon, they will always be distracting. Jung (1986:132) stresses the importance of this matter by quoting the following statement by Lloyd-Jones: "Take time over this because the whole purpose of dividing up the subject in this way is to make it easier for the people to take in the Truth and to assimilate it". So we have to recognise that the purpose of the skeleton is to support the body, and in so doing to keep itself largely out of view (Stott, 1982a:299).

Therefore, the preacher must not artificially arrange the structure of his sermon into divisions, and should not add to the number of divisions for the sake of some kind of completeness that he has in his mind or in order to make it conform to his usual practice. Rather, he should always make sure that these divisions arise naturally out of the text, and the headings should be natural and appear to be inevitable.

### 5.3.3.3 The words for the sermon

After arranging the sermon structure, Stott (1982a:231) suggests that, the preacher should clothe his thoughts in words in order to communicate clearly. Hence Stott is keenly aware of the fact that the sermon is a form of communication designed for the oral medium. In fact, it is impossible to convey a precise message without choosing accurate words. What sort of words, then, shall we use?

Stott brings forward the following two suggestions regarding this question.

#### 5.3.3.3.1 The simple and clear words

First of all, Stott (1982a:231) emphasises that "a preacher's words need to be as simple and clear as possible". So whenever we read and listen to his sermons, we feel that they are very comprehensible and straightforward. He never uses difficult and ambiguous words or complicated expressions in his sermons. Kroll (1984:63) agrees with Stott's point: the preacher must "be careful about using long and complicated sentences". Adams (1974:123) advises: "Learn to freckle your speech with periods". Braga (1981:162) stresses that "if a preacher is to avoid the pitfall of an extended discourse he should train himself to speak concisely. Every word he says should count. Every idea he expresses should be pertinent".

Gowers (1974:1) urges upon us a careful choice of words, avoiding the superfluous, and choosing the familiar and the precise. He emphasises a quotation by Anold and Swift "have something to say and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style. Proper words in appropriate places make the true definition of style" (Gowers, 1974:3,119). In fact, to make our meaning clear is not easy, but very necessary. It is essential, for many words have other words which are similar to them but not completely identical (Kroll, 1984:60). Therefore, the congregation shall disperse saying 'the preacher said this', when the sermon is ended. The sermon should have a message that is perfectly clear in its statement of something that grips the congregation (Morgan, 1980:33).

#### 5.3.3.3.2 The vivid words

The preacher's diction should be vivid. This designates his choice of words with their perennial freshness and vigour, by means of which the characters of the Bible must be set before the people in such a way that they may see their own circumstances, temptations, and failures portrayed in the experience of the people in the Bible. In addition, the words of Scripture must be made meaningful to the hearers in terms of their own life situations (Braga, 1981:164).

Accordingly, Stott (1982a:234) stresses that "if our words are to be simple and vivid, they must also be honest. We have to beware of exaggerations and be sparing in our use of superlatives". When struggling to communicate some message to his listeners, the preacher should search for simple words which they will understand, vivid words which will help them to visualise what he is saying, and honest words which tell the plain truth without exaggeration (Stott, 1982a:235).

To sum up, in the light of what Stott has said about the choice of our words: they must be simple, clarity and vivid. Then our diction will be greatly improved, resulting in a much more stirring presentation.

#### 5.3.4 *Illustration*

##### 5.3.4.1 His general view on using illustrations in a sermon

Illustrations are needed in sermons. They are needed to reach the present-day “picture-conscious mind” (Brown, 1991:69). Using illustrations to convey the text and main theme of the sermon can be useful (Fasol, 1989:63; Vines 1985:139). Stott uses illustrations and anecdotes very effectively in his sermons. Above all, Stott (1982a:237) thinks that the using of illustrations in preaching has had a long and honourable record in the history of the Church. So he records numerous examples of how many of the greatest preachers in the history of the Church used simple anecdotes to drive home deep truths. He also agrees with the fact that the reason for using the illustration in a sermon is to help making the truth plain and clear.

Lloyd-Jones (1982:233) says that "the illustration is meant to illustrate truth, not to show itself, not to call attention to itself; it is a means of leading and helping people to see the truth that you are enunciating and proclaiming still more clearly". Therefore illustration must be used carefully to that end alone, and not to entertain people. Stott stresses this point in connection with illustrations by our Lord. He (1982a:237) says that "it is not only the parables of Jesus which demonstrate the importance of the illustrating truth, or making it visible, it is Jesus Himself. For Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, the visible message of the invisible God, so that He who saw Him saw the Father".

##### 5.3.4.2 His view on using incidents in Scripture as illustrations

Stott (1982a:236) premises that the Bible teems with illustrations, particularly similes. He presents some illustrations from the Old Testament: "‘As a father pities His children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him’. ‘The wicked ... are like the chaff which the wind drives away’. ‘I will be as the dew to Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, he shall strike roots as the poplar’. ‘They shall mount up with wings like eagles’. ‘Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces’". And he also takes some examples from the New Testament: "‘You are the light of the world’. ‘As the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the

other, so will the Son of man be in his day' ... 'What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes', etc."

Even though Adams (1982:103) points out that it is wrong to use an Old Testament event as an illustration, since the biblical preachers in the New Testament do not use the Old Testament illustratively, Stott maintains that all preachers can beneficially use both Old Testament and New Testament incidents as illustrations. Daane (1980:76) agrees with John Stott's argument: "Illustration can be found in the Bible. Here, too, the rule holds: in order to effectively illumine biblical material, an illustration taken from the Bible must be simple and sufficiently well known as to require no extensive explanation".

#### 5.3.4.3 The jeopardy of the using illustrations

Stott (1982a;240,241) points out that the following are two main drawbacks to using illustrations: The first is that they are too prominent, thrusting themselves into the light instead of casting light on some obscurity. In addition, a merely professional use of the illustration must be avoided, because it pays too much attention to, and is too much concerned about, enticing people (Lloyd-Jones, 1982:232). At the same time, the preacher has to note carefully that the illustration must not only be brief and relevant to the theme, but also that it should avoid anything that takes attention away from the main message (Lane, 1988:89,90).

The second danger attached to illustrations applies particularly to analogies which are either improperly or inappropriately applied. In every analogy we have to make it plain at what point the likeness is suggested. For instance, when Jesus told us to 'become like little children', he did not mean that we are to be childlike in every respect. He was not recommending the immaturity or naughtiness or irresponsibility or innocence or ignorance of a child, but only its 'humility'. That is, we are as dependent on God's grace as a child is on its parents. For there are other biblical passages in which we are forbidden, rather than encouraged, to become like children. Therefore, it is always dangerous, and often misleading, to 'argue from an analogy', that is to say, to give the false impression that because two objects or events are corresponding at one point, they must therefore be alike in all (Stott, 1982a:241).

Consequently, it is clear that illustrations in preaching should only be meant to illustrate the truth, not to call attention to themselves, because an illustration is a

means of throwing light upon a sermon by using an everyday occurrence as an instance of God's mercy, love and devotion etc.

#### 5.3.4.4 The aim of illustration is to stimulate the imagination

Stott (1982a:239) points out that the purpose of the illustration is to awaken the imagination. Although many preachers (Braga, White, Lloyd-Jones, Broadus, Adams, etc.) have treated the imagination as a process employed during the delivery of a sermon, Stott deals with it as one of the aims of the illustration. In fact, throughout the history of the church, imagination has been one of the hallmarks of great preachers - Chrysostom, Luther, Spurgeon, all made truth live by picturing it to their hearers (Adams, 1983:64). Stott describes the good example of imagination that Paul uses in Galatian 3:1. Stott (1982a:238; 1986b:70) says that Paul referred to his preaching of the Cross to the Galatians as a 'public portrayal' before their very eyes of Jesus Christ as the one who had been crucified. Now the crucifixion had taken place some twenty years previously, and none of Paul's Galatian readers had been present to witness it. Yet by his vivid proclamation Paul had been able to bring this event out of the past into the present, out of hearsay into a dramatic visual image. He (1982a:239) emphasises that "the illustration is intended to stimulate people's imagination and to help them to see things clearly in their minds. Illustrations transform the abstract into the concrete, the ancient into the modern, the unfamiliar into the familiar, the general into the particular, the vague into the precise, the unreal into the real, and the invisible into the visible".

For Stott the preacher should vividly employ those illustrations which stimulate the imagination in order that his congregation can clearly understand the truth. Beecher (1972:134) also stresses the importance of the imagination as follows: "The first element on which your preaching will largely depend for power and success ... is imagination, which I regard as the most important of all of the elements that go to make the preacher".

#### 5.3.4.5 The sources of illustrations

First of all, Stott thinks that all preachers can collect examples of illustrations from both the Old and New Testament, because the Bible itself has the most complete stockpile of illustrative materials. Brown (1991:72) says that "the Bible is a primary source of illustration ... The fact that an illustration is drawn from the Bible gives it authority with many people which an illustration from another source would not have.

Biblical illustrations have a remarkably timeless and contemporary quality about them". Killinger (1985:110) also says: "the Bible is a great treasury of illustrative material, and an additional advantage to using it in this way is that it acquaints people with biblical material they have either forgotten or never known, producing a more biblically literate community". And then all preachers can accumulate useful illustrations from some books they read and during the course of their everyday lives. Literature in all forms can also be a source (Kroll, 1984:174; Blackwood, 1978:120; Brown, 1991:73).

Stott (1982a:243) says that "the most effective illustrations are probably anecdotes, culled from history or biography, from current affairs or from our own experience. For these help to set biblical truth in the widest possible context, historical, global and personal". In order to collect good illustrations, the preacher should read and look to the classics, the apocrypha, history and Church history, science, the arts, paintings, and music, and modern writers. Current events provide one readily available source of such material as well (Fasol, 1989:83; Chapell, 1994:194). The newspapers, magazines, etc., supply good illustration materials that are thoroughly up-to-date. Above all, all nature and all life are rich in illustration. As one sails through life with a trawling eye, what fine things come into the net (Sangster, 1946:239).

Finally, for Stott the illustration is one of the most efficient instruments helping to deliver the Word of God and should be used to explain and apply the truth clearly to the audience. So Stott's illumination always shines into his main theme but he never go away with the illumination as the supreme thing.

### *5.3.5 Stott's use of humour in the pulpit*

A word needs to be said concerning Stott's use of humour in his sermons. All preachers are advised to employ wit so that their sermons sparkle with good humour.

#### 5.3.5.1 The examples of humour of the Lord in the New Testament

The principles and the method of the proper employment of humour can be seen in the teachings of our Lord in several portions of the New Testament. Stott insists that all preachers can use jesting as Jesus did. He (1982a:287) says that "the place to begin our enquiry is the teaching of Jesus, for it seems to be generally agreed that humour was one of the weapons in the armoury of the Master Teacher". Trueblood avers that

the commonest form of humour used by Jesus is irony ('a holding up to public view of either vice or folly'), not sarcasm (which is cruel and wounds its victims). And then he writes on this matter as follows: "It is very important to understand that the evident purpose of Christ's humour is to clarify and increase understanding, rather than to hurt. Perhaps some hurt is inevitable, especially when ... human pride is rendered ridiculous, but the clear aim is something other than harm ... Truth, and truth alone, is the end ... The unmasking of error and thereby the emergence of truth" (Trueblood, 1965:49-53).

Stott (1982a:287) introduces Glover who wrote the famous book, *The Jesus of history*, to us by mentioning a good example of Glover's humour. It is Jesus' caricature of the Scribes and Pharisees who were conscientious in minute duties, while altogether neglecting 'the weightier matters of the law'. Their lack of proportion was like people drinking, who would 'strain out a gnat and swallow a camel' (Mt. 23:23,24). Glover gets us laughing by making us imagine a man attempting to swallow a camel as follows: "How many of us have ever pictured the process, and the serious of sensations, as the long hairy neck slid down the throat of the Pharisee - all that amplitude of loose-hung anatomy - the hump - two humps - both of them slid down - and he never noticed - and the legs - all of them - with the whole outfit of knees and big padded feet. The Pharisee swallowed a camel and never noticed it" (Glover, 1965:44).

Accordingly, Stott (1982a:288) adds that "even if Jesus only used the expression and attempted no description, he must have had his listeners in fits of laughter". In fact, because of the precedent set by Jesus, it is hardly surprising that the use of humour in preaching and teaching has had a long and honourable tradition.

#### 5.3.5.2 The value of humour

Stott (1982a:289-292) points out that there are four values of humour when we use the proper wit in the right place in the sermon.

First, it breaks tension. Most people need to relax for a few moments, and one of the simplest, quickest and healthiest ways to secure their relaxation is to tell a joke and make them laugh. Because of this relaxing effect, the preacher who uses humour in his sermons may discover himself ministering to a relaxed, responsive congregation that will be a joy and delight to him (Drakeford, 1986:41).

Secondly, laughter has an extraordinary power to break down people's defenses. Some parishioners come to church in a stubborn and rebellious frame of mind. But if the preacher makes his listeners laugh, all resistance will suddenly collapse.

Thirdly, the greatest benefit of humour is that it humbles us by pricking the bubble of our human pomposity. Ronald Knox (1984:26-27) says that "satire is born to scourge the persistent and even recurrent follies of the human creature as such ... laughter is a deadly explosive which is meant to be wrapped up in the cartridge of satire, and so, aimed unerringly at its appointed target, deals its salutary wound".

Fourthly, the final value of humour is to cause us to laugh at the human condition, and therefore at ourselves: humour helps us to see things in proportion. It is often through laughter that we gain clear glimpses both of the heights from which we have fallen and of the depths to which we have sunk, leading to a wistful desire to be 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'. Since it can contribute to the awakening within human hearts of shame over what we are and of longing for what we could be, we should press it gladly into service in the cause of the gospel.

#### 5.3.5.3 The danger of humour

Merely to get people to laugh for laughter's sake is out of keeping with the sacredness of the preacher's task. The preacher may lead his congregation in the message to the point where they become tense with emotion or interest. In this moment, if the preacher makes them laugh, it will break the tension, and condition the people to listen with even greater interest. According to Stott (1982a:288), although the humour is legitimate, we have to be sparing in our use of it and judicious in the topics we select for laughter. Stott issues two warnings: the preacher must not make his hearers laugh about God, the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is equally unfitting for sinners to laugh about the cross or the resurrection of Jesus by which their salvation has been achieved, or about the solemn realities of the last things, namely death, judgement, heaven and hell. Because these topics are not in themselves amusing, and are trivialised if we try to make them funny. And then people may stop taking the words of the preacher seriously.

Consequently, the preacher ought to use humour more skilfully and more frequently, ensuring always that in laughing at others we are also laughing at ourselves within the solidarity of human pomp and folly.

### 5.3.6 *The conclusion*

The conclusion is the summarisation of the sermon showing its relevance to the daily living of the listeners. It will challenge the hearers to make some decision regarding the content of the sermon.

Stott gives considerable weight to the conclusion of a sermon. Accordingly, a sermon which seem not to have arrived constitutionally or concluding anything positive, are nothing less than tragic examples of aimlessness (Stott, 1982a:245). Ultimately the whole development of the main theme in his sermon is aimed at achieving a climactic conclusion. So he emphasises that the conclusion has to include two important elements: a summarised recapitulation and a personal application. He (1982a:246) says that "a true conclusion goes beyond recapitulation to personal application. Of course, not that all application should be left to the end, for our texts need to be applied as we go along".

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to disclose too soon the conclusion to which we are going to come. If we do, we lose people's sense of expectation. It is better to keep something up our sleeve. Then we can leave to the end that persuading which, by the Holy Spirit's power, will prevail on people to take action". Lloyd-Jones (1982:77) also stresses the importance of the conclusion in his sermon: "You must end on a climax, and everything should lead up to it in such a way that the great truth stands out, dominating everything that has been said, and the listeners go away with this in their minds".

Therefore, in Stott's opinion, the conclusion should be a clear application of the truth proclaimed in terms of the lives of the listeners: in the conclusion the preacher should directly involve each individual personally with the truth and the challenge of his message, because his sermon should be a personal encounter with the living God.

Stott always concludes his sermons along the two above mentioned principles. Let us study an excellent example of a summarised recapitulation and a final application in his conclusion. In the conclusion of his sermon on 2 Thessalonians 1:1-11, he summarises Paul's theme (the glory of Jesus Christ) in four stages as follows: (1) "The Lord Jesus will be revealed in His glory (1:7)", (2) "The Lord Jesus will be glorified in His people (1:10)", (3) "Those who reject Christ will be excluded from His glory (1:8-9)", and (4) "Meanwhile Jesus Christ must begin to be glorified in us (1:12)" (Stott, 1991a:153-155).

And then in the conclusion of his sermon on Galatians 4:1-11, he says that "the way for us to avoid the Galatians' folly is to heed Paul's words. Let God's Word keep telling us who and what we are if we are Christians. We must keep reminding ourselves what we have and are in Christ. One of the great purposes of daily Bible reading, meditation and prayer is just this, to get ourselves correctly orientated, to remember who and what we are. We need to say to ourselves: "Once I was a slave, but God has made me His son and put the Spirit of His Son into my heart. How can I turn back to the old slavery?" Again: "Once I did not know God, but now I know Him and have come to be known by Him. How can I turn back to the old ignorance?" By the grace of God we must determine to remember what once we were and never to return to it; to remember what God has made us and to conform our lives to it" (Stott, 1986b:109,110).

Consequently, Stott looks back over the terrain of preaching and restates points covered in the way that he does in many conclusions of his sermons. So he reviews the important assertions in order to bind them into the major idea of the sermon. He ties loose ends together through the summary of the content of his sermon.

### *5.3.7 His view on the length of sermons*

Finally, in the characteristic form of Stott's sermons, we turn to deal with his view on the length of a sermon. In general, Stott (1982a:292) thinks that the issue of how long a sermon ought to be, is an impossible question to answer, because there are so many imponderables. It depends on the occasion and topic, on the preacher's gift and the congregation's maturity. Bryan Chapell (1994:54) supports Stott: "The length of a sermon is no automatic measure of orthodoxy, yet sermons long enough to explain what a passage means and short enough to keep interested persons listening, will indicate much about the vitality of a congregation and the wisdom of the pastor".

Sweazey (1976:145) offers the following neat synopsis about the length of a sermon: "In the circles with which I am most familiar, a fifteen-minute message seems miniature, twenty minutes is short, twenty-five minutes is usual, and thirty minutes is long". Stott does not debate Sweazey's analysis, writing, "no hard and fast rules can be laid down about the length of sermon, except perhaps those ten minutes is too short and forty minutes too long". Instead, he neatly sidesteps the issue of the ideal length of a sermon by saying "every sermon should 'seem like twenty minutes', even if it is much longer" (Stott, 1982a:294).

Lloyd-Jones (1982:197) also makes it clear that a sermon may be long or short and that any rigidity in these matter must be avoided: "It not only depends on the particular person of the preacher, but also depends upon his stage of development".

Therefore, whatever the norm of a particular congregation, the preacher must still have the wisdom to choose passages of such length and / or substance that they can be expounded within the allotted time.

## **5.4 His evangelistic sermon**

### *5.4.1 Preamble*

As we have seen in chapter 2 (2.1.4), Stott is concerned about the evangelism in his church and all over the world. Moreover, when he worked as a full-time minister at All Soul's church for twenty-five years he did not neglect to preach evangelistic sermons. The responsibility of the preacher is not to give a twentieth-century testimony to Christ, but to relate to the twentieth century the only authoritative witness there is, the Word of God. To Stott, it is shameful that Evangelicals fail to be the preachers they ought to be. The preacher should be the fervent herald of God's message, a living word to a living people from the Living God (Catherwood, 1985:31). So Baumann (1978:208) says that "evangelistic preaching is necessary because Christ has commanded it and people need it".

We know the reason why Stott has been concerned about evangelistic preaching. Even though he went to the church in order to attend the worship every Sunday, he did not really believe in God. When he was 17 years old, he experienced Jesus Christ as the Saviour in his heart as a result of the message of John Bridger, Nash and he was born again as a true Christian at a meeting organised in February, 1938 by the Christian Union (Catherwood, 1985:15). So Stott deplors the tendency to assume that because people go to church, they must therefore need be Christians or to hold that the baptised children of the church members are of a necessity Christian. Venter (1974:46,47) warns against this tendency: "Do not think that all of those who listen to your preaching are true Christians. You may be of the opinion that many of them desire the truth and have some personal problem or other... His [the preacher's] preaching should be aimed at the contending searching sinner".

For this reason, it is an honourable task to me to evaluate Stott's evangelistic sermons which are clear and contain the kerygma. In fact, no sermon can rightly be called

evangelistic if its content does not proclaim the evangelic, or kerygma. Thus, Davis (1988:106) emphasises that “no preaching is legitimate in the church’s public ministry in our day except that which meets the New Testament test of *Kerygma*, both in content and in form”. The evaluation of his evangelistic sermons is to challenge the modern preacher who neglects to preach the kerygmatic sermon and to be awakened to the importance of evangelical preaching.

Therefore, this study will first provide Stott’s definition of the term ‘evangelism’ in order to avoid confusion and misrepresentation. And then, secondly we will examine the context that he used in the evangelistic preaching, then survey its practices and finally analyse a typical example of a sermon of his sermons in order to evaluate the worth of this propagandistic preaching.

#### 5.4.2 *His definition of evangelism*

In his famous book, *Evangelism: the Counter Revolution*, Drummond (1972:25) defines that “evangelism is a concerted effort to confront the unbeliever with the truth about and claims of Jesus Christ so as to challenge and lead him into repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and thus into the fellowship of the Church”.

According to Wagner (1981:56-57), the result is a definition that is stated in terms of the nature, the purpose, and the goal of evangelism: “The nature of evangelism is the communication of the Good News. The purpose of evangelism is to give individuals and groups valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. The goal of evangelism is to persuade men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to serve Him in the fellowship of His Church”. The element of persuasion may sound stronger in this second definition because the definition is more concise. A phrase in a short paragraph does not have to be as strong in order to receive attention.

Officially John Stott was the chairman of the Drafting committee for the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 (Groover, 1988:87,88). It defined evangelism as follows: “To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and

Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world” (Lausanne Covenant, Para. 4).

In his article, *The biblical basis of evangelism*, Stott (1975a:71) defines the term ‘evangelism’ more clearly and shortly: “It is sharing the Gospel with others. The good news is Jesus, and the good news about Jesus which we announce is that he died for our sins and was raised from death by the Father, according to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and that on the basis of his death and resurrection he offers forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit to all those who repent, believe, and are baptised”.

Therefore, to Stott ‘evangelism’ is an essential part of the church’s mission, and then ‘evangelical preaching’ is an important element of the local church’s ministry.

#### 5.4.3 Examples of evangelistic preaching in Stott’s sermons

There are plentiful examples of evangelistic preaching in his sermons. One of his earliest books, *Basic Christianity*, was actually an edition of the evangelistic sermons he preached on university campuses when he went on missions in the 1950’s.

Another resource used in evaluating John Stott’s preaching was a research paper written in 1981 by one of his study assistants. Mark Labberton was a Master of Divinity student at California’s Fuller Theological Seminary when he got the opportunity to interrupt his formal studies to work with Stott. He assisted Stott in the preparation of *Between Two Worlds* (the other name is *I believe in preaching*), heard the Anglican preach in five countries on three continents, and listened to over 100 recorded sermons which dated from 1959 to 1981 (Groover, 1988:140).

The other resource of the evangelistic sermons was Stott’s book, *You can trust the Bible* (1982): our foundation of belief and obedience. The substance of this book was a series of five evangelistic sermons which contain the basic doctrines of Christianity - God and the Bible, Christ and the Bible, the Holy Spirit and the Bible, the Church and the Bible, and the Christian and the Bible - in All Souls Church, Langham Place London.

Whenever Stott has an opportunity to preach evangelistic sermons, especially at evangelical conferences and meetings all over the world, he eagerly grasps the chance to do so.

#### *5.4.4 The variety of context in his evangelistic sermons*

Stott preached evangelistic sermons at All Souls in several contexts, but the primary forum was the monthly 'guest services'. The idea of the guest service came from his Cambridge experience. Students in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, henceforth designated as the IVF, would organise services at local churches and use guest preachers. Attendance would run as high as seven hundred. After becoming rector, Stott attempted to recreate these services in a local church setting in London. Beginning in 1950, the guest services were held one Sunday evening a month (Groover, 1988:140). From Stott early guest services at Cambridge, he became more and more extensively involved in university missions during the period of his early ministry at All Souls church. As large numbers of London university students came to his church, one might draw the conclusion that the guest services focused on students. The order of worship prayer was simplified a bit. Worship leaders gave a brief explanation of what was taking place so that new comers would not feel out of place (Stott, 1961b:7).

Stott would preach an evangelistic sermon and people who were interested in accepting Christ were invited to stay for a ten minute epilogue in which the plan of salvation was explained. Those wishing to accept Christ were led in a time of silent prayer and then encouraged to accept some printed materials and enrol in a beginner's class. There were three advantages to these guest services. First, special plans could be made. Secondly, specific prayers could be encouraged. Thirdly, the members could make an extra effort to bring unconverted friends (Stott, 1983:85).

In addition to guest services, evangelistic sermons were also preached at special receptions. Trained visitors would make contact with someone living in the parish. Revisits were made once a month with the goal to make friends. Once a relationship was established, the prospect was invited to a reception, either at the church or at someone's house, for a meal, some entertainment, and then to receive a message. These gatherings were "very effective" (Groover, 1988:141,142).

A third opportunity for evangelistic preaching within the parish was created by open-air services. These services were planned for the Summer months following evening

prayer at All Souls. Trained laypeople canvassed a street, inviting residents, during the weeks prior to the service. On the appointed day a collapsible stand was put in place. Regular church attenders were encouraged to attend and ‘swell the crowd and lead the singing’. Testimonies were often given by lay people prior to the sermon (Stott, 1953:7).

Stott has had the opportunity to preach an evangelistic sermon for one month during every Summer vacation so far. The writer had an opportunity to listen to his sermon when we attended a service at All Souls Church on a Sunday morning in 1995.

#### *5.4.5 Some examples of his evangelistic sermons*

In order to evaluate Stott’s evangelistic preaching, outlines taken from cassette tapes of three of his sermons preached at All Souls Church are presented as typical examples.

##### 5.4.5.1 John 3:1-15 - “Meeting with Jesus” : Nicodemus [cf. Appendix 1]

**INTRODUCTION** : Jesus wants to meet somebody. During his life on earth He spent time with people face to face. Jesus encounters Nicodemus and talks to him about a new birth. What is happening during in their conversation?

#### **BODY :**

- 1 What is the nature of the new birth ?
  - 1.1 It is not a second physical birth
  - 1.2 It is not a moral self-reformation
  - 1.3 It is not the same as baptism
  - 1.4 It is a spiritual birth
  
- 2 How can we be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God ?
  - 2.1 By water. It means the baptism of repentance by John the Baptist’s baptism.
  - 2.2 By the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit.
  
- 3 The necessity of the new birth. Is it really necessary?

- 3.1 The answer is 'Yes'.
  - 3.2 Jesus said, 'You must be born again'.
  - 3.3 It is indispensable if we are to be authentic followers of Jesus.
- 4 How does it take place?
- 4.1 From God's viewpoint, it is largely a mystery.
  - 4.2 The new birth is a birth from above by the initiative and activity and the power of God Himself.
  - 4.3 From our side we have both to repent and to put our trust in Jesus Christ.

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus Christ wants to meet anyone who seeks Him. God so loved the world that he has given His only Son to die on the cross. He has done everything that is necessary. Now He waits for us to repent. Whoever believes and trust in Him will be born again and begin the new life He offers. And then he or she can see and enter the Kingdom of God in present and future.

**EVALUATION :** Each point of this sermon is drawn directly from the chosen text of the Bible, and no significant portion of the text is ignored. We find here that Stott always takes his theme and its main ideas from the text. In other words, the theme of his sermon is based on and derived from the text. And then he focuses only on one theme, namely 'new birth' and its result. Hence Stott forces his listeners who are unbelievers to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

At the conclusion of his evangelical sermons Stott invited his listeners in various ways to become followers of Jesus Christ. In this sermon, he indirectly called his listeners to trust, to believe, and to accept Jesus in order to be born again and begin the new life.

#### 5.4.5.2 John 4:1-42 - "If only you knew": The Samaritan woman [cf. Appendix 2]

**INTRODUCTION :** People can try to ignore Jesus Christ or suppress Him and His message, but He always comes back. You must decide what you will do with Jesus. 'If only you knew' exactly who he was and is, you would decide to follow Him. 'Who is the authentic Jesus? He is ...'.

## **BODY :**

- 1 Jesus is both human and divine and has His humanity and His deity. He hungered, thirsted, and suffered. He knew everything about her messy domestic life and He offered her the water of life, a symbol of eternal life.
- 2 Jesus is both conservative and radical. He was conservative, particularly in relation to Scripture and He was critical of His inherited tradition.
- 3 Jesus is both satisfying and disturbing. His gift of an inner spring of life-giving water satisfies but His reminder of our sins is deeply agitating and brings us to repentance.

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus is true Man/God who came to die for us. He offers us the gift of the spring of living waters inside of us. Whoever drinks the water He gives, will get eternal life.

**EVALUATION:** In this sermon, the text dictates Stott's typical three point patterns. Except for an introduction which really does not point to what follows until its end, each point of this sermon is lifted directly from the text and each addresses the question, 'if you only knew what ?' Every portion of the narrative which yields a clue toward a full answer to the question is squeezed for its contribution.

### 5.4.5.3 Luke 15:1-32 - "Lost and Found" [cf. Appendix 3]

**INTRODUCTION:** Of all possible things you can lose and find, nothing is more serious than to lose yourself, and then nothing is more important than to find yourself. Who are you? Have you found yourself? The needs for self-discovery is universally recognised. Jesus knows what is in mankind. He has a profound understanding of human nature.

## **BODY :**

- 1 The younger brother as a model of publicans

There are four stages in his digression:

- 1.1 The first stage is a bid for independence
- 1.2 The second stage is self- indulgence
- 1.3 The third comes in his deterioration - hunger and humiliation

- 1.4 The fourth stage is isolation
- 2 He Returned his father's home
  - 2.1 He came to his senses. He found himself
  - 2.2 He got up and went home
  - 2.3 He was accepted. When he came back his father's home, his father welcomed him heartily.
  - 2.4 We can be sure of our reception in heaven because of the cross and Christ's substitutionary atonement.
- 3 The elder brother as symbol of the Pharisees
  - 3.1 He had travelled very far into a far country himself
  - 3.2 He was very far away from his father's heart.

We are all alienated from God and from our true selves as both the younger brother and the elder.

**CONCLUSION:** Some of us are like the prodigal and some are like the elder brother. Some are like the publicans and sinners and some are like the Pharisees. Some sin by immorality and drunkenness and the cruder forms of sin. Other sin by pride, envy, malice and hypocrisy. The religious sins. They(the elder and the younger son) are alienated and both need the forgiveness of God. The main lesson of this parable is the unquenchable love of God. We must ask ourselves, "Where am I?"

**EVALUATION:** This sermon is like many others which says the message of the parable is the father's love, but then concentrates on the younger brother sin. The elder brother's sin is no less than his brother's. The main point of this is to emphasise the kerygma, that is, God's love, forgiveness, very welcome and the cross of Jesus Christ. Even though this sermon is not very original, it is a solid exposition. Each point is biblically supported, not just directly from the chosen text.

#### *5.4.6 His views on the invitation in an evangelical sermon*

The evangelistic sermon provides an occasion for response. that is, some form of invitation is offered. Allen (1964:12) expresses it well: "The invitation is not a gimmick to catch souls. It is not a fetish to insure results. It is not a ritual to confirm

orthodoxy. It is simply the call of Christ to confront persons with the offer of his redemption, the demands of His lordship, and the privilege of His service". Baumann (1978:209) also says that "this may be appropriate if the congregation regularly includes persons who are outside of the faith ... A variety of invitations are available to the concerned pastor".

Stott uses a variety of invitations to call for decisions at the conclusion of his evangelical sermons. In 'why drag in the cross?', an exposition of Romans 5:8, he calls his listeners to humble themselves and accept Christ. He (1986a:163) uses a verse from the hymn '*Rock of Ages*' for the emotional impact of its words:

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die".

The use of a verse from '*Rock of Ages*' as the invitation would be much more effective for people who are familiar with the poetic language of the traditional church.

Stott (1983:91) sometimes offers a few minutes of silent prayer and leaves his audience alone in prayer to answer for themselves the question about humbling themselves. After his sermon and the formal invitation, Stott makes an announcement, inviting everyone, particularly visitors, to go to the fellowship hall for coffee after the closing hymn. Then he adds another word of invitation. Stott asks anyone who prayed the prayer as best they know how to come and meet him at the pulpit.

The invitation to this 'continuation service' would come as no surprise to the hearers; the practice at All Souls Church is to announce the service during the 'notices'. Therefore, consistent with Stott's clarity and integrity, there are no hidden tactics or pressures. People are only asked to do things they are able to do, because to pressure them is 'as harmful as it is wrong' (Stott, 1983:90,91).

Stott (1982a:334) recalls his real experience of the invitation in a week's mission in the University of Sydney in June 1958: "Then at the end , after a straightforward

instruction on how to come to Christ, I issued an invitation and there was an immediate and reasonably large response".

Therefore, Stott (1983:93) emphasises that the preacher has to turn his message, in conclusion, toward an appeal to the unsaved in the audience to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. The invitation is the time when the people make their response. The conclusion of the evangelical sermon should include a definite invitation.

## **5.5 Bridge-building as characteristics of Stott's expository preaching**

### *5.5.1 Preamble*

The chasm still exists between the first century and ours, but it is connected, not with a flimsy, treacherous tightrope, but with a massive, solid bridge, the bridge of age. Preaching does not stop with understanding ancient languages, history, culture, and customs. Unless the centuries can be bridged with contemporary relevance in the message, the preaching experience differs little from a classroom encounter. Liefelt (1984:107) insists this point: "Unless we have made a sensitive, compassionate, forceful, and unmistakable application, we have merely done exposition, not expository preaching". One must first process the text for original meaning and then principalize the text for current applicability. Cunliffe-Jones (1953:5) supports this matter: "We must be able to say not only 'this is what this passage originally meant', but also 'this passage is true in this particular way for us in the twentieth century'". Greidanus (1988:167) clearly explains this point as follows: "In order for the guidance accurately to reflect the Bible's intent, the preacher must discern the biblical principles reflected in the text that were directed to the people of that time, and apply the same principles to the people of this time with instructions directed to their actions, attitudes, and /or beliefs". Towner (1994:182) says more strongly this matter: "The task is not finished until the original message has been brought across the centuries and applied freshly in our situations. This is not the task of a single person, but it to be carried out in the church in dependence on the Holy Spirit and with a view to the understanding of the church down through the ages and in our present time".

Stott (1982a:137) uses the characteristic term, that is, the bridge-building which is to link the gap between the biblical and the modern in order to apply the message of the text to the modern situation of the congregation. At the same time, he avers that the preacher's task is to build a bridge between the biblical world and the modern world.

Therefore, Stott emphasises that the sermon should constitute two parts, that is, the first part of the sermon is explication, then follows the application. In his book, *The preacher's portrait*, Stott (1961a:31,32) says exactly that: "Even when the text is understood, the preacher's work is only half done, for the elucidation of its meaning must be followed by its application to some realistic modern situation in the life of man today". McGoldrick (1989:7) also says that "preaching should be the faithful exposition and practical application of God's Word".

In this section we will investigate the theory and method of Stott's 'bridge-building' which replaces the more generally accepted and used term of 'application' in a sermon.

### 5.5.2 *His theory of the bridge-building as the application in a sermon*

#### 5.5.2.1 His definition of 'bridge-building'

Stott prefers to apply the term bridge-building to the application in a sermon. In his famous homiletical book, *I believe in preaching*, chapters 4-8 offer balanced and wise guidance about the practice of preaching. Chapter 4, preaching as 'Bridge-Building', is a good example. It concludes that "such preaching will be authoritative in expounding biblical principles, but tentative in applying them to the complex issues of the day. The combination of the authoritative and tentative, the dogmatic and agnostic, conviction and open-mindedness, teaching the people and leaving them free to make up their own minds, is exceedingly difficult to maintain. But it seems to me to be the only way to handle the Word of God with integrity (declaring what is plain but not pretending everything is plain when it is not), and on the other hand to lead the people of God into maturity (by encouraging them to develop a Christian mind, and use it)" (Stott, 1982a:178).

First of all, Stott (1982a:137-138) defines this term, 'bridge-building' as follows: "A bridge is a means of communication between two places which would otherwise be cut off from each other by a river or a ravine. It makes possible a flow of traffic which without it would be impossible. What, then, does the gorge or chasm represent? and what is the bridge which spans it The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world. In a famous essay published in 1955 Lord Snow spoke of '*The Two Cultures*' - science and arts - and bemoaned the increasing alienation of literary and scientific intellectuals from each other. He spoke of the "gulf of mutual incomprehension" between them. But if the gulf between two contemporary cultures

is so wide, the gulf between both of them and the ancient world is wider still. It is across this broad and deep divided of two thousand years of changing culture (more still in the case of the Old Testament) that Christian communicators have to throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today". In a word, there must be a bridge between the text and its world, and the message and our world (Halvorson, 1982:76; Lloyd-Jones, 1975:66,244; Jung, 1986:170).

Thus, according to Stott, the bridge-building is necessary to make the personal connection between the eternal truth and our daily lives as experience at present, because the bridge-building is intended to make the critical moves from the *then* of Scripture to the *here and now* of today (Bae, 1991:133). Accordingly, the preacher has to pay attention to both contexts, to past and present, to then and now.

#### 5.5.2.2 The definition of application in a sermon by others

We need to study some preachers' definitions in order to understand Stott's obvious conception of the bridge-building as application. Broadus (1979:91) classically defines it: "The application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but it must bring the truths of the Word of God to the listener". He is simply saying that preaching is application. Preaching is not speaking about truth to the congregation, but rather speaking the truth to the audience.

Brown (1991:60) says that "application means to relate, to involve, to move to action. When the preacher uses application in a sermon, he speaks to the audience in such a way that they see how the sermon is appropriate, fitting, and suitable for them. Application means to show to the audience that they can use and put to a practical personal use the truth of the message".

Jonson (1990:214,215) states that "application is the task of relating the Bible's authoritative message to people today so that God may use it to change their lives. In other words, application is the task of relating what God has said since the beginning of time to modern man". But his definition of application in a sermon is not totally valid, because God did not only apply His message to the people of those times but also to modern people, in the same way.

So, to sum up, application is that part of the sermon which brings the truth of the Word to the listener on a personal basis. At the same time, we define application as

the process by which truth is brought to bear directly and personally upon individuals in order to persuade them to respond properly to it.

We can summarise the above-mentioned (5.4.2 and 5.4.3): "Application does not only bridge the gap between the world of the Bible and the modern world but also has the effect of changing the listener's life through the truth of the Word of God" (An, 1995:9).

### 5.5.2.3 Two groups who hold mistaken notions of bridge-building

Stott makes some very helpful suggestions concerning how to apply the truths of God's Word to modern congregations. He correctly affirms that bridge-building as application is essential in exposition. Through the correct and the sound application all which preachers are able to span the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of today. But faced with the communication gulf between two worlds, preachers tend to make two mistakes in expository preaching.

#### 5.5.2.3.1 The conservative group

There is the tendency to live on the biblical side of the chasm. This is probably the danger of the conservative preacher. He is so interested in accurately finding the message of the Bible that he may neglect to 'earth' it out. He fails to build a bridge to the modern world. Such preaching may be clearly biblical, but it lacks contemporary application. Stott (1982a:140) points out that "if we are conservative (referring to our theology), and stand in the tradition of historic Christian orthodoxy, we are on the Bible side of the gulf. That is where we feel comfortable and safe. We believe the Bible, love the Bible, read the Bible, study the Bible and expound the Bible. But we are not at home in the modern world on the other side of the gap, especially if we have reached - or passed - middle age ... So we tend to insulate ourselves from it".

Accordingly, exposition without application never arrives at the doorstep of the modern man. Stott's caution is of special interest to us. Being theological conservatives ourselves, we have been guilty too often of failure to adequately apply the message of the Bible to man wherever he lives today.

#### 5.5.2.3.2 The radical group

On the other hand, some Christians make the mistake of living on the contemporary side of the chasm. Too often liberal preachers are very contemporary but lack a biblical base. Stott says that "they (Liberal preachers) find it congenial to live on the contemporary side of the great divide. They are modern people who belong to the modern world. They are sensitive to the current mood and understand what is going on around them. They read modern poetry and philosophy. They are familiar with the writings of living novelists and the discoveries of modern scientists. They go to the theatre and the cinema, and they watch television ... All their sermons are earthed in the real world, but where they come from (one is tempted to add) heaven alone knows. They certainly do not appear to come out of the Bible. On the contrary, these preachers have allowed the biblical revelation to slip through their fingers".

This is Stott's (1982a:144) criticisms of the radical preachers: "They restate the Christian faith in terms which are intelligible, meaningful and credible to their secular colleagues and friends". Therefore, "in discarding the ancient formulations they tend also to discard the truth formulated, and so to throw out the baby with the bathwater". Stott thinks that the liberal preachers may give an up-to-date picture of contemporary life but fail to communicate an authoritative truth to his congregation. Such preaching demonstrates a knowledge of what the problems are. What is lacking is the ability to give God's fresh Word as a viable solution to those problems.

Consequently, Stott (1982a:144) says that "conservatives are biblical but not contemporary, while on the other hand liberals and radicals are contemporary but not biblical". So Stott wants to combine the concerns of both the conservative and the liberal groups.

Stott's suggestions will actually help us to relate our particular message to the contemporary situation and will enable us to "contextualize" the Word of God (Vines, 1985:100).

#### 5.5.2.4 The incarnation as a model of bridge-building

Many preachers (Brooks, Tillich, Howe, Clark, Abbey, etc.) use the term of the incarnation as the model of the communication in a sermon. But Stott (1982a:150) uses this term in the other meaning, i.e., the incarnation means exchanging one world for another. Stott (1982a:145; 1992:194) points out two biblical precedents as the

model of the bridge-building. First, in Scripture He spoke his Word through human words to human beings in a precise historical and cultural context; He did not speak in culture-free generalities. Secondly, His eternal Word (Logos) became flesh, in all the particularity of a first-century Palestinian Jew. In both cases He reached down to where the people were with whom He desired to communicate. He spoke in human language; He appeared in human flesh.

Therefore, Stott (1982a:145) urges us strongly to do as God did: "Our bridges, too, must be firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm, by refusing either to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it has to be spoken. We have to plunge fearlessly into both worlds, ancient and modern, biblical and contemporary, and to listen attentively to both. For only then shall we understand what each is saying, and so discern the Spirit's message to the present generation".

In his famous sermon, *The Sermon on the Mount*, we can actually see Stott's effort to bridge a gap between the biblical and the modern worlds. He says that "the Sermon on the Mount is the most complete delineation anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counter-culture. Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, life style and network of relationship - all of which are totally at variance with those of the non-Christian world. And this Christian counter-culture is the life of the kingdom of God, a fully human life indeed but lived out under the divine rule" (Stott, 1978a:19).

#### 5.5.2.5 Christ as the content of the bridge-building

Stott emphasises that Jesus Christ is the answer to the major themes of human life. So, above all else, the preacher must preach Christ, because Jesus is the fulfilment of every truly human aspiration.

In his addresses entitled '*How to Meet the Evils of the Ages*', Spurgeon (1960:117,127) urges his fellow-Christians to "keep to the gospel, then, more and more. Give the people Christ and nothing but Christ" Then, after expatiating on some current evils, he concludes that "we have only one remedy for them; preach Jesus Christ, and let us do it more and more ... anywhere, everywhere, let us preach Christ".

Stott actually preaches Christ throughout his sermons, as well as emphasising the importance of Jesus Christ in his books. Let us listen directly to his voice on this matter: "Christ is our contemporary. The Jesus who was born into our world, and who

lived and died in first-century Palestine, also rose from the dead, is now alive for ever, and is available and accessible to His people. Jesus Christ is not to be relegated, like other religious leaders, to history and history books. He is not dead and gone, finished or fossilised. He is alive and active. He calls us to follow Him, and He offers Himself to us as our indwelling and transforming Saviour" (Stott, 1992:313,314). He continues by saying: "The One we preach is not Christ-in-a-vacuum, nor even only the Jesus of ancient history, but rather the contemporary Christ who once lived and died, and now lives to meet human need in all its variety today. To encounter Christ is to touch reality and experience transcendence" (1982a:154).

Therefore, to Stott, Christ is the content of the bridge-building, as well as the key of the solution to all themes of human existence. Accordingly, one of the most fascinating of all the preacher's tasks is to explore both the emptiness of fallen man and the fullness of Jesus Christ, in order to demonstrate how He can fill our emptiness, lighten our darkness, enrich our poverty, and bring our human aspirations to fulfilment. The riches of Christ are unfathomable (Eph. 3:8) (Stott, 1982a:154).

#### 5.5.2.6 Bridge-building covers the whole field of Christian life

The aim of modern preaching should include a thorough analysis and understanding of the contemporary situation of the congregation. Moreover the preacher should have a deep-seated knowledge of the particular circumstances of his parishioners. The analysis of the congregational situation has some bearing upon subject choice, method of development, exegesis, and explanation; but it is of the utmost importance to the bridge-building of the message as it relates to the assembled listeners (Liefelt, 1984:106). The analysis of Christian situations is imperative before an appropriate application such as bridge-building can be made. The nature and the problem of the congregational circumstances should be known in rather minute detail so as to make the truth as helpful as possible. Therefore, Stott is concerned about the all-inclusive encompassing matter of the congregational whereabouts and the society.

He deals with the Christian's ethics, the church and the home, as well as social and political issues, and then handling controversial questions. Even though he can give several other illustrations, Stott (1982a:160,161) shows clearly by giving a good example of sexual ethics: "Certain standards of sexual morality are clearly taught in the Bible, for instance that lifelong heterosexual marriage is the only context, and 'honour' as opposed to 'lust' the only style, in which sexual intercourse is to be enjoyed (Gen. 2:24; Mk. 10:5-9; 1 Th. 4:3-5)".

Moreover, since marriage is an ordinance of creation rather than of redemption, these divine standards apply to the whole human community, and not merely to a diminishing religious remnant. It is impossible, therefore, to rest content with the faithful teaching of biblical sex ethics to the congregation (though, to be sure, this is so rare that in itself it would be a welcome improvement); we have to be concerned also with the public debate about marriage (is it not now dispensable?), about divorce and remarriage of divorced persons (why make a fuss about these things?), and about homosexual partnerships (if characterised not by promiscuity but by fidelity, are they not an acceptable variation to heterosexual marriage?). Christians should enter vigorously into these debates, and fearlessly use the pulpit to do so. We have a responsibility not only to expound God's standards with clarity and courage, and without compromise, and to exhort our own congregations to maintain and exhibit these standards with joyful faithfulness, but also to go on to comment on them to the secular community".

Stott (1982a:170) concludes that "a mind may be said to be Christian when it has firmly grasped the fourfold biblical scheme of creation, fall, redemption and consummation, and is able to evaluate the phenomena of life in the light of it. So all our preaching should gradually unfold the 'whole counsel of God' and so contribute to the development of Christian minds in the congregation".

Therefore, according to Stott, in order to apply the Word of God to listeners, the preacher ought to understand the world and the concrete situation of the real life of his hearers, the world to which the whole counsel of God must be preached.

### *5.5.3 His methods of bridge-building as the application in a sermon*

#### *5.5.3.1 Direct application*

Applications may take several forms, direct or indirect. The preacher can use all of them effectively. We will first deal with Stott's direct application in a sermon.

Whitesell (1963:92) says that "it is better to make definite, searching application than to imply or hint at it". We can find the direct application everywhere in Stott's sermons. He likes to apply the truth to his listeners directly. He (1979b:252, 258) says that "exactly the same principle can be applied by contemporary Christians to their work and employment ... In labour relations today the same basic principle holds good of justice based on reciprocal rights" .

#### 5.5.3.1.1 The note of inevitability

The note of inevitability is always present in his application. In his sermon on Galatians 4:12-20, Stott (1986b:115) appeals as follows: "There is an important lesson here. When the Galatians recognised Paul's apostolic authority, they treated him as an angel, as Christ Jesus. But when they did not like his message, he became their enemy. How fickle they were, and foolish! An apostle's authority does not cease when he begins to teach unpopular truths. We cannot be selective in our reading of the apostolic doctrine of the New Testament. We cannot, when we like what an apostle teaches, defer to him as an angel, and when we do not like what he teaches, hate him and reject him as an enemy. No, the apostles of Jesus Christ have authority in everything they teach, whether we happen to like it or not".

And still on another occasion he (1986b:137,138) says that "the religion of the New Testament is vastly different from this mental outlook. Christianity will not allow us to sit on the fence or live in a haze; it urges us to be definite and decisive, and in particular to choose between Christ and circumcision. 'Circumcision' stands for a religion of human achievement, of what man can do by his own good works; 'Christ' stands for a religion of divine achievement, of what God has done through the finished work of Christ. 'Circumcision' means law, works and bondage; 'Christ' means grace, faith and freedom. Everyman must choose ... Further, this choice has to be made by both the people and the ministers of the church, by those who practise and those who propagate religion. It is either Christ or circumcision that the people 'receive' (verse 2), and either Christ or circumcision that ministers 'preach' (verse 11). In principle, there is no third alternative".

#### 5.5.3.1.2 The note of warning

Another aspect that can be included under Stott's direct application is his warning of discipline to his congregation.

In the conclusion of his sermon on Matthew 7:15-20, he (1978a:200) warns as follows: "'So, beware!' Jesus warns. We must be on our guard, pray for discernment, use our critical faculties and never relax our vigilance. We must not be dazzled by a person's outward clothing - his charm, learning, doctorates and ecclesiastical honours. We must not be so naive as to suppose that because he is a Ph.D or a D.D or a professor or a bishop he must be a true and orthodox ambassador of Christ. We must

look beneath the appearance to the reality. What lives under the fleece: a sheep or a wolf?”.

Therefore, Stott often applies the truth of God to listeners by using the warning in order to arouse people from indolence and sloth.

#### 5.5.3.1.3 By way of interrogation

Most frequently Stott applies the truth to his hearers by way of interrogation. In his sermon on 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18, he (1991a:199) asks: “To which kind of church do we belong? Is its vision global or merely parochial? Is its attitude to Scripture principled or unprincipled, obedient or disobedient? While history moves towards its denouement and we await the rebellion of Antichrist which will hear the revelation of Christ, can we say from the heart ‘Let the Word of the Lord run and be honoured throughout the world’ and ‘ Let the Word of the Lord be honoured and obeyed in the church?’”

And still on another occasion he (1966:56) concretely and individually applies the message to listeners by means of direct speech: "We need to talk to ourselves about them, and ask ourselves, ‘Don’t you know?’ ... ‘Don’t you know that you are one with Christ? That you have died to sin and risen to God? Don’t you know that you are a slave of God and therefore committed to His obedience? Don’t you know these things?’ And we must go on asking ourselves these questions until we reply, ‘Yes, I do know, and by the grace of God I shall live accordingly’”.

Stott believes that to set a series of questions is a particularly good way to convey the truth and to bring it home to the minds and the hearts of his listeners, as Paul used to do (1 Cor. 1:12, 20, 2:4-5,16 etc.).

#### 5.5.3.2 Indirect application

The indirect application must in every case follow the same rule as the direct application - it must add nothing new to the text, but simply exhibit and set in operation the divine truth contained in it. The indirect application gives stimulation in a particular direction but trusts the listener to make his own specific decision. It recognises the uniqueness of every situation and trusts the Holy Spirit to complete what the sermon has begun (An, 1995:133). Baumann (1978:250) says that "good preaching need not make explicit application, but may often serve its purpose - and

more effectively so - through implicit, subtle, and suggestive application. The preacher becomes a midwife who assists in the encounter between God and man". Man must do the responding; the preacher's task is to assist, not do it for him.

Stott suggests indirect application, i.e., stating the case in such a way that the hearers will think of ways in which the truth specifically applies to them. For instance, in his exposition of the Sermon on the mount (Mt. 5:21-30), he (1978a:91) shows that "Jesus was quite clear about it. It is better to lose one member and enter life maimed, he said, than to retain our whole body and go to hell. That is to say, it is better to forgo some experiences this life offers in order to enter the life which is life indeed; it is better to accept some cultural amputation in this world than risk final destruction in the next. Of course this teaching runs clean counter to modern standards of permissiveness. It is based on the principle that eternity is more important than time and purity than culture, and that any sacrifice is worth - while in this life if it is necessary to ensure our entry into the next. We have to decide, quite simply, whether to live for this world or the next, whether to follow the crowd or Jesus Christ".

Stott sometimes applies the Word of God to listeners by means of an illustration in the conclusion of his sermon (1979b:58, 152-153, 183).

In the conclusion of his sermon on Galatians 4:1-11, in conclusion, he holds up John Newton as an apt illustration: "He was an only child and lost his mother when he was seven years old. He went to sea at the tender age of eleven and later became involved, in the words of one of his biographers, 'in the unspeakable atrocities of the Africa slave trade'. He plumbed the depths of human sin and degradation. When he was twenty-three, on 10 March 1748, when his ship was in imminent peril of foundering in a terrific storm, he cried to God for mercy, and he found it. He was truly converted, and he never forgot how God had had mercy upon on him, a former blasphemer. He sought diligently to remember what he had previously been, and what God had done for him. In order to imprint it on his memory, he wrote the words of Deuteronomy 15:15 in bold letters and affixed it above the mantelpiece of his study: 'Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman (a slave) in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee'. If only we remember these things, what we once were and what we now are, we would have an increasing desire within us to live accordingly, to be what we are, namely sons of God set free by Christ.

Thus, Stott is sure that he should address the consciences of his hearers, whether he uses the front door of the heart by direct application or the back door by indirect application.

### 5.5.3.3 Persuasion as the end in application

Application in the sermon, both throughout the discourse and as a concluding act, must be focused upon persuading the hearer - stirring the listener of the sermon to act upon the truth that was shared. Persuasion is a key concern in the preaching task because pulpit utterance must have both its art and its aim. Preaching is deliberative, using both information and inspiration to achieve its end: acceptance of the Word and action because of its importance. Stott emphasises this point in his sermons. When the preacher preaches sermons to his congregation, each person responds differently to the sermonizer's message.

According to Stott (1982a:253), the members of the congregation hear sermons through different filters. Some will be receptive to our message. Others will be resistant to it because they perceive it as a threat to their world view, or culture, or family unity, or personal self-esteem, or sinful way of life, or economic lifestyle. Being sensitive to these mental and spiritual blocks, we may well need in the conclusion to resort to 'persuasion', a common description of the preaching of the apostles. Persuasion is based upon a shared understanding of the given Word. A call must finally be made to identify with the meaning and import of it all, so that the claim of the truth can be answered to the hearer's benefit. Very strategic in all of this is the kind of appeal the preacher has made in the handling of the text and its message.

Stott (1982a, 251,252) says that "as for our text, we meditated on it until it yielded its dominant thought or theme. It is this, then, which now needs to be enforced in such a way that the people feel its impact and go away determined to act upon it. Does the text call to repentance or stimulate faith? Does it evoke worship, demand obedience, summon to witness, or challenge to service? The text itself determines the particular response we desire".

There are many rhetorical means by which a final application can be made in a sermon. One method is to simplify it by a direct statement about the significance of acting on the message one has heard. Another means is to amplify it, reinforcing the point of the message by dramatic examples of outcomes. Still another course is to dignify the message by a planned cadence of strategically ordered words and climax-

building phrases, so that the zeal and enthusiasm of the preacher can speak even more warmly to the feeling-level of the hearers, 'moving' them to identify fully with it all. This can be most important in stirring the hearer to a positive, personal, and passionate commitment to some truth one not only believes but also feels (Dutuit, 1992:213).

Consequently, in Stott's view (1982a:253,254), the preacher may seek to persuade by argument (anticipating and answering people's objections). or by admonition (warning them of the consequences of disobedience), or by indirect conviction (first arousing a moral judgement in them and then turning it upon themselves, as Nathan did with David), or by pleading (applying the gentle pressure of God's love).

#### 5.5.3.4 Placement within the sermon

Many sermons attempt some indirect or direct application throughout the message. Lloyd-Jones (1981:58) especially applies the truth throughout his sermon. But Stott's sermons postpone the application until the conclusion. But not all application should be left to the end, for our text needs to be applied as we go along. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to disclose too soon the conclusion to which we are going to come. If we do, we lose people's sense of expectation. It is better to keep something up our sleeve. Then we can leave to the end that persuading which, by the Holy Spirit's power, will prevail on people to take action (Stott, 1982a:246).

As Stott has said, obviously, in many sermons he does not entirely postpone the application to the few moments of the conclusion. He is moving steadily toward the conclusion throughout, and the carefully chosen last point brings him to his goal, the issues.

Consequently, Stott likes to apply the message at the end of the sermon. For instance, in his sermon on Galatians 4:1-11. he uses 6 pages for his explanation and 2 pages in the conclusion for his application, which includes two subpoints and the illustration in order to confirm 'what the Christian's life is' and 'how to live the Christian life' (Stott, 1986b:103-110).

#### 5.5.3.5 His view on the Holy Spirit and bridge-building

The preacher may preach the Word with the utmost fidelity, he may make the most fervent appeals or warn with the deepest solemnity, but unless the Holy Spirit breathes

upon the message and quickens the hearts of individuals, the sermon will of itself fail to accomplish anything (Braga, 1981:210). The power of the Holy Spirit makes preaching effective and applicable. Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance".

Stott (1992:68) explains the foundation of Paul's power in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 as follows: "His confidence was not in 'wise and persuasive words' (NIV) or 'plausible words of wisdom' (RSV). That is, he relied neither on the wisdom nor on the eloquence of the world. Instead of the world's wisdom he preached Christ and his cross (Verses 1-2), and instead of the world's rhetoric he trusted in the powerful demonstration which the Holy Spirit gives to the word. For only the Holy Spirit can convince people of their sin and need, open their eyes to see the truth of Christ crucified, bend their proud wills to submit to him, set them free to believe in him, and bring them to new birth. This is the powerful 'demonstration' which the Holy Spirit gives to words spoken in human weakness".

Lloyd-Jones emphasises that the general preaching of the Gospel is particularly applied by the Holy Spirit to specific cases. In other words, under the influence of the Holy Spirit people are able at different levels to extract what they need and what is helpful to them. The application of the truth of the Word is always made by the Holy Ghost (Jung, 1981:186). Stott believes that the Holy Spirit takes the preaching of the Word and applies timeless truths in a practical way to the lives of those helped. In the early years of his ministry, Stott's theory and his practice were to expound the biblical text and leave the application largely to the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this method is by no means as ineffective as it may sound, for two reasons. First, the biblical text is itself amazingly contemporary, and secondly, the Holy Spirit does use it to bring the hearers to conviction of sin, faith in Christ and growth in holiness. At the same time, it would be quite inadmissible to use the perpetual relevance of the gospel and the up-to-date ministry of the Holy Spirit as an excuse for avoiding the communication problem (Stott, 1982a:142).

Of course, we must do everything we can to enhance the practical nature of our sermons. But we must also be keenly aware that we do rely on our own skill and energies in our preaching. The Holy Spirit powerfully applies the Word when a preacher preaches (Vines, 1985:102).

Therefore, according to Stott, the Spirit of truth alone can stir the conscience, move the will, sanctify the soul, write God's law upon the heart, and stamp God's image upon the character.

## **5.6 Stott's contribution to homiletics for the modern preacher**

5.6.1 From our study of Stott's homiletical principle in general (5.1.2) it can be said that the biblical expository sermon will rightly convey its God-given message on the sound theological foundations. Without sufficient understanding of the basic doctrine of Christianity, the preacher neither formulates his sermon, nor preaches effectively to his congregation. So, Theology is essential to preaching (5.1.5). Without theology there is no preaching, at least not in the New Testament sense.

Thus it can be concluded that there are at least five theological foundations which are essential to each sermon to the listeners. That is why the preacher must effectively preach to the uncaring contemporary world.

These arguments in support of the sermon are based on the doctrine of God, Scripture, the church, the ministry (or pastorate as Stott prefers to call it), and preaching as the ground work.

The major reason why he has stressed these theological foundations of preaching, is that the real secret of expository preaching is not a matter of the preacher using certain techniques, but of his being mastered by certain convictions. To put the same point in another way, theology is far more important than methodology. Therefore, it can be regarded as the essential point of John Stott's homiletical contribution. And then his theological arguments of preaching will do much to encourage modern preachers that the revival of the sermon so urgently needed.

5.6.2 Stott's special concern for the preachers emphasises that all preachers must have some basic qualification (5.2), because preaching is conveying truth through the whole personality of preacher and his message moves through his qualities and characteristics. So the whole personality of the preacher must be involved. It is not of primary importance that the preacher is skilful in conveying his message but his preaching must have a fine quality. In fact, a significant form of the preparation of the sermon is its arrangement by the

preacher. Effectiveness in the pulpit is indeed tied to the life, the integrity, the Christian character of the man who delivers the message. Good men are full of their message and will be heard. So, the preacher must be a godly man and must have wisdom, patience and forbearance. These are basic qualifications that should be looked for and on which we must insist. It is only after emphasising such qualities that we come to the question of ability.

In fact, Stott stresses that the quality of the preacher's personality and qualifications is of such vital importance to the delivery of the sermon, because the success or failure of the preaching depends on this preacher's personality. Therefore, for Stott every principle of sermon delivery, whether pertaining to vocal production, use of the body, or delivery style, is to be judged by a more important concept - the minister's personality and characteristics. But, at all costs, let the creative endowments of his personality, those distinctive attributes which can make his preaching effective, be seen. Stott exhorts his fellow-preachers that even more important is the inner personal preparation of himself. Thus, the preacher's first and most important task is to prepare himself, not his sermon. At first one tends to think that the great thing is to prepare the sermon - and the sermon, as I have been saying, does need most careful preparation. But altogether more important is the preparation of the preacher himself.

Consequently, without having good characteristics the preacher cannot effectively preach a sermon which leads the people of God to maturity.

5.6.3 John Stott's major contribution lies in his consistent emphasis on evangelistic preaching (5.4). Stott's formulation of the kerygma has not changed substantially in over thirty years. He (1986a:33) says that "Jesus was a man who was accredited by God through miracles and anointed by the Holy Spirit to do good and to heal. Despite this, He was crucified through the agency of wicked men, though also by God's purpose according to the Scripture, and as attested by the apostolic eyewitness. Next God exalted Him to the place of supreme honour as the Lord and Saviour. He now possesses full authority both to save those who repent, believe and are baptised in His name, bestowing on them the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit, and to judge those who reject Him".

Whenever Stott has an opportunity to preach a sermon, he thinks of unbelievers who attend the worship and the meeting. So he frequently proclaims the kerygmatic message to his audience. The application in Stott's sermon is very frequently directed at the non-Christian rather than the church member. Stott shows that the church needs a preacher who will strive for a balance between evangelistic, doctrinal, therapeutic, and prophetic preaching. All of these needs are resident in a contemporary congregation. We can learn from him.

5.6.4 According to Stott (5.5), the words of Scripture are directed to specific people who are in specific situations, times and cultures. The Bible was not written by a series of authors who were divorced from life. Therefore, the truth in the Bible, equally, should be directed to modern people specifically because the truth of the scriptures is the eternal words of God. Stott always emphasises that the preacher always has to make use of the 'bridge-building' connecting the truth of the ancient and modern worlds. Bridge building is the present consequence of scriptural truth. Without bridge building (application) the preacher has no reason to preach because truth without application is useless. This means that the essence of preaching is not merely the proclamation of truth, but is truth applied. The bridge building focuses the truth of God's Word on specific, life-related situations. It helps people understand what to do or how to use what they have learned. The application in a sermon persuades His listeners to act. The bridge building also focuses the impact of the entire sermon on the transformation God requires in His people. Thus, in the application, preachers ought to pour out their hearts.

5.6.5 John Stott is called to preach, and he devotes himself to training his mind to analyse and communicate Scripture. He has never outgrown his devotional life, believing that daily time spent in reading the Bible for his personal edification, aside from time spent in sermon preparation, is essential. The other side of this coin must also not be neglected: Stott reads the secular literature regularly, both fiction and non-fiction, in order to expound God's Word. Although Stott's effectiveness cannot be documented in statistics, his contribution have been very significant. He has practised what he has preached. He realised his shortcomings and took steps to improve himself for his ministry. He committed his life to helping other people come to know Christ and to understand the message of the Bible. Though very few pastors will have the keen analytical mind, the gentle spirit, and the historical church

at the cross roads of the world that John Stott has, every preacher should be able to learn form these observations.

5.6.6 Finally, comprehensive understanding of the preaching in John Stott's homiletics which considers the process of exegesis, hermeneusis and homileisis as essential ingredients in expository sermons, can be contributed as corrective. We evaluated and analysed Stott's sermons with the above mentioned elements in which determined for the sermon in this study. These evaluations and analyses may lead to further correctives which may equip preachers more extensively in essential elements of the expository sermon.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis as indicated in the introduction, was an in-depth research into the principles and methods employed in the homiletics of John R.W. Stott.

A closer specification of the goal of this study was: (1) to undertake an investigation of and to describe his exegetic, hermeneutic and homiletic principles and methods, (2) to arrive at a descriptive analysis of his homiletic principles and especially, to examine his views concerning the application in a sermon, i.e., '*Bridge-Building*', and (3) to interpret and evaluate his sermons in the context of the biblical and Reformed theology.

It was imperative to undertake an intensive analytical study of his published works because all his principles and methods concerning exegesis, hermeneutic and homiletic questions are contained in his extensive range of sermons and his treatise on preaching. Final conclusions are stated below.

### 6.1 Influences on Stott's background

We dealt briefly with his biography, giving special attention to the issues that influenced Stott and his career. The influences of home and the various schools attended helped to shape this reserved young man. And the other primary factors (the influences of Nash, Simeon, Ryle and Morgan, etc.) also has effected Stott to mould the characteristics of a great preacher and one of the most passionate evangelists of the late twentieth century.

As a result of these influences, there are two characteristics that mark John Stott's career and thus effect his thought. The first - the high place he has given to sound, doctrinal, expository preaching - has been with him from the beginning, and the love of Scripture was instilled in him at an early stage. The second - a demonstration of the fact that one can be biblically conservative and also actively involved in the resolution

of social issues - has developed more recently and has caused controversy in evangelical circles.

Therefore, his most recently published works on the spiritual experience of the preacher illustrate the intimate connection between the Word of God and the personal spirituality of the preacher. And then, as a background to all his life and work, there are the recurring fundamental evangelical distinctives: the uniqueness of Christ and the need of personal conversion; the living word of the Holy Scripture; and the centrality of the cross.

## **6.2 Conclusions on Stott's exegetical viewpoints**

6.2.1 According to Stott, without a proper basic understanding of the Bible no both the principles and methods of exegesis can help a preacher in attaining his goal: discovering the original meaning of the text.

He regards the Bible as God's self-disclosure in speech and writing, the divine autobiography written by the biblical authors. Scripture is God's written Word, the product of His revelation, inspiration and providence. Here God Himself speaks to us. So this understanding of the Bible is indispensable to exegetes and preachers.

6.2.2 From our study on Stott's attitude to the study of the Bible, it is concluded that his views are governed by at least three basic characteristics:

- \* The exegete should study the whole Bible using the comprehensive method.
- \* The preacher should face Scripture as far as possible with fairness and an open mind.
- \* The pastor has to be expectant in his Bible study, e.g., God is going to speak to him through the text of the Bible.

6.2.3 We can sum up Stott's characteristic principles of all biblical exegesis in three ways:

- \* **'Scriptura sui ipsius interpres'** - The Scripture is its own interpreter. This is not just a formal, technical rule. An obscure and doubtful passage of Scripture must be interpreted by another clear and certain passage.
- \* The expositor must pray for the illumination of the Spirit of God before reading the Bible. Because without prayer we cannot understand the Word of God. Therefore, the important key to the exegesis of Stott is the confession **'Spiritus Sanctus est Verus Interpres Scripturae'** (the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of Scripture).
- \* The preacher has to discern what the original writers meant by discovering the original sense or the natural sense, which may be either literal or figurative. He must also represent the precise meaning of the text as intended by the biblical authors. These are respectively the principles of history and of simplicity.

6.2.4 Finally, from our study of Stott's characteristic method of all biblical exegesis (3.7), it can be concluded that he does not use new exegetical methods, but he reminds one afresh of the time-honoured exegetical practices:

- \* The preacher must derive the text of his sermon from the Holy Scripture.
- \* The expositor has to meditate on the text for as long a time as possible.
- \* The exegete should approach the Bible inductively. Stott calls it the art of discovering the original meaning of the text.
- \* Finally, exegetical aids (i.e., semantic language analysis) help the preacher to analyze a word's tense, case, and number so that its specific grammatical features can be identified or researched by a grammatical aid or lexicon. The

exegetical tools will guide preachers to the original-language meanings and uses of the biblical words, and then they are available to help grant pastors confidence that they are preaching what the Holy Spirit wants them to say.

### **6.3 Conclusions on Stott's hermeneutical viewpoints**

6.3.1 From the approach of Stott to hermeneutics, his prominent contributions can be stated as follows:

- \* His principles and methods of hermeneutics are to persist in the traditional viewpoint of interpretation of the Reformers. In that regard Stott concentrates on grasping the meaning of the passage of the Bible in which God speaks to us.
- \* His deepest concern is to consider the context as part of any text. The first task of hermeneutics is to interpret precisely what a biblical author's statement means in its context.

6.3.2 Stott's particular hermeneutical contributions can be summarized as follows:

- \* The principles of his hermeneutics are dominated by guidelines by three teachers e.g., the Holy Spirit, the preachers and the Church. It is by receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit, by using our own reason and by listening to the teaching of others in the Church that we grow in our understanding of Scripture.
- \* Stott does not neglect the basic methods of interpretation, but he sticks to them. With regard to the meaning of the text, he emphasizes the preeminence of the contextual, the grammatical and the verbal approaches. In the case of the significance of the text, he stresses the theological and cultural understanding.

- \* His principle of the salient features of hermeneutics is the Christ-centred approach. He consistently attempts to extract redemptive truths from all of Scripture. So his idea of a message from the text highlights the central theme of atonement as it relates to all the issues of faith and life. The Bible is indeed the cradle that brings Christ to us.
- \* Stott uses the principle of the ‘analogy of faith’ to guide his hermeneutics, as the Protestant Reformers did. This standard requires preachers to use Scripture alone as the basis for their exhortation. Stott determines the biblical truths intended for the persons addressed by the text and then identifies similarities in our present condition that require the application of precisely the same truths.
- \* The aim of Stott’s hermeneutics not only inspires us by its example, but also provides the principles and methods for the interpretation of the Bible by which the Church today can do what Stott has done during his life time, as the Reformers of old did.

6.3.3 Stott emphasizes that these principles can be dominated by the threefold rules of hermeneutics, that is, the natural meaning, the original meaning and the general meaning. Each of these characteristic principles of hermeneutics is not only common but also an immutable rule in biblical interpretation. Nobody dares to refute its validity; however, what is characteristic in Stott’s case is that he does apply them to the hermeneutical practice in his actual preaching.

6.3.4 One of the dominant characteristics of his principles and methods is that he has never been influenced by the current liberal theology to include the reader’s views into the text. On the contrary, Stott criticizes their principles and methods of interpretation through a critical rereading of the Bible. Accordingly he has never placed any doctrine, criticism or the principles of the modern theologian above the teaching of the Holy Scripture.

## **6.4 Conclusions on Stott's viewpoints on the act of hermeneusis**

- 6.4.1 The purpose of his hermeneusis does not merely obligate preachers to explain what the Bible says; it impells them to explain what the Bible means in the lives of people today. So he always tries to apply the original meaning of the text to the modern situation.
- 6.4.2 From our study of Stott's essential elements in the process of hermeneusis, it can be concluded that the expositor has to consider the indicative, the imperative and the promise in the text, as well as the revelation of God (Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), because hermeneusis deals with the meaning of the 'then' text bridging the gap to 'today'.
- 6.4.3 The central elements in the process of hermeneusis are not only the indicative, the imperative and the promise that must be incorporated in the praxis of unfolding the text, but also the revelation of Triune God that the author makes known about God, i.e., His will, His mercy, His wrath, etc. and about His grace in Christ, His Spirit within us.

## **6.5 Conclusions on Stott's homiletic viewpoints**

- 6.5.1 He stresses that an expository sermon must be established on a sound theological foundation. The principles of the theological foundation are the doctrines of God: the Holy Scripture, the Church, the pastorate, and the preaching as the ground work. Therefore, for Stott, it can be concluded that there are at least five theological foundations of preaching that enable a preacher to preach effectively to the modern world.
- 6.5.2 The practice of preaching cannot be divorced from the person of the preacher because the whole theology of a preacher lies beneath the practice of his sermon and a whole lifestyle stands behind it. Therefore, the preacher's

personality and qualifications are of such vital importance to the delivery of the sermon.

6.5.3 From our study of Stott's characteristic form of preaching it is concluded that his sermon is governed by a few basic homiletic principles as follows:

- \* The sermon must arise out of a text the preacher has chosen. Within his sermon Stott is committed to the idea that the text should dominate. He emphasizes that the text should always furnish the message and the theme of the sermon, regardless of the length of the text.
- \* The sermon needs to have a sound and functional structure, e.g., the introduction, the body and the conclusion in a sermon. For Stott, formulating the sermon is of vital importance in creating a sound sermon structure. He states firmly that no sermon is really strong which is not strong in structure too. Just as bones without flesh make a skeleton, so flesh without bones makes a jellyfish.
- \* For Stott, the purpose of the formulation of the sermon is an essential process to convey the message of the text and to lead the audience to face God. For this purpose the preacher has to study and develop his sermon. And then he has to be sure at all times that he must depend upon the Holy Spirit, and not rely only on his own skill.

6.5.4 Stott emphasizes that the preacher should interpret the Bible as Christ-centred, as well as preach the kerygmatic message, because there are some unbelievers among his congregation. Moreover, Stott thinks that preaching not only tells us about Jesus Christ but also stresses His presence in Christian communities. This has been at the very heart of John Stott's life and message.

6.5.5 The core of Stott's methods on homiletics is a bridge-building as the application in a sermon. He describes the deep rift between the biblical and the

modern world. Thus the expository preacher must do his utmost to interpret the Scripture so accurately and plainly, and to apply it so forcefully, that the truth crosses the bridge. Because an expository sermon is based on correct exegesis, hermeneusis and homileisis, a preaching text itself should be interpreted, explained and applied to the listeners in their concrete situation.

His particular concern of bridge-building as homiletic action can be summarized as follows:

- \* The preacher must understand the cultural background of the text in order attain build a bridge.
- \* The preacher also has to know the listener's contemporary situation (culture, politics, ethics) in order to make bridge-building comprehensible to him.
- \* The model of bridge-building in a sermon is the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- \* The methods of bridge-building as an application in a sermon are governed by the direct and indirect way of application throughout the content of a sermon.
- \* The bridge-building as an application should be in congruence with the telos of the text.
- \* The final purpose of the bridge-building is to lead the people of God into maturity.

6.5.6 The way to improve our expository preaching is not to emulate Stott's homiletical principles and methods directly, but to imitate his passion and tender heart for the people of God. Above all, the real secret of his sermon is not the mastering of certain homiletic principles and methods, but the fact that he is being controlled by a consuming pastoral love for the people to whom he is preaching.

## 6.6 Final conclusions

6.6.1 Stott's perspectives for the praxis of the Reformed preaching can be summed them up as follows:

- \* First of all, Stott's perspective for the praxis of the Reformed preaching is regarded as one of the most vital elements in the process of hermeneusis, i.e. the central revelation of God in the text, the indicative, imperative, and promise in the biblical text.
- \* Stott does not follow the Reformers in formulating a sermon, instead he has developed more principles and methods, that is, for the exegesis, hermeneusis and homileusis he always works conforming to Scripture, tradition and reason. Scripture is consistently supreme.
- \* Stott's preaching is primarily concerned with what the Bible says and means from the standpoint of its main Divine intention. He stresses biblical content as well as sermon organization and structure. So the content of his sermons keeps to serve the total significance of biblical revelation.
- \* As the Reformers did, Stott does not always preach expository sermons but sometimes switches to topical preaching. For example, the major difference between his writing style in *The Cross of Christ* and his preaching is that the book is topical, and his other sermons are expository. The Reformed tradition has always stressed a thematic style of preaching.
- \* Stott's perspective on preaching is that a sermon is the chief means ordained by God by which God, the Holy Spirit, works His grace in the hearts of the elect in Christ and preserves them to everlasting life and glory.
- \* Concerning his perspective for the praxis of the Reformed preaching, Stott stresses that the preaching must explain the plain, simple, yet utterly profound

meaning of the Word of God as that Word applies to every sphere of human life and meets every need of the child of God. He always tries to understand the congregation and their situation in the process of homiletics and recognises that there should be a congruence between the meaning and the application of the text.

#### 6.6.2 Correctives for certain types of preaching:

- \* The principles and methods of Stott's preaching can be used as a model for correcting certain types of sermons which are divorced from the biblical text. Such sermons are contrary to Stott's process of exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics as the most vital elements in a sermon.
- \* A further improvement could be for some preachers who preach a sermon that have weak points from an exegetical and hermeneutic perspective. The study of the principles and methods in the homiletics of John Stott can lead to further amendments which may equip the preacher more extensively in the essential elements of the expository sermon.
- \* Stott's 'bridge-building' as application in a sermon may be a corrective for preaching that does not regard the proper explanation of the text and a sound application as of great importance in the content of a sermon.
- \* The pneumatic principle and method in Stott's preaching can especially lead to further correctives that may equip pastors more effectively with the power of the Holy Spirit when they prepare and preach their sermons.

6.6.3 Finally, we want to conclude this thesis by quoting Stott's prayer that he has been praying for the past number of years before mounting the pulpit (Stott, 1982a:340):

**Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence.  
May your Word be our rule,  
your Spirit our teacher,  
and your greater glory our supreme concern,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **6.7 Topics for further study**

- 6.7.1 The elements and the methods of communication in Stott's preaching. The primary sources are available from his books and tapes of sermons in All Souls Church.
- 6.7.2 A biblical study of Stott's theory of atonement in both the Old and the New Testaments and its significance to preaching.
- 6.7.3 A comparative study of the exegetic, hermeneutic and homiletic principles and methods of John Stott and Lloyd-Jones, since the sermons of both on Romans are available.
- 6.7.4 A study of his pneumatic viewpoint which contains 'the baptism and fullness of the Holy Ghost' in the New Testament and its significance to preaching.
- 6.7.5 Further study of his viewpoints on the understanding of the modern situation and contemporary Christianity, and their significance to preaching and for preachers.
- 6.7.6 A thorough study of Stott's concern with social action in the national activities and in the world-wide ministry, especially the evangelical movement.
- 6.7.7 A study of his understanding of 'mission' in both the Old and the New Testament

## **6.8 Keywords of this study**

The following keywords can be used for electronic research purposes:

John Stott, Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Hermeneusis, Homiletics, Homilexis, Expository preaching, Sermon, Preacher, Analogy of faith, Application, Bridge-building, Authority, Text, Context, Illustrations, Introduction, Kerygma, Meaning of the text, The Bible, Scripture, Revelation, Triune God, The Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ.

The more detailed keywords will be added to the index of subjects.

# ABSTRACT

## \* PRINCIPLES AND METHODS IN THE HOMILETICS OF JOHN R.W. STOTT

### 1 The purpose of this study

A closer specification of the aim of this study is threefold:

- \* To undertake a closer investigation of and to describe his exegetical, hermeneutic and homiletic principles and methods.
- \* To arrive at a descriptive analysis of his homiletic principles and especially, to examine his views concerning the application in a sermon, i.e., '*Bridge-Building*'.
- \* To interpret and evaluate his principles and methods of sermon in the context of the biblical and Reformed theology.

### 2 The method of this study

It is imperative to undertake an intensive analytical study of his published works because all of his principles and methods concerning exegesis, as well as hermeneutic and homiletic questions are contained in his extensive number of sermons and the treatise on preaching (*I believe in preaching*).

The method of this study is threefold:

- \* To investigate John Stott's works in literature by means of analysis and interpretation.
- \* To examine the recorded tapes of his sermons, have a personal interview with him and closely scrutinize of all materials published by him on the overall subject of preaching.

- \* In our presentation it is sometimes inevitable that many quotations and examples have to be used in order to elucidate his principles and methods.

### 3 Stott's biographical background

The influences that his home (parents), the various schools (high school and university) that he attended, and the other primary factors (Nash, Simeon, Ryle, Morgan) had on John Stott molded the characteristics of the greatest preacher and evangelist of the late twentieth century.

### 4 Stott's exegesis

4.1 He stresses that without a proper basic understanding of the Bible, both the principles and methods of exegesis cannot help a preacher in attaining his goal: discovering the original meaning of the text.

4.2 His characteristic attitude to the study of the Bible is governed by at least three bases:

- \* The exegete should study the whole Bible using the comprehensive method.
- \* The preacher should face Scripture as far as possible with fairness and an open mind.
- \* The pastor has to be expectant in his Bible study, i.e., God is going to speak to him through the text of the Bible.

4.3 We sum up all biblical exegesis as Stott's characteristic principles in three ways:

- \* **'Scriptura sui ipsius interpres'** - The Scripture is its own interpreter. This is not just a formal, technical rule. An obscure and doubtful passage of Scripture must be interpreted by another clear and certain passage.

- \* The expositor must pray for the illumination of the Spirit of God before reading the Bible. Because without prayer we cannot understand the Word of God. Therefore, the important key to the exegesis of Stott is the confession ‘**Spiritus Sanctus est Verus Interpres Scripturae**’ (the Holy Spirit is the true interpreter of Scripture).
  - \* The preacher has to discern what the original writers meant by discovering the original sense or the natural sense, which may be either literal or figurative. He must also represent the precise meaning of the text as intended by the biblical authors. These are respectively the principles of history and of simplicity.
- 4.4 We summarize Stott’s characteristic method of all biblical exegesis by stating that he does not use new exegetical procedures, but he reminds one afresh of the time-honoured exegetical practices:
- \* The preacher must derive the text for his sermon from the Holy Scripture.
  - \* The expositor has to meditate on the text for as long a time as possible.
  - \* The exegete should approach the Bible inductively. Stott calls it the art of discovering the original meaning of the text.
- 4.5 Ultimately, exegetical aids (e.g., semantic and syntactic analysis) help the preacher to analyze a word’s tense, case, and number so that its specific grammatical features can be identified or researched by a grammatical aid or lexicon. The exegetical tools will guide preachers to the original-language meanings and uses of the biblical words, and then they are available to help grant pastors confidence that they are preaching what the Holy Spirit wants them to say.

## **5 Stott’s hermeneutics and the process of hermeneusis**

- 5.1 His hermeneutics’ prominent elements is described as follows:

- \* His principles and methods of hermeneutics persist in the traditional viewpoint of interpretation of the Reformers. In that regard Stott concentrates on grasping the meaning of the passage of the Bible in which He speaks to us.
- \* His deepest concern is to consider the context as part of any text. The first task of hermeneutics is to interpret precisely what a biblical author's statement means in its context.
- \* The principles of his hermeneutics are dominated by guidelines of three teachers, e.g., the Holy Spirit, the preachers and the Church. It is by receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit, by using our own reason and by listening to the teaching of others in the Church that we grow in our understanding of Scripture.
- \* Stott emphasizes that the principles can be dominated by the threefold rules of hermeneutics, that is, the natural meaning, the original meaning and the general meaning. Each of his characteristic principles of hermeneutics is not only common but also an immutable rule in biblical interpretation.
- \* Stott does not neglect the basic methods of hermeneutics, but he sticks to them. With regard to the meaning of the text, he emphasizes the preeminence of the contextual, the grammatical and the verbal approaches. In the case of the significance of the text, he stresses the theological and cultural understanding.
- \* His principle of the salient features of hermeneutics is the Christ-centred approach. He consistently attempts to extract redemptive truths from all of Scripture. So his idea of a message from the text highlights the central theme of the atonement as it relates to all the issues of faith and life. The Bible is indeed the cradle that brings Christ to us.

- \* Stott uses the principle of the ‘analogy of faith’ to guide his hermeneutics, as the Protestant Reformers did. This standard requires preachers to use Scripture alone as the basis for their exhortation. Stott determines the biblical truths intended for the persons addressed by the text and then identifies similarities in our present condition that require the application of precisely the same truths.

## **5.2 We sum up Stott ‘s characteristics in the process of hermeneusis:**

- \* The purpose of his hermeneusis does not merely obligate preachers to explain what the Bible says; it requires them to explain what the Bible means in the lives of people today. Therefore, he always tries to apply the original meaning of the text to the modern situation.
- \* According to Stott essential elements in the process of hermeneusis are the indicative, the imperative and the promise in the text, because hermeneusis deals with the meaning of the text ‘then’ bridging the gap to ‘today’.
- \* The aim of Stott’s hermeneusis not only inspires us by its example, but provides the principles and methods for the interpretation of the Bible by which the Church today can do what he has done during his life time, as the Reformers of old did.
- \* The central elements in the process of hermeneusis are the revelation of the Triune God that the author makes known about God, i.e. His will, His mercy, His wrath, etc. and about His grace in Christ and His Spirit within us.

## **6 Stott’s homileis**

- 6.1 He stresses that an expository sermon must be established on a sound theological foundation. The principles of the theological foundation are the

doctrines of God: the Holy Scripture, the Church, the pastorate, and the preaching as the ground work.

6.2 The practice of preaching cannot be separated from the person of the preacher because the whole theology of a preacher lies beneath the practice of his sermon and a whole lifestyle stands behind it. Therefore, the preacher's personality and competence are of such vital importance to the delivery of the sermon.

6.3 His characteristic form of preaching is governed by a few basic homiletic principles:

\* The sermon must arise out of a text the preacher has chosen. Within his sermon Stott is committed to the idea that the text should dominate. He emphasizes that the text should always furnish the message and the theme of the sermon, regardless of the length of the text.

\* The sermon needs to have a sound and functional structure, i.e., the introduction, the body and the conclusion in a sermon. For Stott, formulating the sermon is of vital importance to creating a sound sermon structure. He states firmly that no sermon is really strong which is not strong in structure too. Just as bones without flesh make a skeleton, so flesh without bones makes a jellyfish.

\* For Stott, the purpose of the formulation of the sermon is an essential process to convey the message of the text and to lead the audience to face God. For this purpose the preacher has to study and develop his sermon. And then he has to be sure at all times that he must depend upon the Holy Spirit, and not rely only on his own skill.

6.4 Stott emphasizes that the preacher should interpret the Bible as Christ-centred, as well as preach the kerygmatic message, because there are some

unbelievers among his congregation. Moreover, Stott thinks that preaching not only tells us about Jesus Christ but also stresses the presence of Christ in Christian communities. This has been at the very heart of John Stott's life and message.

6.5 The core of Stott's methods on homiletics is bridge-building as the application in a sermon. He describes the deep rift between the biblical and the modern world. His particular concern of bridge-building can be summarized as follows:

- \* The preacher must understand the cultural background of the text in order to build a bridge.
- \* The preacher also has to know the listener's contemporary situation (culture, politics, ethics) in order to make bridge-building comprehensible to him.
- \* The model of bridge-building in a sermon is the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- \* The methods of bridge-building as an application in a sermon are governed by the direct and indirect way of application throughout the content of a sermon.
- \* The final purpose of the bridge-building is to lead the people of God into maturity.

6.6 The way to improve our expository preaching is not to emulate Stott's homiletical principles and methods directly, but to imitate his passion and tender heart for the people of God. Above all, the real secret of his sermon is not the mastering of certain homiletic principles and methods, but the fact that he is being controlled by a consuming pastoral love for the people to whom he is preaching.

6.7 Finally, we want to conclude this thesis by quoting Stott's prayer that he has been praying for the past number of years before mounting the pulpit (Stott, 1982a:340):

**Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence.  
May your Word be our rule,  
our Spirit our teacher,  
and your greater glory our supreme concern,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

# SAMEVATTING

## \* **BEGINSELS EN METODES IN DIE HOMILETIK VAN JOHN R.W. STOTT**

### **1. Die doel van hierdie studie**

'n nadere omskrywing van die doel van hierdie studie is:

- \* Om 'n deeglike ondersoek na Stott se eksegetiese en homiletiese beginsels en metodes te onderneem en dit te omskryf.
- \* Om tot 'n deskriptiewe analise van sy homiletiese beginsels te kom, en veral van sy siening oor die toepassing in 'n preek, i.e., '*Brug-bou*'.
- \* Om bogenoemde beginsels in die konteks van die Bybelse en Gereformeerde teologie te ontleed, te vertolk en te evalueer.

### **2. Die metode wat in hierdie studie gebruik is**

Dit is noodsaaklik om 'n intensiewe analitiese studie van sy gepubliseerde werke te onderneem omdat sy eksegetiese beginsels en metodes, sowel as hermeneutiese en homiletiese dimensies, na vrae kom in sy groot aantal preke en in sy verhandeling oor die prediking (I believe in preaching).

Die studie metode is drieërlei:

- \* Om John Stott se literere werke deur middel van ontleding en interpretasie te ondersoek.

- \* Om opnames van sy preke te bestudeer , 'n persoonlike onderhoud met hom te voer, en 'n noukeurige ondersoek te onderneem van al die materiaal deur hom gepubliseer oor die omvattende onderwerp van die prediking.
- \* In ons aanbieding is dit soms onvermydelik dat baie aanhalings en voorbeelde gebruik word om daardeur Stott se beginsels en metodes toe te lig.

### **3. Stott se biografie**

Die invloed wat sy ouers, verskeie skole (hoërskool en universiteit ) en verskeie prominente persone (Nash , Simeon, Ryle, Morgan) op hom gehad het, het gehelp om die persoon van 'n groot prediker en evangelis van die laat twintigste eeu te vorm.

### **4. Stott se eksegeese**

4.1 Hy beklemtoon dat sonder 'n deeglike basiese begrip van die Bybel, die beginsels en metodes van eksegeese 'n prediker nie kan help om sy doel te bereik nie, nl die ontdekking van die oorspronklike betekenis van die teks.

4.2 Sy kenmerkende standpunte oor die studie van die Bybel word heheers deur ten minste drie grondslae:

- \* Die eksegeet behoort die hele Bybel met behulp van die “omvattende metode” te bestudeer.
- \* Die prediker behoort, so ver moontlik, die Bybel met 'n eerlike en oop gemoed te benader.
- \* Die predikant moet die Skrif bestudeer in afwagting dat God met hom sal praat deur middel van die teks in die Bybel.

#### 4.3 Ons som drie “Bybelse” aspekte van Stott se eksegetiese beginsels soos volg op:

- \* “Scriptura sui ipsius interpres” - Die Skrif is sy eie interpreteerder, maar dan nie slegs as ’n formele, tegniese voorskrif nie. ’n Onduidelike en dubbelsinnige gedeelte uit die Skrif moet geïnterpreteer word in die lig van ’n ander duideliker gedeelte.
- \* Die eksegeet moet bid om die verligting van die Gees van God alvorens hy die Bybel lees. Sonder gebed kan ons nie die Woord van God verstaan nie. Daarom is die belangrikste sleutel van Stott se eksegese die belydenis “Spiritus Sanctus est Verus Interpres Scripturae” (Die Heilige Gees is die ware interpreteerder van die Skrif).
- \* Die prediker moet vasstel wat die oorspronklike skrywers bedoel het deur die ontdekking van die oorspronklike, of die natuurlike betekenis (wat letterlik of figuurlik mag wees). Hy moet ook die presiese betekenis van die teks, soos die Bybelse skrywers dit bedoel het, oordra. Hierdie is respektiewelik die beginsels van geskiedenis en van eenvoud.

#### 4.4 Ons som John Stott se kenmerkende benadering van Bybelse eksegese op deur te verklaar dat hy nie nuwe eksegetiese prosedures volg nie, maar dat hy ons opnuut herinner aan tydlose eksegetiese praktyke:

- \* Die prediker moet die teks vir sy preek uit die Skrif neem.
- \* Die prediker moet so lank moontlik met die teks besig bly, dit oordink.
- \* Die eksegeet behoort die Bybel induktief te benader. Stott noem dit die kuns om die oorspronklike betekenis van die teks te ontdek.

#### 4.5 Laastens help eksegetiese hulpmiddels (bv. semantiese en sintaktiese analise) die prediker om ’n werkwoord se tyd, of selfstandige naamwoord se naamval en getal te

analiseer, sodat die spesifieke grammatiese kenmerke geïdentifiseer of nagevors kan word met behulp van byvoorbeeld 'n leksikon. Die eksegetiese stappe sal predikers lei na die betekenis in die oorspronklike taal en na die gebruik van Bybelse woorde. Hierdeur kan predikers met vertroue preek en weet wat dit is wat die Heilige Gees wil hê hulle moet preek.

## **5. Stott se hermeneutiek en die proses van hermeneuse**

### 5.1 Die prominente elemente in sy hermeneutiek word as volg beskryf:

- \* In die beginsels en metodes van sy hermeneutiek volg Stott die tradisionele standpunte van interpretasie van die Hervormers. In hierdie opsig beklemtoon Stott die werklike begryp van die betekenis van die gedeelte van die Skrif waarmee hy werk.
- \* Hy plaas groot klem op die feit dat die konteks deel is van enige teks. Die eerste taak van die hermeneutiek is om dit wat die Bybelse skrywer bedoel het, in sy konteks te vertolk.
- \* Die beginsels van sy hermeneutiek word beheers deur drie riglyne, nl. die werk van die Heilige Gees, die predikers en die kerk. Deur die verligting van die Heilige Gees, deur die gebruik van ons verstand en deur te luister na die onderrig van ander gelowiges, groei ons eie insig in die Skrif.
- \* Stott benadruk dat sy hermeneutiese beginsels deur die drievoudige reëls van die hermeneutiek beheers word, nl. die natuurlike betekenis, die oorspronklike betekenis en die algemene betekenis. Elkeen van hierdie hermeneutiese beginsels is nie net algemeen nie maar is ook 'n onveranderlike reël wat by Bybelse interpretasie geld.
- \* Stott verontagsaam nie die basiese metodes van hermeneutiek nie maar hou daarby. Oor die betekenis van die teks, benadruk hy die voortreflikheid van die

kontekstuele, die grammatiese en verbale benadering. Hy beklemtoon die teologiese en kulturele verstaan van 'n teks om die waarde van die spesifieke teks vas te stel.

- \* Een van die opvallendste kenmerke van sy hermeneutiek is die Christosentriese benadering. Hy poog konsekwent om verlossingswaarhede uit alle dele van die Skrif te ontdek. Sy idee van 'n boodskap uit die teks onderstreep die sentrale tema van versoening, soos wat dit verband hou met geloof en die lewe self. Die Bybel is inderdaad die wieg wat Christus na ons bring.
- \* Stott gebruik die beginsel van die sg “analogie van geloof” om sy hermeneutiek te rig, soos die Hervormers dit gebruik het. So word die Skrif alleen gebruik as 'n basis vir die prediking. Stott stel vas wat die Bybelse waarhede is wat aan die oorspronklike lesers of hoorders oorgedra is. Hy bepaal dan hoe hierdie waarhede toegepas moet word op soortgelyke omstandighede wat hedendaagse mense beleef.

## 5.2 Stott se proses van hermeneuse

- \* Die bedoeling van sy hermeneuse is nie om net 'n verpligting op die prediker te plaas om dit wat die Skrif sê te verduidelik nie, dit vereis van 'n prediker 'n verduideliking van wat die teks beteken in die lewe van mense vandag. Hy probeer daarom om altyd die oorspronklike betekenis van die teks toe te pas op die moderne situasie.
- \* Volgens Stott is die essensiële elemente in die proses van hermeneuse die indikatief, die imperatief en die belofte in die teks, want hermeneuse handel oor die betekenis van die teks ‘toe’ en oorspan die gaping na ‘vandag’.
- \* Die einddoel van Stott se hermeneuse besiel nie alleen deur die voorbeeld wat dit stel nie, maar verskaf die beginsels en metodes vir die interpretasie van die

Bybel waarmee die kerk vandag dit kan doen wat sy deur haar geskiedenis heen gedoen het en soos ook die hervormers van ouds gedoen het.

- \* Die hoofelemente in die proses van hermeneuse is die openbaring van die Drie-Enige God, soos die Bybel dit aan ons openbaar i.e., God se wil, sy genade, sy toorn, Christus, en die werk van die Heilige Gees in ons.

## 6. Stott se homilese

6.1 Hy beklemtoon dat 'n verklarende preek gegrond moet wees op 'n vaste teologiese fondament. Die beginsels van hierdie teologiese fondament is die leer oor God, met die Heilige Skrif, die kerk, die pastoraat en die prediking as grondslag.

6.2 Die prediking kan nie los gesien word van die persoon van die prediker nie want die hele teologie van 'n prediker vorm die onderbou van sy prediking en sy hele lewenswyse rugsteun sy prediking. Die persoonlikheid en bekwaamheid van die prediker is daarom van uiterste belang by die aanbieding van 'n preek.

6.3 Die karakteristieke wyse waarop hy preek word bepaal deur 'n paar basiese homiletiese beginsels:

- \* Die preek moet voortkom uit die teks wat deur die prediker gekies is. Stott beklemtoon dat die teks sentraal moet staan. Hy benadruk dat die teks altyd die boodskap en die tema moet voortbring, ongeag die lengte van die teks.
- \* Die preek moet 'n stewige en funksionele struktuur hê, i.e., die inleiding, die liggaam en die slot. Die formulering van die preek is vir Stott van uiterste belang om 'n stewige struktuur vir die preek daar te stel. Hy beweer dat geen preek werklik sterk oorkom as die struktuur nie ook sterk is nie. Net soos bene sonder vleis 'n geraamte is, en vleis sonder bene 'n jellievis is, so is 'n preek sonder struktuur.

- \* Die doel met die formulering van 'n preek is vir Stott in essensie 'n proses om die boodskap van die teks oor te dra en om die hoorders te lei om God van aangesig tot aangesig te ontmoet. Vir hierdie doel moet die prediker die preek bestudeer en van stap tot stap ontwikkel. Hy moet ook te alle tye seker weet dat hy op die Heilige Gees vertrou en nie net op sy eie vaardigheid steun nie.

6.4 Stott beklemtoon dat die prediker die Bybel Christosentries moet vertolk en ook die kerugmatiese boodskap moet preek omdat daar ook ongelowiges in sy gemeente kan wees. Stott voel dat prediking ons nie net vertel van Jesus Christus nie maar ook beklemtoon dat Christus teenwoordig is in die Christelike gemeenskap. Dit vorm die hart van John Stott se lewe en boodskap.

6.5 Die kern van Stott se metodes van homilese is 'brug- bou', met die oog op die toepassing in 'n preek. Hy beskryf die diep kloof tussen die Bybel en die moderne wêreld. Sy besondere manier van 'brug-bou' oor hierdie kloof kan as volg opgesom word:

- \* Die prediker moet die kultuurhistoriese agtergrond van die teks verstaan om 'n 'brug te kan bou'
- \* Die prediker moet ook die gemeente se alledaagse situasie ken (kultuur, politiek, etiek) sodat hulle die 'brug-bou' kan verstaan.
- \* Die model vir 'brug-bou' in 'n preek is die vleeswording van Jesus Christus.
- \* 'Brug-bou' in 'n preek vind plaas wanneer direk en indirek deur die hele preek heen toegepas word.
- \* Die einddoel van 'brug-bou' is om God se kinders te lei tot geloofs- volwassenheid.

6.6 Die manier om verklarende preke te verbeter is nie om Stott se homiletiese beginsels en metodes slaafs na te volg nie maar wel om sy liefde vir en meeleving met God se kinders na te streef. Die werklike geheim van sy prediking lê tog nie in die bemeestering van sekere homiletiese beginsels en metodes nie, maar in die feit dat hy deur 'n verterende pastorale liefde vir die mense vir wie hy preek, vervul is.

6.7 Ten slotte wil ons hierdie proefskrif afsluit met Stott se gebed wat hy reeds vir 'n geruime tyd gebruik alvorens hy die kansel bestyg (Stott, 1982a:340).

**Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence.  
May your Word be our rule,  
your Spirit our teacher,  
and your greater glory our supreme concern,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

# ABBREVIATIONS

## 1. THE OLD TESTAMENT

Gen.	Genesis	Ess.	Ecclesiastes
Ex.	Exodus	Ss.	Song of songs
Lev.	Leviticus	Isa.	Isaiah
Nu.	Numbers	Jer.	Jeremiah
Deut.	Deuteronomy	La.	Lamentations
Jos.	Joshua	Eze.	Ezekiel
Jdg.	Judges	Dn.	Daniel
Ru.	Ruth	Hos.	Hosea
1 Sa.	1 Samuel	Joel	Joel
2 Sa.	2 Samuel	Am.	Amos
1 Ki.	1 Kings	Ob.	Obadiah
2 Ki.	2 Kings	Jnh.	Jonah
1 Ch.	1 Chronicles	Mic.	Micah
2 Ch.	2 Chronicles	Na.	Nahum
Ezr.	Ezra	Hab.	HABakkuk
Ne.	Nehemiah	Zep.	Zephaniah
Est.	Esther	Hag.	Haggai
Job	Job	Zec.	Zechariah
Ps.	Psalms	Mal.	Malachi
Pr.	Proverbs		

## 2. THE NEW TESTAMENT

Mt.	Matthew	Rom.	Romans
Mk.	Mark	1 Cor.	First Corinthians
Lk.	Luke	2 Cor.	Second Corinthians
Jn.	John	Gal.	Galatians
Acts	Acts	Eph.	Ephesians
Php.	Philippians	Jas.	James

Col.	Colossians	1 Pe.	First Peter
1 Th.	First Thessalonians	2 Pe.	Second Peter
2 Th.	Second Thessalonians	1 Jn.	1 John
1 Tim.	First Timothy	2 Jn.	2 John
2 Tim.	Second Timothy	3 Jn.	3 John
Tit.	Titus	Jude	Jude
Phm.	Phiemon	Rev.	Revelation
Heb.	Hebrews		

### 3. OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

LXX	Latin Septuagint Version	KJV	King James Version
NIV	New International Version	RSV	Revised Standard Version
AV	Authorized Version	LICC	The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press		
IVF	Inter-Varsity Fellowship		

\* **The Greek *accents* are omitted in this study, but the *breathing* alone is indicated (on a vowel or diphthong at the beginning of every Greek word).**

## APPENDIX

The original transcribed sermons which are evaluated in Chapter 5 are as follows:

- 1 John 3:1-15 - "Meeting with Jesus" : Nicodemus
- 2 John 4:1-42 - "If only you knew" : The Samaritan woman
- 3 Luke 15:1-32 - "Lost and found"



## Appendix 1 (Tape No. 2)

### John 3:1-15 Meeting with Jesus : Nicodemus

preached by Dr. John R.W. Stott.

It is a very wonderful thing that Jesus makes time for individuals. The Gospel writers tell us that He spent time preaching to the multitudes and training the twelve, but they also made it known that He spent time with people on a one-to-one basis. He gave them the opportunity to meet with him personally.

*Meeting with Jesus* is the overall title of this mini-series of sermons that begins today and will continue next Sunday and the Sundays after. In this service we are going to consider the personal dealings with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman, and then the rich young ruler.

This morning we are going to eavesdrop on the conversation that took place in the 1st century Jerusalem, between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 3:1-2: “Now there was a man named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council of the Sanhedrin. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miraculous signs that you are doing if God were not with him”.

Nicodemus was a very likable character. He was, in fact, an outstanding example of the sincere seekers after the truth. He came secretly to Jesus one night. I see no reason why we should blame him for that. He wanted to see Jesus privately and the great thing is that he came. He did not send somebody else to interview Jesus on his behalf. Moreover, he was not prepared to condemn this new movement which was associated with the name of Jesus of Nazareth, unheard.

The fact that other religious authorities disapproved of Jesus, seems to him no reason whatever, why he should. He had an independent mind. Have you?. So many of us only do what the crowd does. We are at root conformists. Nicodemus was not. In addition to that, he had integrity. He was determined to get his questions answered. Having evidence and listening to Jesus teaching at some occasion in public, he now came for a private talk.

I want to introduce Nicodemus to you, this morning, as an honest inquirer. I hope and believe that there are others like him in church this morning. He was neither a bigot not a humbug, nor a coward. He was an open-minded, open-hearted seeker after the truth and his search was rewarded.

Later in the Gospel we find him numbered among the disciples of Jesus. I want to say to you, if only there were more Nicodemuses in the world today. If only there were men and women who were prepared to lay aside their apathy, their prejudice and their fears and speak the truth with an honest and humble spirit. Their search would be fruitful because no godhead can search without finding.

Jesus says in the sermon on the Mount, "Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened unto everyone who seeks". God rewards all those who diligently seek Him. God is nobody's debtor and if there is somebody here this morning who has never come to know, never found God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, I wonder if the reason is not that you have not really sought Him with all your heart. But if you sought Him at all, only half-heatedly.

Jesus startled Nicodemus in their conversation, by talking to him about a new birth. About the need to be born all over again. He said it at least four times. Verse 3 says, "I tell you the truth that nobody can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again". Later on in verse 5, "I tell you the truth , nobody can enter the kingdom of God, unless he is born of water and spirit". Verse 7, "You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again".

So what does He mean? It was president Carter who in the 1976-1977 president's campaign, declared that he was a born-again Christian. Next, Chuck Sarison wrote his excellent biography under the title, 'Born Again' Billy Graham then came along with his best-selling book, "*How to be born again*". Journalists began to speak of the evangelic Renaissance in the USA, at the born-again movement. Everyone seemed to jump onto the born-again bandwagon.

We come back again to our question, "What does it mean?" Lots of people use the phrase without understanding it. First, we consider the nature of the new birth. What is it?

In order to do that, it is probably good to clear the ground a little bit negatively and clarify what it is not. The new birth is, of course, not a second physical birth. Nicodemus was puzzled on that point. He said that it was impossible for a man to re-enter his mother's womb and be born all over again. Jesus was not referring to that. Flesh gives birth to flesh and spirit gives birth to spirit. Physical birth is one thing, and spiritual birth is another. So, the new birth is not a second physical birth, it is a spiritual birth. It is not a self-reformation. Although to be sure, it leads to one. The new birth is not a gargantuan effort to turn over a new leaf and reform ourselves. I think it is important to know that the Greek adverb, which is used twice here in verse 3-7 can mean from the beginning all over again, but it also means from "above". It is not so much a new beginning from below by our own human efforts, it is a new birth from above by the activity of God, the Holy Spirit. So it is not our pulling ourselves together, it is allowing the Holy Spirit to enter our personality and change us from within. It is not a self-reformation. The new birth is not baptism. There is a mistake that many Anglicans make, who imagine if they had been baptized, they must also have been born again, but that is not so. Baptism is very important because Jesus our Lord, instituted it. Remember he instituted it after the resurrection during his great commission to goad, to back his disciples and to baptize people.

If this conversation with Nicodemus was historical, if it actually happened, because he could not be referring to baptism because it did not exist. It hadn't been instituted.

Nicodemus would not have understood what Jesus was talking about. Baptism was instituted 3 years later. So, when He referred to being born of water and spirit, He meant something else. Christian baptism is a visible sign and seal or sacrament of the new birth. The new birth itself is secret and invisible, but baptism is its public dramatization. Baptism brings out on the public stage and dramatizes a new birth that is essentially inward and hidden and secret. The new birth is not a second physical birth, it is not a moral self-reformation. It is not the same as baptism.

So what is it? It is a spiritual birth, the emergence of a new person. The person is the same person with the same body and same face and the same identity and same passport and the same temperament. This person, for all that sameness, is a new person with a new life, new heart, new desires, new aspirations, new ambitions and new relationships with God and other people. A new awareness of spiritual reality.

Dr. Gius Davis, a Christian consultant psychiatrist, writes in his book, '*Genius and Grace*' about the action and interaction between our natural aptitude, or if you like, genius and the grace of God. Listen to him and his wisdom.

“Grace does not change us as personalities. Our body, our intelligence and our natural aptitude remain the same. Grace does not change our temperament. The new life, the new creation, expresses itself through the same old personalities. Behaviour, attitudes and motives change, but the basic personalities do not”.

If you were an extrovert before you were born again, you will be an extrovert afterwards, but you will be easier to live with. If you were an introvert before you were born again, you will be an introvert afterwards, but you will find it easier to live with yourself. That is the kind of change that takes place when we are born again.

The results of the new birth: the most important thing about physical birth is that it is the beginning of a new life. The most important thing of spiritual birth is that it is the beginning of a spiritual life.

The question is what are the major characteristics of this new life that we receive at new birth? Well, Jesus tells us, he tells us firstly in verse 3. When we are born again we can see the Kingdom of God. Unless people are born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God because they are spiritually blind.

When people are born again their spiritual eyes are opened. They see things to which they were previously totally blind and in particular they see the reality of the reign of God , the Kingdom of God - that God is ruling and reigning through Christ by the Holy Spirit over His people.

I dare say, humbly, that was my own experience. I used to read the Bible when I was a kid, because my mother taught my sister's and me to do so. It was double-Dutch to me. I used to come to church, often to this church, but I did not know what was going on around me. I used to say my prayers but I never got through to God. I once said with the omniscience of a teenager, nobody believed in the Trinity now-a-days. I was blind. That was my experience. Blind to the beauty of truth. Then one day, Jesus Christ came into my life. It is not an exaggeration to say that scales fell from my eyes. The Bible began to be a new book to me. I do not say that everything in the Bible is plain sailing. There are still things I do not understand. Everything in Christianity began to make sense and has been making sense ever since. We see the kingdom of God when we are born again.

Secondly, we enter the kingdom of God. Unless we are born of water and spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of God. So instead of resenting God's sovereign interference in our lives, we now welcome it. We rejoice in His rule and we find freedom in His service.

Thirdly, the necessity of the new birth. Is it really necessary? Somebody says, "Isn't being born again rather an exceptional experience restricted to a small minority? Is not it even, between you and me, a little bit fanatical. Is not it perhaps the preserve of Baptists? Must Anglicans be born again?" Well, thanks for asking those questions. The answer is, "Yes". We know that is so because Jesus said so. We all need it. "You

must be born again”, He said. It is indispensable if we are to be authentic followers of Jesus. I do not say that we all come to Christ in the same way. Conversion experiences vary enormously. I did not say either that we all have the same dramatic experience. I did not even say that we all know when the new birth took place. A matter of fact, we would not know when we were born physically if our parents had not told us. We did not take out a note book and make a note of the date in case we forgot it. We know our birth date because our parents told us. If you do not know when you were born again, do not worry. The day will come when your heavenly Father will tell you. He knows even if you don't. There is a wide variety of experiences. I think one must say this: As just heirs we know that we were born physically because we have a certain physical life which must have begun at a physical birth. We know we have been born again spiritually because we are possessors of a certain spiritual life that must have begun with a new birth. There is a wide variety in human and Christian experiences. All I dare to say, because Jesus Christ said it, is we must be born again. The indispensable necessity of the new birth is clearly seen from the fact that Nicodemus, as we have already seen, was really a very attractive character. He was a Jew, a member of the covenant people of God. He was a Pharisee committed to righteous living. He was a leader in the community, a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a teacher, a man of learning and culture. He was polite and appreciative in his evaluation of the ministry of Jesus. It will be hard to imagine a finer man. Nicodemus represented the best and the noblest in Judaism. He was religious, moral, upright and more things besides. He even believed in the divine origins of Jesus. What more can we ask? Answer: The new birth. He still had to be born again. Jesus added, “Do not be surprised that I said to you, you must be born again.”

I, myself, am convinced that one of the devil's cleverest and busiest activities is manufacturing substitutes for the real thing. Let a person be upright and honest let him or her be a respected member of the community, let them come to church and say their prayers and read the Bible. The devil has lulled them to sleep. On that pillow they dream that they have a first class ticket to heaven.

Friends, do not be deceived. To Nicodemus, with all those things and more, Jesus said, “You must be born again”. So far we have looked at the nature of the new birth, a deep inward radical change, a new heart, a new life. We looked at the results, seeing and then entering the kingdom of God. We looked at the necessity that we must be born again.

Fourthly, and lastly, its conditions. How does it take place? We repeat the question of Nicodemus. ‘How can these things be?’ From God’s sight, it is largely a mystery. We do not altogether understand how God works. Birth always implies the prior decision or initiative of parents. Nobody has ever been his own parents. Nobody has ever given birth to himself or herself. Just so, the new birth is a birth from above by the initiative and the activity and the power of God Himself. We read in verse 8, Jesus said the wind blows where it chooses. You do not know where it comes from, you do not know where it is going. There is a mystery, so is everyone born of the spirit. From God’s side we do not altogether understand, but that does not mean that we have no responsibility to act. From our side we have both to repent and to put our trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus made it very plain to Nicodemus. To repent is to turn away from everything we know to be wrong in our lives and to be willing to let it go.

It seems almost certain that this is what Jesus meant when he referred to being born of water and of the spirit. The water must have referred to the baptism of John the Baptist. John the Baptist, at that very time that Nicodemus came to Jesus, was himself distinguishing between water and spirit. He said, “I baptize you with water, He will baptize with the Holy Spirit”. Jesus said you can’t avoid the one in order to get the other “If you want to come to me”, He said, “you have to do so via John the Baptist”. John the Baptist’s baptism was a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, “You cannot come to the Messiah”, Jesus said, “unless you have first gone to John the Baptist. Repent and then you are ready to believe”.

It seems to be a logical interpretation in the context. We have to repent and then we have to believe or put our trust in Jesus. In order to illustrate the meaning of this, Jesus choose to refer to a story in the Old Testament that is recorded in Numbers chapter 21. The children of Israel, between Egypt and Canaan, the Promised Land,

were crossing wild Edomite territory, at the foot of Mt Hore. Once again they rebelled against Moses. God's Judgment fell upon them on this occasion in terms of the plague of poisonous snakes that are found in that area, and many died. They cried to God for mercy and their judge became their Saviour, as He still does.

God instructed Moses to make a replica in bronze of the poisonous snake, to stick it on a pole in full view of the camp. God promised that any snake-bitten Israelite, if he looked at the bronze snake, would live. Jesus says in verse 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that anybody who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life". As the bronzed snake on the pole was God's remedy for snake bite, so Christ on His cross is God's remedy for sin and guilt, or again, as every bitten Israelite had to look in order to live, so we sinners have to look to Christ in order to receive eternal life.

Did you ever hear of the Rev. William Haslam? He was an Anglican clergyman, in the last century, in Cornwall. One of the most remarkable things about him, was that he was converted after he was ordained. He was converted by his own sermon in his own pulpit. Haslam had an amazing ministry after that - leading clergy to Christ. He carried with him, wherever he went, a beautiful coloured picture. The picture represents a 15th century manuscript that can still be seen in the Bodlian library in Oxford. It was an enactment of Moses, the pole in the wilderness, the snake bite etc. Four victims are displayed in the picture. First there is a man kneeling at the cross, but instead of looking at the cross or at the snake, he is looking to Moses and confessing to Moses as if Moses were a priest. The second man is lying on his back in the picture as if he is perfect. The third man was a man with a sad face doing the work a nurse, binding up the wounds of a fellow sufferer and little suspecting that he himself is involved in the same danger. The fourth man was a valiant fellow doing battle with the snakes which may be seen rising against him in unabating persistency.

Haslam says, 'I observe that none of the four men was looking at the brazen serpent as he had been instructed to do. Haslam went on to applying this to his own experience. He said, "First I strove against sin in my own strength, secondly I went to do good works. Thirdly, I relied on the Church for salvation and fourthly I sought forgiveness

at the hand of a priest. But none worked”, He said. “At last I was brought by the Spirit of God as a wounded dying sinner. Looking at the crucified One, I found pardon and peace”.

So you see, it is no good looking to the clergy or any human being. We cannot save you.

It is no use looking to the church or any religious organization. It cannot save you. It is no good looking to yourself and your own good works because you cannot save yourself. One thing we must do is to look to Christ who was lifted up on the cross to bear our own sin and guilt in His own innocent person, in order to that we might live together.

The old hymn used to put it: *There is life for a look at the crucified one.*

*There is life at this moment to be.*

*Then look unto Christ and be saved.*

*Unto Christ who was nailed to the tree.*

If I am not mistaken it is this looking to Christ, this trusting personally to Christ which so many people miss. Then naturally because Christ died on the cross, the whole world has been put right. But it has not. I once used to think like that, but there is nothing automatic about God’s dealings with us. He, for His part, has done everything necessary. God so loved the world that he has given His only Son to die on the cross. He has done everything that is necessary. Now He waits for us to repent. Whoever believes in Him, adults, young persons, child, male or female, British, from overseas, whoever puts his or her trust in Christ crucified, the Saviour, will live, will receive eternal life, will be born again and begin the new life that He offers. Do not miss it. It is for you. Amen.



## **Appendix 2 (Tape No. 3)**

### **John 4:1-42 “If only you knew”: The Samaritan woman**

Preached by Dr. John R.W. Stott.

We are looking on these three Sunday mornings at 3 individuals who met with Jesus during his life-time and his public ministry. We began last Sunday with Nicodemus, we continue this Sunday with the Samaritan woman. It is immediately obvious how different these two people were from one another. He (Nicodemus) was a man, she was a woman. He was a Jewish, she was a Samaritan, He was a well-known ruler, she was an unknown, nameless citizen. He was an upright Pharisee, she was a notorious sinner. Yet they were equal in the sight of God. Both of them had the same needs of a new beginning or a new birth and Jesus spent time with both of them.

I want to ask a question this morning. What do we learn about Jesus from His conversation with that unidentified Samaritan woman? One of the most important questions facing the church today, concerns the essential identity of Jesus Christ. As Dietrich Bonner first said as he was languishing in a Nazi prison, “What is bothering me incessantly is, who Jesus is for us today?” He was right, it is a very bothersome question. The truth is that there are many Jesuses on offer in the world’s religious supermarket. There is Jesus, that clown of “Godspell”. There is “Jesus Christ Super-Star”: the disillusioned celebrity. There is Jesus the freedom fighter, the first century chegabara and there are many others beside them. All attempt to present Jesus to the contemporary world in modern dress, but all failing to some degree to be loyal to his historical authenticity.

I want to ask my question again, “Who is the authentic Jesus?” What can we learn about Him from this conversation and encounter and with the Samaritan woman?”

I want to suggest to you that this encounter this morning between Jesus and that woman, contributes substantially to an authentic portrait of Jesus.

Open your Bible, pg. 1066, verse 10. In verse 10 Jesus answered her, “If only you knew the gift of God. If only you knew who it is that is speaking to you and asking you for a drink, then you would have asked Him and he would have given you living water. If only you knew who it was speaking to you”.

Well, who is it? Who was it? What should she have known about Him? What ought we to know about Him? I would like to suggest to you several things that emerge clearly from this story.

Firstly, Jesus is both human and divine and his humanity and His deity both stand out clearly from this story. His genuine humanity there is no doubt. You will remember that He and His disciples had reached a place in Samaria, a historical spot, where about 2,000 years previously, Jacob had bought a bit of land and dug a well, and later handed these things over to his son, Joseph.

When Jesus reached this historical spot it was 12 noon, and the sun, therefore, was at its hottest. We are told first that Jesus was tired after his morning’s walk, so he sat down by the well-side to rest. Next we are told that he was hungry because he sent his disciples into the nearby village to buy some food. Thirdly, he was hot and thirsty, so he asked the Samaritan to give him a drink.

Now that evidence tells us that Jesus of Nazareth was no superman who was immune to the common frailty of mortals like us. On the contrary, he grew hot, sweaty, tired, hungry and thirsty. He was a real human being with a real human body as we learn from other passages in the Gospel. He was also subject to the same temptations which assail us. All these things are evidence of the reality of his humanness. Something that we occasionally forget when we are so anxious to affirm his deity. Of his humanity there is no doubt, but there is ample evidence that he was also divine, “If only you knew who it was who was speaking to you”.

Well, what did he do? He offered us eternal life. He offered her the water of life, a symbol of eternal life. Nobody can give eternal life but God Himself. The very fact

that he offered her the water of life, indicates what He thought about Himself. He was capable to bestow eternal life upon us. He also had supernatural knowledge. Apparently without asking her anything about herself, He knew everything about her messy domestic life. He was also conscious of her unique relation of intimacy with the One whom he called the Father, while calling Himself the Son. There is clear evidence of His divinity.

Throughout Christian history the church has had difficulty in holding together the humanity and the deity of Jesus. Sometimes the Church has presented Him as a man. Certainly He was man so He must only have had divine qualities. He cannot also have been God. If He was, or they made the opposite mistake and said that they were convinced by the evidence that he had deity that was divine and that if He was God, He could not be man as well. He must have been God in human disguise, pretending to be man but not really human. The orthodox position is to say that he was both God and man. We must never emphasize the deity of Jesus in such a way as to deny his humanity, nor must we emphasize the humanity of Jesus in such way as to deny his deity. The authentic Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. They are not afraid to affirm it because the evidence of both is very compelling. That is the first thing.

Secondly, the authentic Jesus is both conservative and radical. Is that possible? Yes, it is. To begin with He was conservative, particularly in relation to Scripture. He regarded the Holy Scripture as the Word of His heavenly Father. He was determined to submit to its authority and He was conservative, or if you prefer a conservationist, in His attitude to Scripture as the Word of God.

His moral standards and His understanding of His mission He derived from the Old Testament scriptures. That too, is evident in the story of the Samaritan woman. The story is simply steeped in O.T history and theology. Jesus affirmed the O.T as the story of God's covenant people. It is, what we sometimes call, Salvation History. It is the story of God's saving actions on behalf of His covenant people.

We read in verse 22 that Jesus said, "We worship what we know. We know because God has revealed it to us." It is a very clear claim to revelation and then He goes on,

salvation comes from the Jews because salvation in the Messiah is the culmination of a long history of the Jewish people whom God was preparing for the arrival of their Messiah and their Saviour. So the woman said, verses 25-26 . “I know that the Messiah is coming.” Jesus said, “I who speak to you, am He.” Jesus did claim to be the Messiah of O.T expectation.

He was not another prophet. Surprising, how many people are prepared to discuss Jesus as a prophet. Maybe, the greatest prophet who ever lived. Jesus never claimed to be a prophet. He claimed to be the fulfilment of prophecy. He claimed that He was the culmination of this whole process and that the whole prophetic testimony of the O.T converged upon himself “The scripture bares witness to me”, of John’s Gospel. He was the fulfilment of the prophecy and not just another visionary in the long history of the centuries. It was in and it was with Jesus of Nazareth that the Kingdom of God had come.

You cannot deny that he was conservative, very conservative, in His attitude to Scripture and anxious to conserve and preserve it as the Word of God. He was also radical.

What is a radical? A radical is somebody who asks awkward and irreverent questions of the establishment. A radical is somebody who is critical both of the tradition and of convention, who refuses to accept any tradition merely because it has been handed down from the past or to accept any social convention merely because it is regarded as ‘politically correct’.

Jesus was very far from being “politically correct”. He was the critic of human tradition and social convention. In fact , Jesus drew a clear distinction between Scripture on the one hand, which is the Word of God, and tradition and convention on the other, which are the words of human beings. He submitted to Scripture. He never contradicted Scripture but He did contradict the tradition of the elders, and He set Himself against many social conventions. The Samaritan woman is a good example of this because she suffered from a three-fold conventional disability.

First, she was a woman and it was not done for men to talk to a woman in public. Jesus did what was not done. Her next disability was that she was a Samaritan. We read in verse 9 that the Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus did. He did what was not done.

Secondly, she was a sinner. She has had 5 husbands and the man she lived with now, was not her husband. She was cohabiting without being married. Respectable people, like Rabbis, did not mix with sinners. Jesus did. He did what was not done. Is that your Jesus? Is that the authentic Jesus in whom you believe?. Jesus deliberately breached both the tradition of elders and the conventions of society in His debt. Jesus was entirely free from sex discrimination, from radical prejudice and from moral priggishness. He loved and respected everybody and he shrank from nobody. He even asked this three times outcast woman to give Him a drink. That put Him in her debt. That was his courtesy towards woman in His day.

To me, I tell you friends, it is a very strange thing. How many Christians regard themselves as either conservative or radical? "I am very radical", other people say. Well, extreme conservatives are not only determined to conserve Scripture but to conserve all the traditions of the church as well. They are resistant to all change. Their favourite quotation from the liturgy is that it was in the beginning and now and ever shall be. Their slogans are "No change" and "Over my dead body". There are lots of them in the Christian church today, but then there are ultra-radicals as well. They are determined to criticize everything, including Scripture. One may say that no part of the Christian past is sacrosanct to the ultra-radical. It is not secure against their reforming zeal. Their slogan is "all change" not "No change". Even the Word of God, well, I ask you, why must we always be extremists?. Why must we always polarize between the extremes?

Jesus was both conservative in relation to Scripture and radical in relation to tradition and convention. I say to you friends, we need a whole new generation of RC's. This does not stand for Roman Catholic, but for radical conservatives.

Are you a radical conservative? Holding fast to the Word of God, but radical in your application of it. That is what we ought to be. That is what Jesus was, both human and divine, both conservative and radical.

Thirdly, Jesus was both satisfying and disturbing. No doubt of His ability to satisfy our hunger and quench our thirsty. Indeed, the essence of the story of the Samaritan woman is that Jesus did claim that He could satisfy and quench her thirst. Although He began by asking her to give Him a drink He went on to offer to give her a drink. You can understand that she was completely mystified by Him. How can He both ask her for a drink and offer her a drink at the same time. Besides, she said to him, “How can you give me a drink, you have not got a bucket and the well is deep?” So, you see, she was the Biblical literalist. There is a great deal in John’s Gospel against Biblical literalism. We had it with Nicodemus. Jesus said, “ You have to be born again” “Born again”, he said, “how can I enter my mother’s womb and be born all over again?”. He took it literally. He said, “I can give you a drink”, “You have not a bucket”, she said.

She took it literally but he was figurative. We must have discernment. Pray to God to give us the Spirit of discernment between what is literal and what is intended to be figurative in the pages of the Bible.

He had to explain to her that there are two different kinds of thirst requiring two different kinds of water. There is well water or tap water, if you like, that is H<sub>2</sub>O, for our physical thirst and on the other hand, there is life-giving water for our spiritual thirst. Jesus implied that she had an inner thirst which her sexual promiscuity had not been able to satisfy only He was able to quench this thirst.

Verse 13, “Everyone who drinks this water in Jacob’s well, will get thirsty again. Anybody who drinks from the water I will give him or her, will never thirst again. The water that I will give them will become within themselves a perpetual spring bubbling up into eternal life”.

Once Jesus comes into our personality by the Holy Spirit, we have a perpetual spring within us of life-giving water from which we can continually drink at any moment so that we never need to thirst again.

I do not know of anyone who has put this truth more eloquently than Malcolm Muggeridge, who died a couple of years ago. In a sermon, in Aberdeen, about 25 years ago, he said, "I may, I suppose, regard myself as pastor a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the street. That is fame. I can fairly easily earn enough to qualify to the highest stakes of the inland revenue. That's success. Furnished with money and a little fame, even the elderly, like myself, if they care to, may partake in friendly diversions. That is pleasure. It might happen, once in a while, that something I said or wrote was sufficiently heeded for me to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our times. That is for fulfillment. Yes, I say to you, and I beg you to believe me. Multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together and they are nothing. Less than nothing. A positive impediment measured against one draft of that living water which Christ offers to the spiritual thirsty irrespective of who and what they are".

What, I ask myself does life hold? What is there in the works of time in the past present or future which could possibly be put in the balance against the refreshment of drinking that water?. Oh, friends, I think I may say, I hope with humility, that I know what is meant by that thirst quenching water. Do you? Have you come to Christ? Have you invited Him to come in and to become by His spirit within you, a perennial spring of life-giving water. You will find satisfaction in no other words. You will find the experience of the Samaritan woman to be yours.

Let us come back then to the text. Jesus did not only offer to satisfy or quench our thirst. He did something else to that woman. He disturbed her conscience. when she said V.15 "Sir, give me this water that I do not have to come here any longer to draw water that I won't any longer get thirsty" Verse 16, "Go and call your husband and come back". He added a while later, "The man you call your husband is not your husband. You are just cohabiting with him". She had come to the well in the middle

of the day, in the heat of the day, in order to avoid the stares and the finger-wagging of her critics whom she probably would have met if she had come in the cool of the morning or the cool of the evening. She came in the heat of the day to avoid them. She then met Jesus and He insisted that she must face her sin and deal with it.

Now, friends, I doubt very much whether you and I would have done what Jesus did, which is to call to mind her sin and her guilt. No, today compassion is the name of the game. In the name of compassion we overlook sin and we condone it. We call it by some other name. We tolerate lax standards and we shun the exercise of discipline even in the church. We are determined to save ourselves the embarrassment of any confrontational situation. We would rather run a mile than to confront somebody with their wrongdoing. In consequence, life becomes for us one long compromising cover up. That is the position even in the church today. We offer what gone her before, cheap grace. We offer forgiveness without repentance. We offer compassion without integrity and we offer tolerance, without discipline. That is what we do. It was not what Jesus did. He knew that her raging inner thrust would never be quenched until and unless she faced the reality of her sin and her conscience had come cleansed by His forgiveness. Jesus, first pricked her conscience and then quenched her thirst. Jesus always disturbs the comfortable before he comforts the disturbed. He does both in that order.

What is our version of Jesus Christ? Let us have the courage to reject all unbiblical and unbalanced caricatures. Let us resist the temptation to create a Jesus of our own imagination and speculation. Remember that the authentic Jesus of the New Testament is both human and divine, both conservative and radical, both disturbing and comforting. He still says to us, “If only you knew who it is that is talking to you”.

May God keep us true to the authentic Jesus. Amen.

## Appendix 3 (Tape No. 3)

### Luke 15:11-32 Lost and found

Preached by Dr. John R.W. Stott.

Most of us are inveterate losers and finders. At least, speaking for myself, that is true. Many are the times I needed to visit the lost property department. The Americans call it 'the lost and found department'. Either at a conference, or in a store or a British Rail. Of all possible things you can lose and find, nothing is more serious than to lose yourself. Nothing is more important than to find yourself.

If I am myself lost, I am not really able to discover or find anything properly. One of the very saddest comments you can ever make upon people, and I have heard it said of one or two, 'He has never really found himself. She has never really found herself.' The needs for self-discovery is universally recognized. It was recognized in the Ancient World. One of the most familiar saying in ancient Greece, attributed both to Plato and Socrates, and associated with the famous Delphic oracle was the command, 'Know yourself.' Alexander Pope took it up in the 18th century in his famous essay on Man. He wrote, 'Know then thyself. Presume not God to scan. The proper study of mankind is Man.'

In the following century, the 19th century, that famous German philosopher, Schopenhauer, who was always disheveled and sometimes disreputable in his appearance, was sitting on a seat in the park of The Beer Garten, in Frankfurt when the parkkeeper came up to him and asked him gruffly, "Who are you ?" The philosopher replied, "I would to God I knew." Modern psychology endorses it that true self-knowledge is indispensable for mental health and mental maturity.

Let me ask you, if I may, who are you? Have you found yourself? Do you know who you are? Is it possible that the adolescent identity crisis has persisted for some here

into adult life? Are you still asking teenage questions, “Where did I come from ?  
Where am I going ? Has life any meaning ? Has existence any value ?”

There are people who give very cynical answers to the questions. The most cynical I came across is Mark Twain who said, “If man could be crossed with a cat, it would improve man but deteriorate the cat.” I hope there are not many cynics quite as bad as that today. Most of us know that we have another side to us. We have a nobler side. There is a hidden side to us that Andy Hughes was talking about. He knew that it was there underneath, even in the ten years of his atheism or semi - atheism.

What Matthew Arnold called “A Buried love.” Do you know that poem? Listen to these words,

“But often in the world’s most crowded streets  
That often in the din of strife  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life.  
A thirst to stem our fire  
And restless though in tracking out our  
true original course  
A longing to inquire into the mystery of this  
heart  
Which beats so wild, so deep in us  
To know whence our lives come and where  
they go.”

I believe that is a question known in many people’s hearts. As you are listening this morning, you may have come on your own, you may have come because a friend invited you, you may have come , as you always do, as a regular worshipper. Yet, there is still that buried life crying out to be recognized, to emerge and to be born.

When we turn to the teaching of Jesus, because we have heard about Him, and we knew what was in man, Male and Female made into the image of God and yet simply needing to be redeemed.

He knew what was in mankind. He had a profound understanding of human nature. We are going to turn to that very well - known story in Luke 15 verse 14. The bare bones of the story about the prodigal son can be very simply told. A man had two sons. The younger one left home, squandered his inheritance, was reduced to penury, recognised his folly, came back home and was given a welcome beyond his wildest dreams. But his homecoming was marred by his elder brother whose mouth was so full of sour grapes that he was not able to rejoice with everybody else. Who, although he stayed at home, had actually strayed further from his father than his younger brother, at least, in his heart and his mind. You know the story but I want you to understand the implications of it.

We ought to call this parable not a parable of the lost son, but the parable of the two sons. Not the parable of the prodigal son, because it is the parable of the pharisaical son as well. It is very plain from the context. Luke tells us what this was in the first two verses of the gospel. He says the tax collectors or publicans and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus and the Pharisees and the crowd murmured, 'This man receives sinners and eat with them.' So, you see, there were two groups of people who gathered around Jesus. They were the publicans and sinners who knew what they were. They had no pretensions to righteousness. They were sinners all right. They came near to Jesus and He received them just as the father received the prodigal in the parable. Scribes and the Pharisees, on the other hand, were indignant like the elder brother in the story.

I want to suggest to you that this parable tells the story of every man and woman. Everybody here are either publicans or Pharisees. Either like the younger brother or like the elder brother. There is no third alternative. We are all of us in one or the other of those two categories.

Now let us look at some details. The younger brother's journey to the far country, his progressive deterioration is already delineated stage by stage by Jesus. There was first a self - centred , bitter independence. There is nothing wrong in his leaving home, all young people have to leave home at some point and, indeed, it is part of the growing - up process that we do leave home. Scripture itself says, 'therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, especially to cleave to his wife so that they become one flesh.' Leaving home is a very natural thing. Nothing morally wrong either in asking for his share of the inheritance. After all, it was going to be his one day. What was wrong, was his self - centred motivation. Evidently he had no thought of his father's old age. He had no thought for his own future wife and family. He had no thought for the poor, the needy or the destitute in his own community. He thought only of himself and the good time that his wealth was going to give him. "Give me my share," he demanded peremptorily. He went to a far country where he could conveniently forget his obligations. That is precisely our attitude to God. There is a sense which God wants us to, as it were, leave His home. There is a sense in which He wants us to come of age. We have to grow out of immaturity into adult maturity. We have to assume responsibilities and not shirk them. There is nothing wrong in that. What is wrong, is the bid for independence as if we could live our lives without God.

The essence of sin is the proclamation of my own autonomy. It is foolish to imagine that I can live without God. Why, my very breath is in His hands. If He were to take away my breath, I would die. So would you, turn to dust. There is only one independent or self - dependent being who exists, it is God Himself. What we mean by this is that God is the Supreme Creator who depends for Himself on Himself. He doesn't depend on anybody else. The secret of His being is within Himself. He is self - dependent. Every other being or creature depends upon God, the creator, and sin is a refusal to admit my creative status. It is a bid for id autonomy. "Sin", as one theologian has put it, "is getting rid of the Lord God. What a nuisance He is. It's rebelling against His authority, rebuffing his love and travelling to a far country where we can conveniently forget Him."

After the bid for independence, came the next stage of self - indulgence. He squandered his inheritance in riotous living. The Greek adverb indicates that he now lost all self - control. The reason why he left home becomes plain. It was not in order to claim a responsible independence. It was in order to reject the values and the standards of his upbringing. He lost his inheritance by reckless spending and he lost his innocence by sexual promiscuity. He thought that he would be free. He found himself in bondage to his own passions.

It is the universal experience to throw off restraint. It is not the way to liberty, its the way of slavery. It comes to the third stage in his deterioration. Hunger and humiliation. When he had spent everything, there was a great famine in the land and he began to be in want. Destitute and hungry, he managed to secure employment from a farmer who did him the ultimate humiliation as a Jew, in making him go and care for his pigs. Those unclean animals which the O.T. said the Jew is to have nothing to do with. So low had he sunk that he gladly said he would eat pigswill. He probably did when nobody was looking because nobody gave him anything.

Hunger and humiliation. Things haven't changed, nothing in the far country satisfies. Michael Muggeridge, an outstanding modern example says in his autobiography: "Human beings are peculiar in that they avidly pursue ends which they know would bring them no satisfaction. They gorge themselves with food which cannot nourish and with pleasures which cannot please. I know, because I am a prize example." He speaks to us from his own experience of the far country.

The forth stage in his deterioration was isolation. The friends who had buzzed around him, like flies when he was rich, now vanished into thin air. Even his prostitutes deserted him now that he could no longer pay. He discovered that their love was not love at all. The far country in which the prodigal had travelled from self - independence, to self - indulgence to hunger, humiliation and extreme loneliness.

The far country is a symbol of human alienation. That young man was alienated from his friends, alienated from his father and alienated from his true self. Alienation is the

most basic and the most tragic of all human conditions. We feel homeless in a hostile world like waifs and strays. We don't seem to belong anywhere. We can't find any meaning to life or to ourselves. Instead of finding life we are effectively dead. The young man's journey into the far country...

Listen carefully as we come to the second part of the story which is the young man's return journey home. If the deterioration was in four stages, the return home is only in two. They are very simple and the first is he came to himself or he came to his senses. He was all alone now. The loud noise of empty laughter that had accompanied his orgies and drowned his conscience has given place to a great silence in which his conscience accused him again. His memories tormented him also. He remembered the security of his boyhood, the love of his parents, the comfort of his home. The sights and the sounds and the smells of the old farmstead came back to him and he was overcome by a vast nostalgia. A few days before he had been looking on the pigs with envy. Now he looked on the servants in his father's home with an even greater envy. He was his father's son. The servants were much more favoured than he was now. They had plenty to eat and to spare. Look at him. The father's son dying with hunger. He came to himself, he came to his senses. He compared what he was with what he had been. He recognised that he had not only lost his home and his inheritance and his honour and his friends but he had lost himself. He knew that life was meant to be more than loneliness and pigswill. He realized what a fool he had been. He came to himself. He said to himself; I will arise and I will go to my father and I'll say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am not worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your servants". He came to himself.

The road of recovery always begins with the same first step. Before you can come to God you have to come to yourself. We have to remember what we are by creation, a son or daughter of the living God. We have to remember what we have become by our own sin and foolishness. Instead of finding freedom we find emptiness and disillusion and bondage. I know what I'm talking about. Not just because Jesus said it, but because I've known it in my own experience. I knew already in my teens that I was lost. I knew what I was and knew what I was meant to be and there was a great

chasm between the two. I was torn by painful conflict between the reality and the ideal. I glimpsed the heavenly Father's house from which I had run away. The pigswill had not satisfied me

What is that nagging inner emptiness? What is it? What is that sense you have that life is more than pigswill and loneliness? What is that inward yearning for something else, something better, something nobler, somewhere to find yourself? What is that? I will tell you what it is. It is divine signals. It signals to you that you are in the far country. It signals that the Father is calling you home. He came to himself and then he came to his father not enough to resolve to return, he had to get up and go. All the way home he rehearsed his lines until he got them word-perfect. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your house servants". He went on over and over until he got his lines perfect. He did not have any expectation of any reinstatement. The most he thought he could hope for was employment in by father's house, no longer as a son but as a servant. His father was kind, its true, but he forfeited all right to be received back home again. He kept on with his recitation, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your servants ...".

His return was so dramatically different from when he went away. He left well-fed. He came back bankrupt. He left well-dressed and in finery. He came back in rags and tatters. He left in proud independence and it is in penitent humility that he returns. What he did not know is that all the time that he had been away, his father was watching and waiting. He had forgotten his father but his father had never forgotten him. His father could not get him out of his mind. He thought about him by day he dreamed of him by night. His father, even if he was an old man now, must often have climbed those stone steps outside the farmstead up onto the flat roof of the house. He must have put his hand to his tear-filled eyes and scanned the horizon for the first sign that his boy was coming home again. The pain he felt was almost unbearable, much greater than any pain the youngest son found in the far country. When he came in sight of the old home he was dumbfounded by the welcome that he received. While he

was a long way away, his father saw him, filled with compassion, ran to greet him. He spoke no word of recrimination. One look at the boy's face could tell him that his penitence was real. At first the father could find no words in which to express his pent-up emotions. All he could do was to smother him with hugs and kisses. The boy began with his set piece, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you". His father interrupted him before he reached the punch line, "Make me one of your house servants". The father contradicted the last thing the boy could get out which was, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son". He contradicted it by immediately reinstating him as his son. He gave instructions for the best robe to be brought to put on him and a ring to be put on his fingers and sandals on his feet. He gave orders for a celebration. A feast to music and dancing. Why? "Because, this my son, was dead and is alive again He was lost and is found"

You can be sure of the same welcome. In fact, you can be sure of a greater welcome, because we live this side of the cross. We know more of the love of God. The parable of the prodigal son, nowhere refers to the cross but everywhere presupposes it. The cross is the place where the father welcomes the son back when he saw him a long way off, he ran in compassion to meet him. His run took him to the cross. On the cross that God in Christ died for sinners, like us. God could not bear to see us suffer the consequences of our own sin and foolishness and determined to bear it Himself. He died instead of us. He took our place. The penalty of our sin He bore in His own loving and innocent person. Because of that you may be sure of the welcome however far you have strayed in the far country He will hug you and kiss you and re-instate you as a son and daughter and forgive your sins and put a robe on your back and a ring on your finger and order a celebration. There will be a feast and dancing and music. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, but alas there is not always joy on earth.

The elder brother with all those sour grapes, also made a journey which won't take us a moment to tell. Although he stayed in his father's house, he was very far away from his father's heart and mind. When he heard that his brother had come back and that this welcome was being given to him, he was furious. He sank into a deep sulk and

refused to go to the party. Some people have a sneaking sympathy for the elder brother. They said “After all he did stay at home and was loyal and all that.” No, do not have any sympathy for him. He had travelled very far into a far country himself. He was as alienated from his father as his younger brother. Although the alienation was in his mind, and not in his body. It was the alienation of pride rather than the alienation of greed and lust.

We are all alienated from God and from our true selves. Some of us are like the prodigal and some are like the elder brother. Some are like the publicans and sinner and some are like the Pharisees. Some sin by immorality and drunkenness and the cruder forms of sin. Other sin by pride, envy, malice and hypocrisy. The religious sins. Both are alienated and both need the forgiveness of God.

In conclusion, this parable of Jesus is a most marvellous revelation of both God and human beings. It tells us who we are, self-centred, alienated and lost. It tells us who God is, loving, forgiving and welcoming.

The main lesson of the parable is not the varied beastliness of sin but the unquenchable love of God. God loves us. It is in love for us that he allows us our freedom to reject him and kick over the traces and travel to a far country. It is in love when we are in the far country disobeying His laws, plunging into sin and shame and sorrow. It is in love that he refuses to wash His hands off us. He refuses to forget us. He misses us. He feels the pain of alienation more than we do. He waits and watches anxiously for our return. It is in love when we first come to ourselves and then come to Him, that His joy knows no bounds.

Will you come to Him? You too have strayed from Him into a far country. You may have wandered a very, very long way either into crude sin or religious and respectable sin. You may be a very respectable person but a long way from God, in the far country of your own heart. Recognize that you are in a far country. I say to you, in the name of Jesus, “Come home. Come to yourself. Come to your Father and receive the welcome which He promises to every penitent who returns. Amen.



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