

# **Holistic Mission with Respect to John Stott's Contribution**

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## ***Table of Contents***

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <b><i>Introduction</i></b>                      | Page 2  |
| <b><i>Background of the debate</i></b>          | Page 2  |
| <b><i>Foundation for Stott's Argument</i></b>   | Page 3  |
| <b><i>Confusion</i></b>                         | Page 5  |
| <b><i>Holistic Mission</i></b>                  | Page 8  |
| <b><i>Is There Any Priority in Mission?</i></b> | Page 10 |
| <b><i>Current Understanding</i></b>             | Page 14 |
| <b><i>Conclusion</i></b>                        | Page 17 |
| <b><i>Bibliography</i></b>                      | Page 19 |

# Debate on Holistic Mission with Respect to John Stott's Contribution

## ***Introduction***

In this essay I would like to consider the debate about holistic mission, to show its sources, interpretations and implications. John Stott seems to have had a significant influence in this debate and tries to help clarify the biblical meaning of mission and related concepts. I will attempt to evaluate how much he was successful and also how far he was helpful in developing the concept of holistic mission, in regard to Christian mission, in the past, and currently.

## ***Background of the debate***

David Hesselgrave thinks that many Evangelicals were influenced by the Ecumenical understanding of the *missio Dei* and points out John Stott's influence in this case.<sup>1</sup> To comprehend Stott's role correctly, I think, it is important to see the whole issue in the context of events which have led Stott to formulate the relationship between evangelistic and social responsibility (in other words, it can be described as the relationship between the spiritual and the social mandate).<sup>2</sup> As Stott confirms, in 1968 he participated in the debate about mission at the Uppsala Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches as adviser.<sup>3</sup> The hot point of the discussion came out of preparatory documents known as 'Drafts for

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission: An Evangelical Perspective on Trends and Issues in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1988), p. 79

David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 403

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1975), p. 9

sections', Section II, 'Renewal in Mission'.<sup>4</sup> These papers, in correspondence with a concept entitled as 'The Church for Others',<sup>5</sup> suggested, that the goal of the Christian mission is to attain 'a just human society'.<sup>6</sup> But Stott understands humanization, renewal of society and social harmony (shalom) as extreme concepts of Biblical mission. Such conception misinterprets the eschatological meaning of Revelation 21:5.<sup>7</sup> Our focus should stay mainly on the fact that people perish without Christ.

In conclusion, outcomes of the Uppsala Assembly 'did not reveal a spiritual concern comparable to that shown for physical hunger and poverty'.<sup>8</sup> Although Stott's position shows considerable concern for evangelism, his interpretation of missions still includes a noteworthy amount of the social aspect, especially from the evangelical perspective. In the International Congress on World Evangelisation at Lausanne in 1974 Stott presented his concept of 'the nature of biblical evangelism'<sup>9</sup> and is considered to be an 'architect of the Lausanne Covenant'.<sup>10</sup> In 1975 in Oxford he presented his views at Wycliffe Hall, and then the content of his lectures is published in his book *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!*

### ***Foundation for Stott's Argument***

Andreas Kostenberger summarises some of John Stott's thoughts presented in Stott's book *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, and he says: 'Stott broadly defines mission as "service to humanity", including, but not limited

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<sup>4</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective*, second edition, revised and enlarged (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1993), p. 223

<sup>5</sup> Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, p. 225

<sup>6</sup> Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, p. 225

<sup>7</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 17-18

<sup>8</sup> Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, p. 228

<sup>9</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 9

<sup>10</sup> Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission*, p. 102

to, “evangelism”<sup>11</sup>. On another occasion Kostenberger sums up Stott’s definition of mission as ‘everything the church is sent into the world to do’.<sup>12</sup> The title of A. Kostenberger’s book -*The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church*, indicates its content. While J. Stott’s definition of mission stands considerably on Johannine texts,<sup>13</sup> Kostenberger finds a few inconsistencies.

Firstly, these inconsistencies lie the way in which Stott understands the ‘incarnational model’.<sup>14</sup> When Kostenberger briefly presents some of the differences between ‘representational’ and ‘incarnational’ model, he says that there is no definite expression about what the ‘incarnational model’ really is.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, Stott builds his ‘incarnational’ argument using John 20:21 ‘As *the Father has sent me, even so I send you*’ (Revised Standard Version). Stott clarifies that some aspects of Christ’s incarnation’s purposes such as salvation, are not possible to copy, but there is an aspect of Christ’s incarnation we can copy – Christ’s ability to serve. However, Kostenberger shows that Stott’s application of John 20:21 does not adequately respect the context of the Fourth Gospel: The primary reason why Jesus was sent by his father in the world, was to provide salvation through the forgiveness of sins, not to practise a ‘service to humanity’.<sup>16</sup> Thirdly, Jesus is a true example of servanthood, but this he models on his relationship with his father. He is the one who brings glory to his father. Similarly, we, his disciples, have to bring glory to our sender – Jesus Christ. Finally, the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus’ incarnation generally as unique. It is

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<sup>11</sup> A. J. Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 13

<sup>12</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 22

<sup>13</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 23

<sup>14</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 213

<sup>15</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 213

<sup>16</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 215

unique in its relationship to Jesus' pre-existence and it is unique because Jesus was the Son of God.<sup>17</sup>

These arguments seem to me to be serious enough to think about a re-evaluation of the Stott's concept of mission. It is understandable when Andreas Kostenberger finally says: 'At every juncture a careful line seems to be drawn between the roles of Jesus and of the disciples.'<sup>18</sup> Moreover, it is worth observing how Stott prepares a way for his 'Johannine' argument. He says this: 'All of us should be able to agree that mission arises primarily out of the nature not of the church but of God himself.'<sup>19</sup> I think that from this point it is a just short step to connect this concept with the incarnational model. I also think that the 'God-church' separation is not necessary, especially if we understand the church's role as representative. Kostenberger confirms the representative model as an appropriate approach; he at the same time critiques the incarnational model and points out that, as it was already mentioned, there are not enough resources which would responsibly answer as to what the incarnational model really is.<sup>20</sup>

## **Confusion**

It is evident that John Stott doesn't agree with the extreme expressions of radical evangelism which understands the world as a place we should totally separate from, a place where the only justifiable reason for its visitation is evangelism. Also, he is not an advocate of the 'shalom' and 'Revelation 21:5' concept which tends to justify almost no evangelistic concern for the world.<sup>21</sup> What seems to be a little surprising is his statement concerning The Great Commission: 'Today, however, I would express myself differently'.<sup>22</sup> He doesn't

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<sup>17</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 216

<sup>18</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 217

<sup>19</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 21

<sup>20</sup> Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, p. 213

<sup>21</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 16-19

<sup>22</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 23

question that consequences of The Great Commission, expressed in three Gospels, result in social responsibility. But he traces his argument further and declares that 'the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus'.<sup>23</sup> Such a statement is, I think, challenging, especially in relation to the traditional evangelical interpretation of the Great Commission.<sup>24</sup> To support this view John Stott explains how he understands John 20:21 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' and adds a few other arguments for this view (Jesus came to serve, The Great Commandment). This concept of mission, in Stott's opinion, should result in 'a far greater impact on society'.<sup>25</sup> Question arises as to how he may be right.

David Hesselgrave understands the shift of Stott's position as moving from the Great Commission in Matthew 28 to John 20:21 in this way: 'evangelization and socio-political action are partners in mission with the former having certain priority'.<sup>26</sup> This corresponds with Stott's own view, not that Hesselgrave would be against the *missio Dei* concept. This concept focusses on the Kingdom-of-God theology and was taught by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew chapter 24). But the context of the Olivet Discourse needs to be considered and the passage needs to be interpreted in its complexity. Jesus speaks about wars and famine, events which are opposite to the ecumenical view of *shalom*.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Stott sees this as an extreme example which will lead to unreal expectations of the desired social harmony.<sup>28</sup> Of course, we should not undermine the social needs of people. Jesus' preaching in Luke 4:18-19 clearly exposes a whole complex of human needs, which Hesselgrave classifies in three

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<sup>23</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 23

<sup>24</sup> Peter Beyerhaus, 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom', in Donald A. McGavran (ed.), *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 54-76

<sup>25</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 34

<sup>26</sup> Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission*, p. 79

<sup>27</sup> Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission*, pp. 87-88

<sup>28</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 17

groups as spiritual, physical and socio-political needs. But these groups have their priorities which ecumenists confuse and evangelicals sometimes do not communicate adequately.<sup>29</sup> In his *Paradigms in Conflict* David Hesselgrave describes *Holism-incarnationalists* who 'do not think so much of priorities'.<sup>30</sup> They see God's Kingdom extended over 'the whole of life and society'<sup>31</sup> and Jesus is 'the Transformer of societies and cultures as well as individuals'.<sup>32</sup>

There is another inconsistency I would like to point out. Stott cites W. A. Visser when he describes the 'tension between the vertical ... and the horizontal interpretation'<sup>33</sup> of the gospel. Stott uses this description to compare the Great Commission with the Great Commandment. His method here is to compare 'go and make disciples' with 'love your neighbour'.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the second part of the Great Commandment helps Stott to build his argument about the partnership of evangelism with social activity. But there is no explanation as to how to relate the first part of the Great Commandment 'love God with all your being' to the Great Commandment.[? Both seem to have the vertical 'tendency' (according to Visser's way of understanding). Although Stott mentions the obvious fact that the first part of the Great Commandment is superior in relationship to the second, however, this does not help much to clarify its relationship to the Great Commandment.

In summary, Hesselgrave says that Stott's approach is not easy to hold. Although there is no doubt as to Stott's great concern about evangelism, it may be confusing for some when he at the same time presents evangelism and social concerns as equal partners.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrows Mission*, p. 88

<sup>30</sup> D. J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), p. 146

<sup>31</sup> Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, p. 146

<sup>32</sup> Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, p. 146

<sup>33</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 20-21

<sup>34</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 29

<sup>35</sup> Hesselgrave, *Today's Choices for Tomorrows Mission*, p. 89

## ***Holistic Mission***

In his book, *Missions in the Third Millennium* Stan Guthrie recapitulates *Holism* in the chapter of the same title.<sup>36</sup> He uses a few examples to show that sometimes preaching of the gospel is accompanied by a suspicion that the messengers are not always authentic in their motives. For example, they use good social works just as means to get converts but they do not really care about social conditions of the target group. This was one of reasons which resulted in a pressure on Christians 'to do good works while keeping their mouths shut about Jesus'.<sup>37</sup> The World Council of Churches, under the influence of liberal theology, willingly supported this direction (especially in Uppsala, 1968). Despite this direction, some still feared to dismiss the role of evangelism. Some continued in their belief that the world is 'simply a way station to heaven and not worth reforming'<sup>38</sup> and people need to be rescued from the corrupted world.

But others began to think about mission more in social terms, especially when crises such as famine or earthquakes were demanding immediate Christian response. Fuelled by the Lausanne Covenant and J. Stott's influence, holism was firmly grounded as a way to do missions, a way which connects both spiritual and material concern for humanity. The experience of some mission programmes seemed to be confirming that compassionate social ministry opens men's hearts to receive the gospel much more willingly, and that transforming a group's worldview can, in fact, change its real situation, sometime even more than a practical temporary help. This created an expectation that evangelicals should rethink their conception of mission and include also 'quality of life indicators'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2000), pp. 123-138

<sup>37</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 124

<sup>38</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 125

<sup>39</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 128

We should ask the question how much this 'broader definition of mission'<sup>40</sup> will influence evangelism and church planting. Guthrie asserts that it is not always possible for evangelism and social programmes to work side by side. The practical experience of mission agencies reveals the 'temptation to soft-pedal the gospel of salvation from sin'.<sup>41</sup> There are practical indicators of such danger. Firstly, when mission agencies receive money from government, it is often conditioned by the restriction to use it for evangelism. Secondly, an ambition to have a respect of those in secular agencies may hinder evangelism. And finally, those who are employed in mission agencies are not always convinced about the people's need to hear the gospel and to be saved.<sup>42</sup>

The final word in this paragraph I would like to direct at David Hesselgrave. He thinks that the understanding of the word *mission* as 'every enterprise sincere Christians undertake'<sup>43</sup> is dangerous for the future of our world generally. He reminds importance of traditional view of evangelism advocated by Donald McGavran and critics John Stott's new position, which does not seem to be stressing the relation between evangelism and church growth enough.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Stott's concept of holistic mission, based mainly on the John's Gospel, lacks a sufficient biblical base. D. Hesselgrave refers to Andreas J. Kostenberger's book *The Mission of Jesus and the Disciples* to prove, that ministry of Jesus and his disciples is not analogous in every respect, that Jesus' main focus was on the salvation and the forgiveness of sins and not on 'service to humanity',<sup>45</sup> and that the Fourth Gospel deals more with the fact that Jesus represents his Father and less with the fact of his incarnation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 129

<sup>41</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 128

<sup>42</sup> Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, p. 129

<sup>43</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35.3 (1999), pp. 287-284 [278]

<sup>44</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', p. 278

<sup>45</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', p. 281

<sup>46</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', pp. 280-281

In summary, in regard to what was said to this point, the gospel appears to be something extraordinary (containing extraordinary reality of Christ's incarnation and redemption). On the other hand, social relationships, good or bad, are natural component of our being, but they are not as extraordinary as the gospel is. Then, I think, it lacks logic to compare realities which are of different substance.

### ***Is There Any Priority in Mission?***

To this question I would like to make a bit more extensive introduction. In the discussion about evangelism and social responsibility David Bosch brings an interesting observation:

As the institution of slavery has shown, sincere Christians, motivated by love, might not move vigorously against the social injustices in the larger society, which they know to be in conflict with their religious and moral ideals.<sup>47</sup>

This provoking statement demands a consideration of the issue of how much should church be concerned about injustice in society. For example, what should church do in the context of the apartheid system or how much effort should church give to gain justice in such society? Bosch describes how this led some in evangelical circles in South Africa to re-evaluate mission and see it in broader context than just evangelism. They believed that 'sin was both personal and structural'.<sup>48</sup> This resulted in an 'important shift in evangelicalism'<sup>49</sup> and even created a base for a belief that social conditions could be naturally improved, being a part of the evolutionary process. In the light of these events and when the broader context of the evil world is concerned, 'mission is the church sent into the world, to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to liberate'.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bosch, *Transforming mission*, p. 403

<sup>48</sup> Bosch, *Transforming mission*, p. 407

<sup>49</sup> Bosch, *Transforming mission*, p. 407

<sup>50</sup> Bosch, *Transforming mission*, p. 412

Such description of mission is close to the Stott's expression who understands mission as 'everything the church is sent into the world to do'.<sup>51</sup> For example, in terms of a Christian's life-work this means that some will serve as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and others are called to work as doctors, teachers, social workers, workers in banks, in commerce, industry, in the mass media or in politics. If Christians would properly understand their vocation as Christ's calling, their authentic service would result in a great influence on the society they are part of. Put differently, if a community is spoiled, it should not be ascribed to the evil in the world but to the church which is 'failing in its responsibility as salt to stop it going bad'.<sup>52</sup> One should ask if there is any priority in mission and if yes, then what is it?

In the *Contemporary Christian*, Stott cites the 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the Lausanne Covenant and agrees, that 'in the church mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary'.<sup>53</sup> The evangelism and the social responsibility are connected vessels, one depended on the other. In this sense, 'evangelism has a certain logical priority'.<sup>54</sup> In other words it would be difficult to expect that a true disciple of Jesus Christ will refuse to fulfil his social responsibilities. Also, the existence of eternity logically implies preference of evangelism, simply because the eternal destiny of a human being is more important than his temporal state. At the same time Stott insists on his position, that social activity and evangelism are partners, partners so related as husband and wife are. The biblical example of the Seven called to a social ministry, while the Twelve remained faithful to their pastoral duties, seem to be an appropriate illustration (The Book of Acts, chapter 6).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 30. J. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian, An Urgent Plea for Double Listening* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), p. 341

<sup>52</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 31-32

<sup>53</sup> Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 339

<sup>54</sup> Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 339

<sup>55</sup> Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 339-340

After seventeen years when *Christian Mission in the Modern World* was issued, it seems that Stott does not bring any considerable changes in his view on the issue. He, again, traces his argument to the difference of the gifting in the church in the sense, that 'everybody cannot do everything'.<sup>56</sup> I understand that Stott tries to solve the problem because of the social injustice in the world (described in the beginning of this section about priority in mission), but I hardly find a biblical or even logical reason which would call for the reconciliation of our social and 'proclamational' responsibility. Naturally we are social beings and our message (the gospel) naturally needs some medium to share it from us to others. Our social relationships are the medium, and our service is the natural component of our social relationships.<sup>57</sup> As Stanley Jones says:

A soul without body is a ghost; a body without a soul is a corpse. The gospel is addressed to living persons, soul and body, in all of their broken humanity and need for wholeness.<sup>58</sup>

Here I would like to consider the issue of mission also from the theological point of view. In the chapter 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom'<sup>59</sup> Peter Beyerhaus asserts that mission, deprived of the central role of Christ in salvation, and without encouraging people to receive Christ, is erroneous. It does not matter how much such mission would help a society to progress, for example, in the breaking down of castes. The argument against such a conception lays in the fact that not only Christians can do such 'mission', but humanists, Marxist or Hindus as well. Then, they also would be a part of the *Mission Dei*, the concept, where 'any good action is mission'.<sup>60</sup>

The inconsistency of such a conception is in the fact that it forsakes two important cornerstones of Christianity – the crucifixion and the second coming of

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<sup>56</sup> Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, p. 341

<sup>57</sup> Martin Klauber and Stott M. Manetsch (eds.), *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), pp. 59

<sup>58</sup> Eli Stanley Jones, *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1972), p. 40

<sup>59</sup> Beyerhaus, 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom', in McGavran, *Crucial Issues*, pp. 54-76

<sup>60</sup> Beyerhaus, 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom', in McGavran, *Crucial Issues*, pp. 70-71

Christ. The anonymous Christ, who causes any good transformation in a current progress of society, becomes the main issue, and the historical Christ, who died on the cross (for some reason, evidently), appears to be not so important. Christians' happiness then originates more from the fact, for example, that political ideologies are influenced by Christian values, and that Christians are 'partners ... in the struggle for justice'.<sup>61</sup>

I would perceive the theological issues of the crucifixion and the second coming of Christ, mentioned by Peter Beyerhaus, as important. They will direct the understanding of mission goals. They will support the priority of evangelism. They will not advocate that class of humanisation, where man is at the centre, with his ability to say what is wrong and what is right. Beyerhaus critiques some passages in *Drafts for Sections, Uppsala 1968*, and asserts that it can lead to error in the theology of mission. Evangelicals are, of course, well aware of the tension between world and mission history. But it will be Christ's task to bring the resolution, not ours. Beyerhaus understands this position as 'The Evangelical Answer'.<sup>62</sup>

David Hesselgrave turns our attention back to Matthew 28:20 and to the (originally) McGavran's emphasis<sup>63</sup> on *Teaching them ... all things*. The context of this passage itself is truly holistic. It mentions 'all authority, all nations, all things and Jesus' promise to be with us always'.<sup>64</sup> The Great Commandment does not complete the Great Commission but complements it. To care for peoples' needs is high on God's agenda. Still, there is a higher priority, which is central for Christian mission and which is well described by terms like evangelism, training and church planting. This priority does not disregard all real pains of this world and in fact, it is not necessary and it is not logical to have such

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<sup>61</sup> Beyerhaus, 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom', in McGavran, *Crucial Issues*, p. 71

<sup>62</sup> Beyerhaus, 'Mission, Humanization, and the Kingdom', in McGavran, *Crucial Issues*, pp. 72-76

<sup>63</sup> Arthur F. Glasser, 'My last conversation with Donald McGavran', *EMQ* 27.1 (1991), pp. 58-62 [59-60]

<sup>64</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', p. 282

attitude. But in regard to existing discussion it could be useful to compare and polarise these issues. Our focus on social things should not in any way reduce our responsibilities towards the world which is lost and needs salvation through faith.<sup>65</sup>

We can feed some of the hungry, but we cannot feed the whole world. We can help heal some of the sick, but we cannot heal the whole world. We can support the rights of some disenfranchised people, but we cannot enfranchise the whole world. But we can evangelize the whole world, and no one else will do it if we do not.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Current Understanding***

At the beginning of this section I would like to reinforce the 'glory motive' which I have mentioned in the paragraph *Foundation for Stott's Argument* (the third Kostenberger's point). In his recent article 'What Makes Mission Christian?'<sup>67</sup> Christopher Little brings into the discussion about mission a factor which he calls a 'doxological orientation'.<sup>68</sup> C. Little thinks that this factor should be recovered in our days again.

To show his point in historical context, C. Little goes back in time and explains background of the issue. The Enlightenment dislodged God and placed man at the centre of the universe. This was transformed in some Christian circles into a posture where social orientation became the prime priority. The whole thing was fuelled with a discouragement, caused by the Christian attitude which was refusing to work outside, in the real world. The World Council of Churches reflected this attitude when it accepted the idea that the world should set the agenda of the mission. This corresponds with and supplements well the picture I have described in the paragraph 'Background of the debate', supported mainly by the Roger Hedlund's and J. Stott's documents. C. Little continues and explains

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<sup>65</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', pp. 282-283

<sup>66</sup> Hesselgrave, 'Redefining Holism', p. 284

<sup>67</sup> C. R. Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', *International Journal on Frontier Missions* 25 (2008), pp. 207-226

<sup>68</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', p. 207

that despite opposition represented by influential figures like Donald McGavran and later Peter Beyerhaus, mission and The Great Commission were becoming not necessarily identical. Also the Lausanne conference, with John Stott in charge, did not bring expected priority for the evangelism. The question about priority, expressed originally by W. A. Visser in Uppsala<sup>69</sup>, remained open.<sup>70</sup>

Trying to bring a solution to this issue, C. Little criticises a holistic conception of mission<sup>71</sup> but offers an alternative mission paradigm. He speaks about 'recovering the doxological theme in mission'.<sup>72</sup> Here I would cite just one but representative Bible scripture (although C. Little carefully quotes more scriptures)<sup>73</sup> found in John 17:4 'I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do' (New American Standard Bible, 1995). For both Jesus and the Apostle Paul this was the principle which motivated them in their mission. Similarly, if seeking the glory of God was important for Jesus a Paul, our mission today 'must reflect this priority'.<sup>74</sup> I think that this corresponds well with Kostenberger's point about Jesus who, as a true servant, brings glory to his Father. In my opinion, this doxological approach may play important role in the future debate about what the authentic mission really is.

Another view of mission, called 'the triune mission',<sup>75</sup> is presented by Robbie Castleman. He critiques a standard understanding of The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), which originally 'was read and understood as the trinitarian foundation of ecclesiology, not as fanfare for missiology'.<sup>76</sup> In this sense The Great Commission reveals the relationship between the Father and the Son. The incarnate Son shows people the life he has from his Father.

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<sup>69</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, pp. 20-21

<sup>70</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', pp. 208-209

<sup>71</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', pp. 212-219

<sup>72</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', pp. 219

<sup>73</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', pp. 220

<sup>74</sup> Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?', pp. 221

<sup>75</sup> Robbie F. Castleman, 'The Last Word: The Great Commission: Ecclesiology', *Themelios journal*, 32.3 (May 2007), pp. 68-70 [70]

<sup>76</sup> Castleman, 'The Great Commission', p. 68

Similarly the Son's disciples have their spiritual life from their Saviour. The task of their mission lies in the commission to announce and share this life. Put differently, God's holistic mission is 'an extension of God's character and triune nature, God's essence, God's very self. ... Like Jesus, we are commissioned to "do" who we "are" and that's what makes it GREAT'.<sup>77</sup>

Still, another view of holistic understanding is presented by Carl Raschke, who emphasises not the message of The Great Commission, but the fact that 'God is with us'.<sup>78</sup> Raschke distinguishes divine relation from divine revelation and say that 'it is a relation that must be propagated until the end of time'.<sup>79</sup> This relation should be manifested to all nations. Jesus, speaking as a Jew, meant by this not necessary other countries, but rather the Gentiles, non-Jews, aliens for Jews. In other words those, who are 'completely different'.<sup>80</sup>

Others underline the importance of *connection* in mission activities<sup>81</sup> or *ecumenical connection*.<sup>82</sup> And still others suggest not using the term *holistic mission* anyway and replacing it by the term *integral mission*.<sup>83</sup>

Here I comment briefly: It is obvious from the examples above, that the current understanding of what is *holistic mission* has many different colours. I will make one more comment concerning the current understanding soon in the conclusion of this essay.

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<sup>77</sup> Castleman, 'The Great Commission', p. 70

<sup>78</sup> Carl Raschke, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 48

<sup>79</sup> Raschke, *GloboChrist*, p. 48

<sup>80</sup> Raschke, *GloboChrist*, p. 49

<sup>81</sup> Jean-Paul A. Heldt, 'Revisiting the "Whole Gospel": Toward a Biblical Model of Holistic Mission in the 21st Century', *Missiology: An International Review* 32.2 (2004), pp. 149-172 [162]

<sup>82</sup> Sherron K. George, "'Joined and Knit Together... Each Part Working Properly": A Missiological Reflection on Practices of God's Holistic Mission in Ephesians', *Missiology: An International Review* 37.3 (2009), pp. 397-409 [407]

<sup>83</sup> Charles Ringma, 'Holistic Ministry and Mission: A Call for Reconceptualization', *Missiology: An International Review* 32.4 (2004), pp. 431-448 [441]

## **Conclusion**

We can legitimately ask the question: How successful was John Stott in his aim to mediate between ecumenists and evangelicals, between the proclamation of the Word and establishing *shalom*? David Hesselgrave, in my opinion, shows the essence of the problem when he comments on Stott's approach to Luke 4:18-19. 'That means that socio-political action (deed) is a more or less equal partner with evangelism ... in ... mission'.<sup>84</sup> I think that nothing can be more or less an equal partner. It is not logical.<sup>85</sup> Although Stott's beliefs sound convincing and deserve all respect for their moral, intellectual and theological integrity, whatever determines an individual's eternal destination (evangelism) should be given its priority with assurance and clarity.

Another attitude which lacks logic is authentic evangelism which is expected to refuse to help those in social need. The Great Commandment is in harmony with The Great Commission although the latter is appointed in evangelical circles to take priority over the first. I think that particularly it was the debate over this matter which forced those, who stand for the conservative evangelical approach, to state it this way. I also think that such declaration is not natural now and neither was it necessary in the past; this would include the period during which the primitive church practiced its mission.<sup>86</sup> Maybe Jonathan Edwards was right when he understood evangelism and social responsibility as two inseparable mandates.<sup>87</sup>

The holistic conception of mission has forced evangelicals to be more careful in their attitude to social needs of the world. But the price which has been

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<sup>84</sup> Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, p. 147

<sup>85</sup> Ringma, 'Holistic Ministry and Mission', p. 440

<sup>86</sup> Martin Klauber and Stott M. Manetsch (eds.), *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), pp. 58-59. Ringma, 'Holistic Ministry and Mission', p. 434

<sup>87</sup> Bosch, *Transforming mission*, p. 403

paid seems to have been too costly. By this I mean much more time could have been offered on the altar of the world evangelization. Instead, this energy has been expended on discussion and unhelpful polarisation.<sup>88</sup> Above all, the need to fight for the holistic position seems to be consuming its advocates so much that they loose focus on evangelisation,<sup>89</sup> although they may not necessarily intend it.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to what I have indicated in the 'Current understanding' paragraph, present understanding of holistic mission may have different nuances to those discussed in relation to J. Stott. Maybe 'the old' dilemma does not need to be solved. Our world has changed too quickly and too much in the last decades. So, maybe this question would be appropriate: What is holistic mission now and how does it correspond to the existing demand that people need to repent?

Finally, when Stott describes reasons, as to why Jesus came, he begins with the salvation aspect and continues: 'It is better to begin with something more general and say that he came to serve'.<sup>91</sup> In the light of the thoughts I have brought into the discussion of this essay I question if this approach is indeed 'better'. In fact, I question, if it is necessary. It seems that the reason for such necessity is more likely due to antagonistic social pressures (depending on the present social situation and feelings), and historical circumstances (depending on the bad mission experiences), rather than biblical reasons. This is confusing because it appears that the 'evangelical expectation' from Stott's pen was generally biblical, not social.

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<sup>88</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 21

<sup>89</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 19

<sup>90</sup> Ringma, 'Holistic Ministry and Mission', p. 435

<sup>91</sup> Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, p. 24

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