The Legacy of Lesslie Newbigin for Mission in the 21st Century

Michael W. Goheen

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin is one of the most important missiological and theological thinkers of the 20th century. The American church historian Geoffrey Wainwright, from Duke University, once remarked that when the history of the church in the 20th century comes to be written, if the church historians know their job, Newbigin will have to be considered one of the top ten or twelve theological figures of the century. In his book, he honors Newbigin's significant contribution by portraying him in patristic terms as a "father of the church."[1] Newbigin was first and foremost a missionary; he spent forty years of his life in India. But he was much more: he was a theologian, biblical scholar, apologist, ecumenical leader, author, and missiologist. The breadth and depth of his experience and his contribution to the ecumenical and missionary history of the church in the 20th century have been "scarcely paralleled."[2]

Newbigin was born in England in 1909. He was converted to Jesus Christ during his university days at Cambridge. He was married, ordained in the Church of Scotland, and set sail for India as a missionary in 1936. He spent the next eleven years as a district missionary in Kanchipuram. He played an important role in clearing a theological impasse that led to the formation of the Church of South India (CSI), a church made up of Congregationalists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Methodists. He served as bishop of Madurai for the next twelve years. The next six years of his life were spent as an ecumenical leader, first as general secretary of the IMC, the International Missionary Council, and then as associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). He returned to India and became bishop of the important Diocese of Madras for ten years. Following his retirement in 1974 until his death in 1998, he lectured at Selly Oaks College in Birmingham, England, pastored a small Reformed church in Birmingham, and carried out a punishing schedule of lecturing and

[1]Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2000), 390–93.

[2]Alan Neely, review of *Unfinished Business* [sic]: *An Autobiography*, by Lesslie Newbigin, in *Faith and Mission* 4/1 (Fall 1986): 106.

writing that produced about a dozen books and hundreds of important articles.[3]

On this occasion of the centenary of Newbigin's birth we probe his legacy for the 21st century. There are a number of ways to approach the issue. One way is to note the various contributions he made to the 20th-century church, which were tangible and readily identifiable: his nuanced theological work in the area of church government that broke the logjam and contributed to the formation of the CSI, his formulations of the missionary church expressed in the official documents of the significant Willingen Conference, his chairmanship of the famous "committee of twenty-five" that produced one of the most significant and foundational theological statements on eschatology for the World Council of Churches that was adopted at the Evanston Meeting, the fashioning of the statement on local and ecumenical unity adopted at the New Delhi meeting of the WCC that remains significant, his key part in the integration of the WCC and IMC in 1961 along with the part he played in shaping the WCC and CWME (Commission on World Mission and Evangelism) in those early days, and his role as a catalyst in making mission and Western culture a central agenda item in the church's mission. Another way is to identify his tremendous theological contribution to mission theology and its relevance and significance for today. This is the way I will proceed in this article.

The Gospel as Public Truth

Newbigin's thinking on every subject begins with the gospel, and especially that event that is at the center: the cross. From the beginning of his Christian life until the end, he believed that this was the clue that he must follow if he were to make any sense of the world.[4] Newbigin stresses the foundational nature of the gospel in two closely related ways: as public truth and as universal

[3]For more on his life see Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993); Tim Stafford, "God's Missionary To Us," *Christianity Today* (December 9, 1996): 24–33; Michael Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You": J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2000); Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life*.

[4]Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 11.

history.[5] While Hinduism and Western humanism locate truth in something unchanging outside of history, the biblical story locates truth in a story of God's redemptive deeds and words in history that culminate in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ the end and meaning of cosmic history have been revealed and accomplished. At the cross God has dealt with the sin and misery of the world; in the resurrection a new world has dawned; at Pentecost the Spirit was given so men and women could begin to share in this new world.

Nothing is more urgent in our day than a church that believes the gospel and makes it the fundamental starting point and directing power for its life. But the way Newbigin articulates the gospel is equally significant: in a world caught on the horns of relativism and fundamentalism, his formulation of the gospel comes as a breath of fresh air. Over against the rampant relativism that threatens the truth of the gospel, Newbigin stands firm: the gospel is true – universally true – for everyone in all parts of the world at every point in history. Over against the fundamentalist assumption that the gospel is a set of unchanging propositional truths or dogmatic ideas to be simply asserted against all others, Newbigin holds forth the gospel as events that reveal the meaning and goal of world history and thus provide *the* clue for understanding and living in the world, but is flexible enough for dialogue with adherents of other religions and worldviews.

The Logic of Mission

If the gospel is true, if it tells us where all of history is going, then mission must follow: the story must be made known. Jesus did not write a book but left behind a community that would make known the good news of the kingdom of God by embodying it in its life, expressing it in its deeds, and announcing it in its words. He charged them with this mission: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). They were to continue the mission of Jesus in his way. As Jesus made known the kingdom to Israel, the church was to make known the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

[5]He also speaks of the gospel as "secular announcement," by which he means the "announcement of an event which is decisive for all men and for the whole of their life" (*The Finality of Christ* [London: SCM], 48).

A number of significant elements of this view of mission remain profoundly relevant for our day. First, mission is not an optional extra but is central to this era in redemptive history. "The meaning of the 'overlap of the ages' in which we live, the time between the coming of Christ and His coming again, is that it is the time given for the witness of the apostolic Church to the ends of the earth. The implication of a true eschatological perspective will be missionary obedience, and the eschatology which does not issue in such obedience is a false eschatology."[6] One cannot understand this time period apart from mission; this era is defined by the call to make known the good news in life, word, and deed. Newbigin speaks of the logic of mission: "The logic of mission is this: the true meaning of the human story has been disclosed. Because it is the truth, it must be shared universally."[7] The term "logic of mission" refers to the essential historical connection between the good news of the kingdom revealed in Jesus and the universal mission of the church to make it known. The era of the church's mission must follow the revelation of the gospel in Jesus.

Second, mission is ecclesial. Mohammed left behind a book to communicate the truth he believed he had received from God. Jesus did not write a book; he left behind a community. Thus, mission defines the church's identity: one cannot understand the church apart from its sending. Mission is not merely one (even very important) ministry of the church but defines the very nature of the church.[8] This is God's way of working in redemptive history: God chooses a people, reveals to them the "secret" of his coming kingdom, and charges them to make it known in their corporate and individual lives, words, and deeds.[9]

[6]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 153–54.

[7]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 125.

[8]Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me"*; also "'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology," *International Review of Mission* 91/362 (July 2002): 354–69.

[9]George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

Third, mission is as broad as human life. When the word "mission" is used in many Christian circles today, the idea of geographical *expansion* still dominates. That is, mission (or missions) is considered to be an activity that proceeds from one part of the world to another. A "missionary" is one who is an agent of this expansion, and a "mission field" is a potential area outside the West where this expansion is being carried out. Of course, the 20th century has given rise to numerous factors that have eroded this view of mission. Throughout the 20th century the ecumenical church struggled to define mission in a new way. Newbigin's book, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*,[10] played a key role in redefining mission in a broader way. He consolidated, interpreted, and disseminated many of the gains made toward a fuller theological understanding of mission made in the early 20th century.[11] Mission is as broad as human life (all of life is mission) because the church is sent to make known the good news that God is restoring the whole creation. Sending, however, is not the sending of some people to other parts of the world but the sending of the whole community to make known the good news (John 20:21).

Yet – and this is the fourth point – it is important "to identify and distinguish the specific foreign missionary task within the total mission of the church."[12] Newbigin made an important distinction between mission and missions, or missionary dimension and missionary intention. Mission is an all-embracing term that refers to "the entire task for which the Church is sent into the world."[13] Missions or foreign missions are intentional activities designed to create a Christian presence in places where there is no such presence, or at least no effective presence. As such the foreign missionary task is an essential part of the church's broader mission. During the time Newbigin served as editor of

[10]*One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1959); partially reprinted in *Ecumenical Review* 11, 143–56.

[11]Rodger Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948–1975. Years of Worldwide Creative Tension – Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena: William Carey Library), 44; Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me,"* 56–57.

[12]Lesslie Newbigin, "Mission and Missions," *Christianity Today* 4/22 (1960): 911.

[13]Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 121.

the *International Review of Missions*, there was immense pressure to remove the *s* from *Missions*, which he refused to do. He insisted that the missionary task of the church to take the gospel to places where it is not known must remain an indispensable aspect of the church's mission. In a time when missionary resources are being scandalously allocated, and when the task of taking the gospel to areas where it is not known remains a vital part of the church's calling, this distinction continues to hold before us that the missionary task of the church is to the ends of the earth.

Is Christ Divided? Mission and Unity

Newbigin always stood against an individualistic understanding of the gospel. For him the biblical story narrated salvation in terms of its cosmic and corporate nature. The goal is to restore all things to unity in Christ (Eph 1:10). There is an inextricable connectedness of the various aspects of human life woven into the fabric of the whole creation. God's intention to save the whole creation in its coherent unity must proceed, not by plucking discrete individuals out of the interconnected totality, but by starting afresh with a community who comes to know God's reconciling work in a comprehensive way. This community becomes the starting and rallying point for God's work. The unity of God's people around Jesus Christ is an expression of the good news that God's work of reconciling all things in Christ has begun. God's people are sent into the world to embody the good news of God's coming unity and to invite others into it. Thus Newbigin believed mission and unity were inseparable:

> It is not possible to account for the contentment with the divisions of the Church except upon the basis of a loss of the conviction that the Church exists to bring all men to Christ. There is the closest possible connection between the acceptance of the missionary obligation and the acceptance of the obligation of unity.[14]

[14]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defence of the South India Scheme* (London: SCM, 1948), 11; see also the revised edition (London: SCM, 1960), which includes an added 28-page introduction.

He never tired of arguing that unity was essential to the mission of the church.[15] If the church is to make known the good news that at the end of history all things will be brought together under one head, even Christ, then it must embody this in its life. Its divided life is a scandal, equivalent to a temperance movement whose members are habitually drunk, because, in both, the life of the community contradicts their message![16] Only when the unbelieving world sees evidence of a reconciled community will they believe the message of the gospel:

> If they can see in the congregation in the centre not a new clique, or a new caste, or a new party, but a family in which men and women of all cliques and castes and parties are being drawn in mutual forgiveness and reconciliation to live a life which is rooted in peace with God, then there is the possibility that they may believe. If, on the other hand, they see only a series of rival groups competing with one another for influence and membership, they are not likely to be impressed by the message of our Saviour.[17]

Ecumenical endeavor, then, is not a fad but is central to the church's calling. Today, when the steam has gone out of the ecumenical sails because of the inertia of denominational and confessional traditions with their inbuilt commitment to large organizations and self-preservation, because of the growth of a fundamentalism uninterested in old ecclesiastical structures as it proliferates ever new forms, because action for justice, peace, and ecological stewardship appear to be more urgent, and because a wider ecumenism (unity around a religious center other than Christ) threatens to displace an ecclesial ecumenism,[18] Newbigin's

[15]Newbigin, *Household of God*, 170–74; see also Newbigin, *Is Christ Divided? A Plea for Christian Unity in a Revolutionary Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961).

[16]Newbigin, *Reunion of the Church*, 24–32.

[17]Lesslie Newbigin, "Unity and Mission," *Covenant Quarterly* 19 (1961): 4.

[18]These were all barriers to unity as Newbigin saw them twenty years ago (see his "The Basis and the Forms of Unity," *Mid-Stream* 23 [1984]: 1–12). Ten years later he adds the intransigence of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, the decline of the Anglican and Protestant mainline churches with their loss of confidence in the gospel, and the hostility of evangelicals, Pentecostals, and parachurch organisations to institutional and visible unity (foreword to *Roland Allen*, by Hubert Allen [Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1995], 8–9).

vast reflection on mission and unity is both motivational and instructive.

No Other Name! The Gospel and Other Religions

Newbigin's vast experience with religious pluralism, in both India and the West, equipped him for making a contribution to the burning issue of the gospel and world religions. Ryerson believes that the study of religions remains an "unfinished agenda" in Newbigin's legacy.[19] While it is true he never treated the subject in a sustained way, his two brief books and numerous articles on the subject are penetrating.[20] Newbigin's legacy remains relevant for today.

Newbigin questions the way religion is defined in Western culture. The word religion is used in a limited way as a department of life concerned with such things as worship, prayer, reading sacred scriptures, an ethical system, beliefs about God and the afterlife, and so forth. It is peculiar to Western culture to separate the domain of religion from the rest of life when in fact, religion is much more basic and comprehensive. Religion is a "set of beliefs, experiences, and practices that seek to grasp and express the ultimate nature of things, that which gives shape and meaning to life, that which claims final loyalty."[21] Thus religion includes not only what are traditionally referred to as the world religions but also ideologies and comprehensive worldviews that shape Western culture like the modern scientific worldview in both its Marxist and its liberal, democratic capitalist expressions.[22]

The clue that the Christian church must follow to understand other religions is "the finality of Christ." Various words have been used to express the truth of Christ: unique, exclusive, superior, definitive, normative, and absolute. Newbigin carefully chose the

[19]Charles Ryerson, review of *Unfinished Agenda*, in *Theology Today*, 43/3 (1986): 459–60; also published in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11/2 (1987): 90.

[20]See, e.g., "The Christian Faith and World Religions," in *Keeping the Faith – Essays to Mark the Centenary of* Lux Mundi, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright (London: SPCK, 1988), 310–40.

[21]Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3.

[22]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Revised edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 161-62.

term "finality." The context for this choice of word is of utmost importance. He believed that the destiny of the individual soul has set the agenda for this discussion. Over against this he maintains that it must be the biblical story as a progressive story of universal history that sets the context. The Bible is not a religious book that focuses on the fate of individual souls but a story of universal history in which is revealed God's mighty deeds to restore the whole creation from sin. God has acted decisively and finally in Jesus to reveal and accomplish his redemptive purposes for the whole creation.

The growing dominance of a pluralist ideology threatens claims about the finality of Christ. Indeed, pluralism has become "contemporary orthodoxy" and the "reigning assumption" among Western scholars. Newbigin has offered a profound critique of pluralism. What drives contemporary expressions of pluralism is the need for global unity: "This sense of paramount need for human unity is one of the genuinely new facts of our time—at least insofar as it now embraces the whole globe."[23] The pluralist claims that one religious tradition cannot provide a center for that unity and charges that those who offer Jesus Christ as the exclusive center are arrogant and breed division. Newbigin's response is to argue that the pluralist too has an exclusive center for unity that is just as dogmatic, but because it comports with the current climate it remains concealed. Newbigin believes that the cross, as the place where human pride and selfish ambition are judged, is the only center that will suffice. The pluralism of Western scholars, in fact, is a symptom of the sickness of postmodern culture that has given up the search for truth. Yet for Newbigin truth is paramount: if Jesus is the fullest revelation of God and his purpose for the creation, then his people must witness in life and word to this truth. A proper posture amidst a plurality of religions will be a missionary encounter in which the Christian church humbly yet confidently witnesses to the finality of Jesus Christ in all of life over against other equally all-embracing commitments.

Contextualization as Challenging Relevance

With the growth of the church throughout the world, the issue of gospel and cultures is an urgent one. Stephen Bevans has

[23]Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 157.

given an important overview of the various models of contextualization employed in the church today. When he finished his book, he recognized that Newbigin's way of approaching the question of gospel, church, and culture did not fit any of those models. In a subsequent revision of his book, he adds a sixth model of which Newbigin is a primary exponent.[24] Newbigin's reflection on contextualization is rich and exceedingly significant in the ongoing struggle to discern the relation between gospel, culture, and cultures.[25]

Newbigin's understanding of gospel and culture was shaped by his experience of the cross-cultural communication of the gospel in India. He recognized in his street preaching that he must both use the language and cultural categories of the hearer *and* challenge the religious commitments that underlie those forms. The gospel must be "at home" in and "at odds" with the culture. Communication of the gospel always seeks to be *faithful* to the gospel and *relevant* to the culture. The one who employs the language of the culture risks the absorption of the gospel into the idolatry of that culture; if one does not use that language, the message will not be understood.

This problem of gospel and culture that he encountered in evangelism in India is not only a problem in non-Western culture; all cultures are shaped by foundational religious commitments that distort all its practices, forms, and institutions. Nor is this dynamic evident only in evangelistic communication; the tension will be in every part of life if the church lives faithfully. The more deeply one senses the contradiction between the gospel and the reigning worldview of a culture, as well as the need to live within the forms of that culture, the more the church will experience a painful tension.[26] This unbearable tension comes from three factors: the church is part of a society that embodies a comprehen-

[24]Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 117–37.

[25]Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me,"* 331–79; "Scholarship at the Crossroads: Exploring Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Model of Contextualization," *European Journal of Theology* 10, 2 (2001): 131–42; "Gospel and Cultures: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Contribution," *Philosophia Reformata* 66, 2 (2001): 178–88; "Is Lesslie Newbigin's Model of Contextualization Anticultural?" *Mission Studies* 19, 2, 38 (October 2002): 136–58.

[26]Lesslie Newbigin, *A South India Diary* (London: SCM Press, 1951), 49.

sive cultural story or worldview that contradicts the gospel; the church finds its identity in another equally comprehensive story that it is called to embody; the tension arises as there is an encounter between these two stories in the life of the church. How can one live as part of an idolatrous culture and yet at the same time be faithful to the gospel?

Newbigin offers a threefold path toward faithful contextualization that will enable the church to embody the gospel within this painful tension.[27] First, the starting point is the primacy of the gospel: the affirmation that the church begins by attending to the story of Scripture as its ultimate commitment, understanding the culture in the context of the gospel. Second, the gospel will speak a word of grace and a word of judgment, a "yes" and a "no." If God's "no" is suppressed, syncretism will be the result; if God's "yes" is suppressed, the gospel will be rendered irrelevant. How then can the church both affirm and reject culture? Newbigin finds a solution in a phrase he borrows from Alfred Hogg: "challenging relevance." Cultural concepts and forms must be reshaped and reinterpreted, set in a new context, and filled with biblical content. Newbigin believes that the Gospel of John offers this model. John freely uses the idolatrous language and thought forms of classical religion and culture that form the world of his hearers – light and darkness, body and soul, heaven and earth, flesh and spirit, and so on. Yet, as he uses them, he fills them with new content from the gospel. John is both relevant and faithful: relevant because he uses familiar categories, and faithful because he challenges the idolatrous worldview that shapes those categories. This notion of "challenging relevance" is the process by which the church interacts with all aspects of its culture. Third, there is always the danger that any one contextualization will be absorbed into the culture of that place. To prevent this, there must be a dialogue among believers from every culture. This dialogue will provide mutual correction and enrichment.

A number of things make this contextual model significant. It takes the comprehensive scope and the truth of the gospel seriously. It takes culture seriously, acknowledging both its good creational structure and its sinful twisting. It recognizes that gospel

[27]Lesslie Newbigin, "Christ and Cultures," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978): 1–2.

and culture is an abstraction and that the real place of contextualization is in the church where these two stories meet in real life. It recognizes the religious core of culture. And it recognizes the marvelous gift of diverse contextualizations of the gospel in the many cultures of the world.

Foolishness to the Greeks: Mission in Western Culture

Newbigin believed that a missionary encounter with modern Western culture was the most urgent item on the agenda of missiology: "It would seem, therefore, that there is no higher priority for the research work of missiologists than to ask the question of what would be involved in a genuinely missionary encounter between the gospel and this modern Western culture."[28] His leadership has enabled many believers in cultures shaped by the modern Western worldview to understand their missionary calling. But the importance of this topic goes beyond those in Western culture because globalization is spreading this worldview around the world, especially in urban settings, and "there is no reason for thinking that they will be exempt from the corrosive power which it has exercised with such devastating results in the churches of the old Christendom."[29]

When Newbigin returned to Britain, he observed that the church was timid about the truth of the gospel. The primary root of this lack of confidence was the enthronement of reason in the modern scientific worldview. He believed that the Western church had accommodated itself to this idolatrous worldview and was an "advanced case of syncretism."[30] If the gospel was to be liberated from this syncretism, the religious beliefs at the center of Western culture needed to be unmasked. He employed the tools of his missionary training to bring new light to bear on the topic.

[28]Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 3. The three books that launched his mission and Western culture project are *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), *Foolishness to the Greeks*, and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*.

[29]Lesslie Newbigin, "Culture of Modernity," in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, ed. Karl Mueller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans, and Richard H. Bliese (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 98–101; quoting here from page 99.

[30]Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984*, 23.

This task was fourfold, the first of which was *cultural*. If the gospel was to be liberated for a missionary encounter, there was a need to engage in a missiological analysis of culture. In the same way that a good missionary will seek to understand the religious beliefs at the core of the culture to which he or she is sent, so must the Western church understand the religious beliefs at the core of its culture. The Western church had been too long blinded to this by being under the illusion that the culture was either Christian, or it was secular and neutral. One of his major contributions was to show that the idolatry of scientific reason led to a dichotomy at the heart of Western culture between facts and values. Facts could govern and shape the public life of a nation. Values, however, were merely tastes, preferences, and opinions, and therefore to remain in the private realm. The gospel was deemed merely a value, and thus relegated by this dichotomy to the private realm.

The second task was *theological*. If the gospel had been reshaped and compromised by the modern scientific worldview by its consignment to the private realm, two tasks were urgent: to recover the gospel as public truth, and to recover the comprehensive scope of its authority. The gospel must be proclaimed as true for all and must be brought to bear on all of social and cultural life. Anything less dishonors the Lord of the gospel.

The third task is *ecclesiological*. There was a need to recover the missionary nature of the church. It had been deeply compromised by its alliance with culture and state in the Christendom arrangement, and the church still lived in that legacy. It has also been compromised since the Enlightenment by its willingness to be relegated to the private realm. The need was to recover a missionary understanding where she understood herself to be a community called to encounter her culture with an equally comprehensive story.

The final task was *epistemological*. If reason had become a central idol, moving outside of its created domain, to judge all truth claims, it was necessary to unmask its pretentious claims. Reason must be seen as a God-given ability to understand the world in community in the light of ultimate faith commitments. Human rationality is not an autonomous arbiter of truth but always functions within some socially embodied tradition shaped by faith.

The church declines to accept the ultimate beliefs of Western culture and instead lives and reasons in the ultimate light of the gospel.

Martin Luther once said that the gospel was like a caged lion: it did not need to be defended, just released. Newbigin's contribution to the world church is to help it see that modern Western culture has in some ways "caged" the gospel and to provide ways that the bars of that cage might be torn away. Then the church will be equipped with its most powerful weapon for a missionary encounter: the gospel.

Michael W. Goheen (PhD University of Utrecht) is Geneva Professor of Religious and Worldview Studies at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C. and Teaching Fellow in Mission at Regent College, Vancouver. He has published books in the areas of worldview, mission, and biblical theology, including a work on Lesslie Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology.