



LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

SUMMER INSTITUTE

Missionary to India (Pt.2)

Scot Sherman
8 July, 2014

4 Stories that get at LN's Missionary Character

- Co-leading the Ashram
- Training Village Leaders
- Writing Gospel chants
- Committing to the Indian Church

LN's Missionary Character

- “The minister should work as a member of the church of India and as its servant...The principle of identification with those to whom we are sent, a principle which derives its sanction from the Incarnation itself, surely forbids us to stop short of this step. Comradeship with the Indian Church cannot be complete so long as the missionary cannot accept, along with his Indian fellow-minister, the spiritual authority of the Church which he is himself committed to build up.”

—LN writing in 1945

Union Negotiator

- “During the ‘forties there was an interesting and highly competent group of new men in the delegations. They gave a fresh impetus particularly to the theological debate. Among the S.I.U.C. representatives J.E.L. Newbigin was outstanding. With a background of solid Scottish theology and experience as a Student Christian Movement secretary, he became in India an expert Tamil linguist and evangelist. An exceptionally happy blend of youth, mature judgement and spiritual authority made his contribution unique.”

—Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India* (1954)

Union Negotiator

- “The little group of men and women which met year by year in South India knew that they were like performers in the ring, lighted up by powerful searchlights, their every movement watched by a vast and unseen cloud of witnesses in every country of the world.”

— Bishop Stephen Neill,
Towards Church Union (1952)

Union Negotiator

- “As one saw the great multitude of people, so absolutely rapt and intent, and their faces so full of joy; and the servers moving about to see that all were served; the thought uppermost in my mind was: Never again will I say that a thing which I believe is God’s will is impossible.”

—LN, *Unfinished Agenda*

The Church and the Gospel (1944)

- Visible and Invisible

“The invisible bond of faith alone toward God is the constitutive fact; but the visible bond of love and fellowship with my brother is the necessary expression of that constitutive fact. If you separate the two, there is a falsehood somewhere. That which constitutes the Church is an invisible fact: but that fact, if it be really there, will be constantly expressing itself in the visible fellowship of brethren dwelling together in unity. In so far as that visible fellowship is not coming into being, we must doubt whether the invisible bond is really there...You cannot set the invisible Church over against the visible Churches. There is only one Church—constituted by the secret bond of election and faith; visible and also concealed in those companies which we call Churches”

The Church and the Gospel (1944)

- Spiritual and Material

“God, according to the Bible, chose to reveal Himself through a small and stiffnecked tribe in an obscure corner of the world, and to crown that revelation in a man who was hanged on a gibbet. This is as offensive to the sophisticated European and the spiritual Brahmin as it was to Greek and Jew in the days of Paul. Like Naaman the Syrian we all resent the fact that God should have linked His gift of healing with something so odd and unpopular as the Jewish race, or so scandalous as a crucified convict. We are all inclined to say, ‘Why should I have to go there, or do that, in order to receive God’s grace? Cannot God deal with me direct instead of by this roundabout and arbitrary way? Why can I not find him in my own soul, in the culture or religion of my own tradition? Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?’ The answer to all this is, of course, that the purely inward and spiritual may be purely private and selfish. What is needed to break through the pride which is the fundamental form of sin, is something that comes to us from outside, the fact or the person who, being outside of us, cannot be adjusted to suit us, or confused with the motions of our own spirit”

The Church and the Gospel (1944)

- Proleptic and Practical

“We are in the paradoxical position of being both a colony of heaven, and also, very obviously, still a sinful and worldly society. We cannot deny either of these facts. To identify this Church as we know it with the perfect Body of Christ, would be to ignore the fact of sin: but to separate them completely would be precisely to ignore the gospel.”

The Church and the Gospel (1944)

- Visible and Invisible
- Spiritual and Material
- Proleptic and Practical
- *Simil Justus et Peccator*

6 Propositions

Negative

- 1. Historical Continuity is not of the *essence* of the church.
- 2. God's grace is *not bound* to the institutional church.
- 3. No definitive form of church government is presented in the New Testament

6 Propositions

Positive

- 4. Christ's work is to draw people into community with himself. The Church is the "fruit of the gospel."
- 5. This new community (fruit) is the means by which others are brought to faith.
- 6. This visible community expresses and maintains its unity by means of appointed officers.