



# LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

## SUMMER INSTITUTE

### Missionary To India

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# CAMBRIDGE:

## The Making of the Evangelical Ecumenical

- “I was totally unprepared for the sudden, overwhelming, desolating knowledge that I was alone. Never before, and never again afterwards, have I known such utter desolation. As I remember it now, I wonder how I survived it, and how countless other children can go through and survive that desolation. There is no way of describing it, for it is just darkness with no light at all.”

—LN, *Unfinished Agenda*

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- “It was a vision of the cross, but it was a vision of the cross spanning the space between heaven and earth, between ideals and present realities, and with arms that embraced the whole world. I saw it as something which reached down to the most hopeless and sordid of human misery and yet promised life and victory. I was sure that night, in a way I have never been before, that this was the clue that I must follow if I were to make any kind of sense of the world. From that moment I would always know how to take bearings when I was lost. I would know where to begin again when I had come to the end of all my resources of understanding or courage.”

—LN, *Unfinished Agenda*

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- “I suddenly knew that I had been told that I must offer for ordination. I have not been thinking about this. But I knew that I had been ordered and that it was settled and I could not escape.”

—LN, *Unfinished Agenda*

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- “Is it not true that we ought to cut down on the work of foreign missions and concentrate our best powers on the problems that confront us at home? I believe that answer is No...because of the very nature of the Christian Church...because it is the body of Christ, whose members are members one of another; because it is the community of people who love one another, who can save the world because that love can overleap every human barrier of race or nation or economic status and draw all men into one. Because the Church is this, a church which is not extending hands of mutual help and friendship across oceans and across frontiers is as much a contradiction in terms as a church whose ministry is corrupt, or whose members are selfish and dishonest. In so far as the church is not truly and deeply one the world over, demonstrating to the world a unity that can transcend all sectional aims, however lofty, it is not merely failing to take account of the plain facts of the world as it is today, it is also to that extent denying its own true nature and contradicting its own true witness”

—LN, Address to Edinburgh Quadrennial, 1933

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- “This was a turning point in my theological journey. I began the study as a typical liberal. I ended it with a strong conviction about “the finished work of Christ”, about the centrality and objectivity of the atonement accomplished on Calvary. The decisive agent in the shift was James Denney. His commentary on Romans carried the day as far as I was concerned. Barth I found incomprehensible. C.H. Dodd seemed to have made the epistle palatable by removing its toughest parts – the parts where I found strong meat. His “demythologizing” of the wrath of God seemed to me effectively to remove the love of God, for if “wrath” was only an anthropomorphic way of describing the consequences of sin, then ‘love’ would have to be explained along the same lines. At the end of the exercise I was much more of an evangelical than a liberal”

—LN, *Unfinished Agenda*

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- “If we are speaking about religious ideas, or about religious experiences, then certainly to claim uniqueness and finality for one's own is intolerable arrogance. Kraemer's whole point is that we are not; we are talking about facts of history. If, in fact, it is true that almighty God, creator and sustainer of all that exists in heaven and on earth, has – at a known time and place in human history – so humbled himself as to become part of our sinful humanity and to suffer and die a shameful death to take away our sin and to rise from the dead as the firstfruit of a new creation; if this is a fact, then to affirm it is not arrogance. To remain quiet about it is treason to our fellow human beings. If it is really true, as it is, that "the Son of God loved me and gave himself up for me," how can I agree that this amazing act of matchless grace should merely become part of a syllabus for the "comparative study of religions"? One can, of course, deny the story. One can say that it is not fact but legend. But if it is fact it cannot be slotted into some way of understanding the world based on other presuppositions; it can only be the startingpoint, the presupposition of all our struggle to understand the world, including our struggle to understand the world of the religions.”

—LN, Comments on 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Tambaram, 1988

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### Bebbington Quadrilateral

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- *Conversionism*: the belief that lives need to be transformed through a "born-again" experience and a life long process of following Jesus.
- *Activism*: the expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts
- *Biblicism*: a high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority
- *Crucicentrism*: a stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity

— David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1930s* (1989)



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- “And my fifth one I would add — even though it may be inherent, it may be implied, I would call it supernatural Christianity. Liberal Christianity tried to redo all of Christian doctrine in terms of naturalistic assumptions, no miracles. And I would say an evangelical Protestant definitely believes in miracles, believes the resurrection really happened.”

—Tim Keller’s “Add on”: Faith Angle Forum,  
Washington DC, 2013