

the Gospel and Our Culture

a network for encouraging the encounter in north america

In This Issue

Companions in the U.K. are exploring many of the same issues we face in North America. This issue includes articles by two of those companions, Anne Wilkinson-Hayes and H. Dan Beeby, courtesy of the British and Foreign Bible Society who first published these pieces in The Bible in TransMission, their magazine for Christian leaders.

In her article beginning on this page, Wilkinson-Hayes is paying attention to the forms taken by the earliest, pre-Christendom church to find clues for noticing "New Ways of Being Church" in the present day, post-Christendom landscape. In his, Beeby reviews Geoffrey Wainwright's new book, Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life (page 7).

The e-group conversation on "Intergenerational Worship" begun in the last issue (13:1) continues here (page 4). A brief reflection by the editor on Matthew 25 is borne out of the story of a parish in Brooklyn, one of a number of congregations visited by one of the current research teams of the network (page 3). A few important "Book Notes" (page 8) completes the issue.

— the Editor

NEW WAYS OF BEING CHURCH

*Anne Wilkinson-Hayes
South Oxford Baptist Church
England*

Recently three people in my church have asked for baptism. We are all thrilled. We are thrilled for them, and we are also thrilled for ourselves— we must be doing something right! So we convince ourselves that it is

evolved into churches unintentionally, and groups that have consciously reinvented themselves. I discovered that there is significant hope and inspiration to be found in these, often very fragile, new beginnings.

Before we consider some of the snapshots, we need to face the question "What is church?"

Many of the groups I have looked

The first key factor of church growth in the first four centuries was a deep expression of inclusive community.

worthwhile struggling on, trying to maintain the familiar ways of being church. However, we all know the statistics, we all know the current climate. Church isn't working. It fails to touch the vast majority of our population. We cannot avoid the necessity of change.

A few years ago I began looking for alternative expressions of church life. I explored Christian communities and then broadened out to consider looser mission-focused groups, alternative worship gatherings, groups that

do not consider themselves "church" because their understanding of that term is shaped by a different set of theological and ecclesiological principles. My guiding framework emerged from an article written by the Early Church historian Alan Kreider (*Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom*, Joint Liturgical Studies 32, Cambridge: Grove Books, 1995). He asked the question "Why did the Church grow at its fastest rate in the first four centuries?" His research discovered that there were no

recorded evangelistic strategies, and that worship usually excluded unbelievers, so the sort of activities that have been in vogue over the last decade, namely missions and seeker services, were not instrumental.

The first key factor was a deep expression of inclusive community. People were amazed by the love Christians had for one another, which broke all the normal social barriers. The second was the degree of service the Christians offered to the wider community. They were noted as caring for widows and orphans, assisting with funerals and being present in times of need. The third factor was a distinctive lifestyle. The early Christians refused to take up arms; they eschewed certain practices and festivals; they sought to live simply and share their belongings. These three factors fascinated unbelievers and Kreider asserts that the Church grew so remarkably by fascination.

These observations seem relevant for two reasons. Firstly, the early Church consciously tried to live out the values of Jesus, and their life was closest to the biblical basis we strive to model ourselves upon. Secondly, we are currently in post-Christendom and non-Christendom models are a useful starting point for considering how to be church in such an era. Thus for me, "church" needs to reflect a sense of community, a commitment to social transformation and a measure of alternative living that in some way challenges the status quo.

As I describe some of the situations I have been privileged to visit, I am very conscious that the stories are not mine to tell, and that I have only gained fleeting impressions. Some stories reflect situations that have now changed radically. Experiments are often fragile and short-lived but the story still has validity and truth and remains an offering to the wider community. It is my hope that the broad brush strokes will catalyze imaginations and sow seeds of new possibilities.

Some of the interesting models

never set out to become church at all. They have evolved from groups of Christians who simply engaged in relevant mission.

Living Proof, in Cardiff, grew from a house group on an estate. Members prayed to have a clear sense of what God wanted them to do. They began a small youth club and over the years they have developed a wide-ranging programme involving teaching life skills in local schools, and running a network of summer schools that bring them into contact with more than 1,500 children. Living Proof has a clear Christian ethos combined with high professional standards. It has gained them wide approval for the difference they are making among a particularly disenfranchised group of young people. The shift from community project to church came imperceptibly as young people became Christians and could not find local churches to settle in. They started asking to come to the staff prayer meeting, and soon outgrew the house setting and now meet in a community centre. A church had been born and the leaders had to be trained to nurture it. It has its own style and practices that are relevant to

its mission focus.

The Hope Community has very different origins. Three Roman Catholic sisters were asked by the local parish church in Wolverhampton to conduct a community survey on a nearby housing estate. The sisters spent each day listening to the pain of the inhabitants on the estate. The estate had all the highest indicators for levels of urban deprivation, and people felt depressed and marginalized. The sisters felt increasingly uncomfortable returning to their convent each evening and eventually secured a maisonette on the third floor of one of the tower blocks. Their belief was that community creates community and that in some way God could use their life of shared prayer for the good of the people on the estate. They did not set out to begin anything, but gradually, as relationships developed, local people took initiatives. Literacy classes, holidays for children who had never before left the city, IT training and a higher level of interest and care between the residents, were just some of the positive effects. The third floor gradually became the effective chapel for the estate. Local people began an

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estate service. They found voices to articulate faith they never knew they had. Church, by my criteria, although not shared publicly by the sisters, has happened and is changing lives.

Other initiatives have been more intentional. The Eagle's Nest in Ramsgate has developed from the Pioneer strand of the house church or new church movement. A group felt that the authority structures of such churches were unhelpful to those who were already damaged by oppressive relationships. The Eagle's Nest was deliberately named to reflect their desire to provide a safe place to care for people who were hurting. The nest was a place where healing could take place. However, it was not a place to stay in. The group has a very radical view that they have failed in their mission if they grow. If they grow, it means that people are not being launched out of the nest; they are not finding their wings. Their aim is that people will find healing and then be helped in the community to discern the call of Christ to move out in new directions. Church thus becomes a place of transience and transition, rather than an end in itself.

Urban Expression is a network of small Christian groups living in under-churched areas of east London. They have resisted calling themselves anything, until local people begin to name them. They recognise that "church" as a name carries a lot of unhelpful baggage for people. They simply want to get to know locals through natural links such as work and school and seek to be a positive asset in the area. They have cleaned windows and picked up litter, been involved in local football competitions and youth work. They aim gradually to invite people to meals and for them to stay for worship around the table. In Shadwell the vision of church is house-sized and the aim is to begin new household communities once one gets too big.

The Church of the Savior in Washington DC is a long-established church plant. It asks three questions: What is the mission? What is the community needed to support that mission? What are the spiritual disci-

Continued on page 7

A Reflection on Matthew 25: 1-46

“We are Matthew 25.”

*George R. Hunsberger
GOCN Coordinator*

When Pascual said that to my research companions visiting him, it was not a belligerent boast, or a smug pride. Rather, it was said as a joyous recognition. “This is what we are here for! We are Matthew 25.” With the comment, Pasqual summed up the sense of identity that characterizes the people of Transfiguration Parish (Roman Catholic) in Brooklyn. In their weekly routines of life in smaller groupings called “fraternities” and in their weekly celebration of the Eucharist, together with a host of ways in which they respond to people in circumstances of brokenness and struggle, they embody their central “charism”—to be “Present with Christ in the Eucharist and present with the poorest of the poor.” They know themselves to be charged to fulfill the designation “Matthew 25” and their routines ensure that it will be so.

Reflecting on Matthew 25 requires serious attention to the question “Who are the *we*?” in the passage. It is probably hardest to be Matthew 25 if *we* are the secure, the unimprisoned, the well-

fed, the warmed. The cold are most likely to share their warmth, the hungry their supper, the imprisoned their “presence.” The Transfiguration Parish is not “the rich helping the poor, the needy, the less fortunate.” They are people of the neighborhood, by many standards “poor” or not far from it, committed to being present with the poorer still. Or in some cases they are people who by choices afforded them because of education have cast their lives into the daily situation of the poor.

The point of Jesus in Matthew 25 is not so much that the “haves” should be careful to share with the “have-nots,” those “less fortunate than themselves.” Rather, he calls for his community—from whatever strata they are drawn—to be fully and genuinely “present” to the hungry, the cold and the imprisoned. The food, the visit, the cloak will follow, but they are mere reflections of the life routines of “presence.” It means that nothing short of imitation of the incarnation—the presence of God among us in Jesus Christ—fulfills the manner of the reign of God honored and portrayed by Jesus in this text and in his life. ■



INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP, PART II

A Cyber-Conversation

An online GOCN discussion group, hosted by Yahoo! Groups, recently got into a vigorous conversation about intergenerational worship. The second installment of the thread of conversation is re-published here to share the insights with a wider audience than the 200 or so who are members of the eGroup. The first installment was published in the March, 2001 issue of this newsletter. (For information about signing on to the discussion group, go to the GOCN webpage about it at <http://www.gocn.org/chatline.htm>.)

Date: Fri, 9 Feb 2001 14:50:21 -0000
From: Adam Sparks <asparks@eauk.org>

This issue is clearly creating quite a lot of interest and thinking.

I thought some of you may be interested to know of a forthcoming publication (expected later this year). It will be on the subject of "Theology of Generations" (title to be confirmed). It will address many of the issues that have been raised by contributors to this GOCN eGroup.

It will be produced by the UK Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE). Part of the rationale for the book is that much of Church Growth thinking on niche services, etc., has been based on sociological reflection without giving due consideration to theological reflection.

If anyone is interested in knowing when it has been published, please send your email address to asparks@eauk.org and I will send you a brief email when it can be purchased.

Date: Fri, 9 Feb 2001 10:03:47 -0700
From: Darren Cummings
<cummings@ecc6.ateng.az.honeywell.com>

"One of the prices we pay in the segregation of education by age is the self-referential reality that each class year and generation makes for itself." David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*.

Date: Fri, 09 Feb 2001 10:08:17 -0600
From: Richard Heyduck <rheyduck@ev1.net>

One of the results of the success of Sunday School over the past couple of generations has been that parents have assumed that passing on the faith is the job of the church program (just as education is the responsibility of a govern-

ment program).

We have seen that Sunday School (and other church programs) don't do such a great job at this. One hour (maybe two or three) a week simply isn't enough.

When we push intergenerationality as an alternative, are we keeping the assumption that it is the responsibility of church program to disciple children? (By "program" I mean simply "structured activity.") We experience a division between what we do "at church" and "at home." Part of this division is structural—more structure at church, less at home; part is temporal—we spend certain times at church, others at home; part of it is geographical—we do "church" at church, we do "family" at home.

All this could be avoided if we made church and family into the same unit, a house church of people who actually lived together. We see this some places. I don't think it is an option (certainly not an immediate one) for most churches in the USA today.

Here are some things I think we need to see happen in this area:

1. In modern times the individual has replaced the family as an economic unit. This has in turn been connected with (if I knew more I might be able to say "resulted in") economics being narrowed to money and its production and use. What seems to me to be a parallel development (though it probably came first) is the notion that individuals have a calling from God as individuals. What if instead we were to seek ways for the family to become an economic unit again and to ask about what calling a *family* might have as a family?

2. We need to do more work on the relationship between the social reality of families and the model of church as family. We have been critical of each of these singly, but I think we need to give more attention to the dynamic relationship between these (social and theological) models.

3. The established mainline churches with which I have the most experience are most likely to try to include everyone in everything and to fail in keeping younger generations. Part of their rationale, especially in smaller churches, is that most of the members are old: they want to see young people. They don't want to allow the young people to *act* like young people, however. In other words, emphasis on integration *can* (I'm *not* saying "must") be a power play.

4. If the majority of young people's time is spent "at home," the leaders of the home need to see discipling as their responsibility—and this not to be passed off on experts. Our primary reason for homeschooling is not school quality, but that we want our kids socialized into Kingdom values. (It is a challenge to me that the hierarchy of my denomination tends to be blind supporters of government schooling.)

The church needs to find ways to motivate, encourage and equip parents (family leaders) in doing this discipling.

5. We need to develop the expectation that young Christians (children) can be in ministry, to their peers and to others. Do away with the assumption that ministry flows only from adults downward.

6. Just as with “family” life at home, not all activities are for the whole family, not all activities at church will be for (or appropriate for) the whole family.

7. At least in the settings with which I am experienced, we need to find ways to minister to those who work with children. This will likely be a first step for traditional churches like my own. Right now I see many adults who never leave the children’s building. The needs are so great and the workers so few that they have no time for anything else. This model costs the children and adults immensely.

As a pastor in a traditional church I see many ways family is sacrificed for unthinking commitment *more* and *bigger* and *busy*. As an Associate Pastor, I feel demands to sacrifice my family for the sake of the ministry (other families, one might say). Too many times family calendar planning turns out to be irrelevant because of a last minute assignment. Obviously this happens in other job settings as well, but at least the church *says* that it values family.

Date: Wed, 14 Feb 2001 00:00:43 +0200

From: Jan Nieder-Heitmann <jniederh@mweb.co.za>

I understand the Christian family to be a basic building block of church, the latter which I prefer to think of in terms of David Bosch’s “body of people sent on a mission.” I propose that we do not necessarily have to think of narrowing church down to the Christian family. There is room for being “a body of people sent on a mission” both in terms of a family dedicated to Christ and in wider groupings. As a matter of fact, the family-crossing-character of the church is equally important for the unity and catholicity of our being church. This I say against my own ecclesial background of church being defined in terms of “extended family,” “tribe” and ethnicity and the detrimental effect it has had for our witness to the gospel.

As a practical example of holding on to both these faces of being God’s missionary people, I would like to share a very valuable experience we as family had in (Dutch) Reformed homes in West Michigan while visiting there. Sunday lunch would be celebrated as a festive family extension of congregational worship. This is symbolically enacted by the head of the family rereading the focus text of the morning service, concluded by a prayer of intercession and thanksgiving.

In a setting where my home congregation has opted so vigorously for the niche approach of the church growth school that none of us still manage to worship together, the above tradition has helped us to recover some of the sense of family as basic missional community. Some adaptation is needed since the bible lessons used in the different services are diverse. Yet, by sharing some of what struck us respec-

tively in the different services we attended, and reading together the lectionary text of the day, we manage to put some of Humpty Dumpty together again.

Date: Wed, 14 Feb 2001 10:11:42 EST

From: Wayne Schwab <ASchwab525@aol.com>

Begin thinking and planning around children with recognition they are full members of Jesus Christ and the church by baptism. In the Episcopal Church, they can receive communion from baptism on.

When you start there, children are our equals differing only by age and experience.

These principles can make a great difference!

Date: Wed, 14 Feb 2001 10:54:32 -0700

From: Darren Cummings

<cummings@ecc6.ateng.az.honeywell.com>

As Troeltsch explored in *Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, the adoption of the gospel into the social unit of the family was the easy step. It is in figuring out what the gospel means to the larger social unit that we have continued to struggle.

“Missionalness” seems to be a powerful way of thinking about these ideas and how to approach this...for adults. But I haven’t heard a lot of talk about children being “missional.” I still hear a tug-of-war between the desire to create a safe and healthy environment in which to raise children over against the desire to go out as mature adults and be salt and light.

I know what it looks like for the whole Christian social answer to be in terms of creating the safe social space. But if we are going to talk about an alternative...then what does it look like for children (and permanent children) to be “missional?”

Date: Thu, 15 Feb 2001 04:12:10 -0500

From: Randy Buist <Georgetown2@email.msn.com>

What does it look like for children to be missional?

I think that part of this question was answered by Wayne Schwab of St. John’s Episcopal Church in an earlier message. He suggests that when children are considered equals in the church, then the differences begin to shrink. If we consider them to be “in Christ,” then they are (not “will be”) also given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5). Perhaps we have bought into the world’s idea that creating a safe place is of primary importance. Perhaps if we lived by the Spirit, then we would not be so scared of what the world had to throw at our children, especially given that they are also living in the Spirit.

On another note.... I wonder if our children are more missional than our adults. Kids are excited about Christ; they tell everyone they know about Jesus. Then they grow into their late elementary years, and their excitement starts to become more “adult-like.” How have we as the church

allowed them to lose their excitement for Christ? Perhaps this is the more honest question to ask? As I have pondered Christ's teachings about the faith of a child, I wonder if we have not missed the depth of what he was really saying to us?

Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2001 07:07:11 -0000
From: Russ Reeves <russ.reeves@trnty.edu>

It seems I've missed most of the discussion on a topic I find very interesting, but I'd like to add some thoughts.

My family (wife and 2 girls, 3 years, 10 months) have been part of a two-month-old church plant in south suburban Chicago. The first meeting consisted of a few families meeting in a garage, and this last Sunday we met in a church building we bought from a church about to close its doors, since with about 30 families now, the garage was getting pretty cramped. It is an age-integrated church—no nursery, no Sunday-Schools, no children's programs. The only thing resembling a church program currently in place is a monthly potluck and hymn sing, which is also a time for the church's children to share memory verses, songs they have learned, etc. By the standards of the church growth gurus, we're on the cutting edge of the 19th, maybe 18th, century.

What we do have is an emphasis on family worship and high expectations for involvement, both of adults and children. Sitting through a church service isn't that big of a stretch for children who are used to sitting through family worship at home, involving prayer, Bible reading, readings from devotionals, memory verses, etc. I think an intergenerational approach to Sunday worship is a wonderful thing, but not as an end in itself. It succeeds best when practiced by those for whom intergenerational family worship is a familiar, or at least not totally unknown practice (as I suspect it is for most North American Christians—at least it was to me at one time and the churches I've ben part of previously).

Date: Thu, 1 Mar 2001 10:30:31 -0800
From: Scott Gassoway <scottgassoway@hotmail.com>

Great thoughts on intergenerational worship, but how do you deal with new families who are unchurched/non-Christian/lost to Christ who have never had 30 minutes of focused, meaningful family time...ever? This isn't a criticism just a question.

Date: Thu, 01 Mar 2001 14:44:46 -0600
From: Russ Reeves <russ.reeves@trnty.edu>

I guess we have rather high expectations for them. Part of the life of discipleship is developing that meaningful family time, and becoming part of the life of the church involves developing family worship at home. The message of the gospel heals that which is broken, and few things are as broken in our society as the family. As families learn to

practice these things at home, Sunday morning gets easier. Kids also have an amazing influence on other kids. Unlike about every other situation kids today are exposed to, acting out and causing problems isn't respected by the other kids in the room. I've heard from many parents with children who initially resisted our church's way of doing things that the example of other children fully participating in the service has had an effect on their kids. There are a few things to make the transition easier as well—the building we purchased has a number of small classrooms, so parents with infants, older children with discipline problems, etc., can be taken somewhere private when needed (and of course it's not just non-Christians who need it!). We avoid having long pastoral prayers (usually the most difficult part of the service for younger children to sit still for), etc.

Evangelism can also come through family worship. Going to church Sunday morning, while far from a universal practice, isn't particularly distinctive. Family worship is, however, and other parents in our neighborhoods, friends of our children, etc., take notice. [This] in many ways is more attractive, even though more foreign, than typical Sunday morning worship.

One of our pastors was bumped up to first class on a plane recently, and he sat next to an official of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). Our pastor asked about the factors that have led to the explosive growth of the Mormons, and the answer wasn't programs, buildings, drums, car washes, etc., etc., etc. (This official was very familiar with current trends in church growth/seeker sensitive services). It was families. This strategy is confirmed in every LDS Church TV ad I've seen—the focus is never on what happens in the church building, but on what happens in the home. If that model has power for the Mormons, how much more powerful could it be in the context of the...gospel?

Date: Thu, 01 Mar 2001 17:15:35 -0800
From: Mark Lau Branson <mbranson@fuller.edu>

We dealt with Scott's question several ways: (1) families arriving needed to be met by adults who provided orientation and options; (2) church adults were ready to sit by newcomers and talk through the experience; (3) pews had helpful supplies (a kids-oriented brochure on our Communion liturgy, a very well illustrated Bible, art supplies); (4) orientation for parents to our Godly Play approach to children formation that connects to worship; (5) adults prepared to intercept all children arriving without adults, to welcome, orient, and sit with them through the service. ■



New Ways of Being Church continued from page 3
plines needed to support that particular community in that mission?

What has developed is a church of nine different mission congregations that serve a needy area of the city. Each is quite distinctive. One is a hospital for street people recovering from substance abuse, another is a housing association and another is a coffee and book shop. Each has their own appropriate style of worship and activities. What links them as one church is the shared teaching and discipleship programme run by another congregation, the Servant Leadership School. This model could provide a relevant way forward for our city-centre churches.

There are many other fascinating examples one could give, such as churches in pubs and workplaces, but there are some common threads emerging.

The first is that the future for the church is much more varied. It will be increasingly difficult to point out churches in the landscape, other than those that remain as architectural monuments. However, the social effectiveness and the evangelistic witness of the church, as a more hidden movement, may be more pronounced at a local level.

The future is relational and in general the models seem to be small. Eating together seems to be a key component and a natural forum for faith-sharing. This should not surprise us if we are recovering our early church roots, where communion was much less symbolic and conducted in the context of a full meal together.

Mission and a commitment to improving life for others is critical to the shape of these models and the outward focus becomes the key component which shapes worship and community life, rather than as previously when the worship was considered the pivotal feature, or the primary way into being church.

Several of the situations visited have children at the heart of their life. A group in Deptford runs Children's Church, a gathering that is led by children and supported by adults. It is interesting what happens when Jesus' words about allowing a little child to lead us into the kingdom of God are put into practice. Enabling the vulnerable and the marginalized to be at the core of church life is a practice that fundamentally affects the way we do church.

Leadership models are challenged by these less formal gatherings because activity is more shared and participative. It is interesting that many of the new ways of being church are currently led by women. Leadership will need to learn from their approaches.

New ways of being church present many challenges and there are obvious losses as well as gains, but people are recognising that new forms are needed. We need to watch the margins—the inner cities, the rural areas, where creative approaches are emerging, often born in despair.

When desperation forces us to let go of the old ways God can bring new life. ■

[Republished with permission from *The Bible in Trans-Mission*, Summer, 2000.]

LESSLIE NEWBIGIN: A THEOLOGICAL LIFE

By Geoffrey Wainwright (Oxford University Press, 2000); ISBN 0195101716; 474 pp; £48)

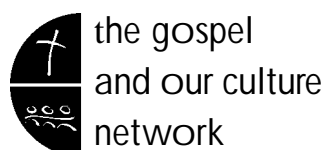
*Reviewed by H. Dan Beeby
Birmingham, England*

Two years before he died in 1998 Lesslie Newbigin addressed the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Salvador de Bahia. The effect of his address was such that an Orthodox bishop from Russia told him that he had spoken "like a Father of the Church." In a similar vein, Wainwright has compared him to Chrysostom and Augustine, and in this remarkable book, provided support and argument for such judgements. At a time when books about Newbigin multiply I doubt whether any other will present such a complete and discerning picture of a unique man.

Between an introduction, "A Man in Christ" and a conclusion, "The Man in History" are ten chapters which detail and assess the man and the height, length and breadth of his character and achievement. We are first introduced to "The Confident Believer" who as a student was "grasped by Christ." Second, the believer is shown as a "Direct Evangelist" witnessing to Indian villagers, students and scholars and, in his final two decades, absorbed in his latest evangelism to reconvert the West now darkened by post-Enlightenment secularism, by modernity and postmodernity and confused post-Christendom.

Chapter three describes "The Ecumenical Advocate," always striving for reconciliation and unity whether in India, in the West or worldwide through his place in the World Council of Churches. Chapter four recounts Newbigin's life as "The Pastoral Bishop," the gentle shepherd and the humble but authoritative universal ecclesiastic. Chapter five looks at him as "The Missionary Strategist." Always the missionary, always the thinker but always the thinking activist, first in India then in the International Missionary Council and the ecumenical movement, finally in the Birmingham lecture room in confused late modernity. Chapter six sees him as "The Religious Interlocutor," first with the Indian intelligentsia, then in Chicago, Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Cambridge and chapter seven acknowledges Newbigin who had studied under J.M. Keynes as "The Social Visionary" in Madras and Britain with a weighty knowledge of economics, society and politics.

In chapter eight, we meet "The Liturgical Preacher" partly responsible for the liturgy of the Church of South India and always preaching with an ecclesiology which was profoundly sacramental. Although all his life he had been lecturing, it was only in "retirement" that he was officially a teacher, at Selly Oak. Only then had he time to write his



commentary on John and the very biblical *The Open Secret*. It is in chapter nine that the Newbigin who lived prayerfully out of the Bible is seen as “The Scriptural Teacher.” In chapter ten, we meet “the Christian Apologist.”

In the conclusion, Wainwright, at some length, justifies saying Newbigin is “like a father of the church.” His five points show that such a title is not bestowed lightly and I am certain I am not the only one who is convinced by his reasoning. In Newbigin, the Church and the world had a servant of God about whom one can with great sincerity use the word “unique.”

An indefatigable writer himself, he has been brilliantly served by Wainwright’s book. Many others will write more books and we shall welcome all voices as all who write will understand him differently. Wainwright, the theologian, has the gift of seeing Newbigin in all of his immensity and somehow has spoken of him with Newbigin’s own voice and insight. He has given a great theological ordering to the Newbigin story that is not imposed; it arises naturally from a deep understanding of his subject. All of us who wish to continue work on Newbigin’s “unfinished agenda” have been given wonderful support and inspiration. ■

[Republished with permission from *The Bible in Trans-Mission*, Spring, 2001.]

BOOK NOTES

□ Oxford University Press has offered readers of this newsletter a 20% discount (\$44.00 USD) off the retail price for Wainwright’s book on Newbigin reviewed in this issue by Dan Beeby (page 7). For a discount flyer, contact Judy Bos at the GOCN office.

□ Mike Goheen has completed a “must-read” doctoral dissertation on Lesslie Newbigin’s missionary ecclesiology. It is published by Boekencentrum in the Netherlands. A limited number of copies has been made available through the GOCN office for the very reduced price of \$25, handling and shipping included (to USA and Canadian addresses). Contact Judy Bos.

□ GOCN member George Beukema has written a fascinating book entitled *Stories from Below the Poverty Line: Urban Lessons for Today’s Mission*. Published by Herald Press, Beukema’s stories provide bridge-building links between urban and non-urban settings in a gritty and compelling way.