

## PREFACE

I have two vivid recollections of the summer of 1994 when this dissertation was initiated. The first was a visit to the home of Jan Jongeneel to propose the theme for my dissertation. The other was the prompting of Jan Van Butselaar to visit Lesslie Newbigin in his home in London. Both have borne wonderful fruit. Jan Jongeneel accepted me as a doctoral student; my weekend with Newbigin was the first of five such occasions when I would have opportunity to spend the better part of three or four days with him. Six years later the dissertation is complete, and I know Newbigin better after carefully tracing his life and thought. My life has been enriched immeasurably. My only regret is that Newbigin has passed on and could not be at the promotion in Utrecht as planned.

The arduous and enriching process of writing a dissertation has made me aware of the marvellous fact that God has created us to live in community. I would like to acknowledge and thank three educational institutions that have made a direct contribution to my work. Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada has given me opportunity to teach mission studies for seven years and allowed me a leave of absence in the winter term of 1999 during which time much of this dissertation was written. In that time period Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA provided a wonderful environment for research while I taught two courses on Newbigin and Mission in Western Culture. Calvin's library, ample office space, and the interaction with students and faculty of that institution enhanced my work significantly. Finally, the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, was where my doctoral work began. Doctoral seminars—one of which was in ecclesiology—and guided reading studies provided a firm foundation for this dissertation.

There are a number of people who have made contributions in one way or another to this dissertation. Over the last ten years, my mission students from Dordt College, Calvin Seminary, and Redeemer University College have been reading Newbigin and sharpening my thinking with their questions and comments. My colleagues in the Foundations Division at Redeemer have provided much stimulation and encouragement; I mention especially my two colleagues in the Theology Department, Gene Haas and Al Wolters. I am deeply grateful to Harry Van Dyke who has spent hours reading every line of this dissertation and offering much helpful advice toward content and style. Gerald Anderson, Stephen Bevans, Sander Griffioen, H. W. De Krijff, and Wilbert Shenk have all read part or all of this dissertation; I have benefitted from their wise counsel. George Hunsberger and Tom Foust, both who have written doctoral dissertations on Newbigin, acted as sounding boards a number of times when I ran stuck.

I have been fortunate to have two very fine promotors—Jan Jongeneel and George Vandervelde. Both have been very critical and very encouraging. I have learned much from Jan's critique of structure and content that will remain valuable for years to come. His handbooks have also provided helpful context on many missiological issues. The shape of the dissertation owes much to his hand. George has been a friend, teacher, and mentor for fifteen years. He has given himself tirelessly to sharpen my thinking and writing. His patient analysis and critique of several versions of this dissertation have enhanced it considerably. Much that is good about this dissertation is owing to the able guidance of these two men; what is lacking is probably because I didn't listen or was unable to carry out their instructions.

Finally, I want to thank my family who have provided support and encouragement. In 1994 when I decided to focus on the theme of mission in western culture, my wife

Marnie advised me to limit myself to Newbigin; she said I would learn more from his life than I could put in a dissertation. She was right! In many ways Marnie has been my closest companion on this journey, and so I dedicate this book to her. My four children have also shared in this project: Erin, Ben, Brittany, and Brielle have all read at least one book by Newbigin. One, at the age of twelve, when reading *Mission in Christ's Way*, wrote, "Dad, when I read this book I can't stand the urge to yellow the whole book in." Another did some editing for me. In the early summer of 1997, we all had the privilege of spending several memorable days with Lesslie Newbigin in Birmingham, Alabama. The last time I saw him, Lesslie was sitting at the airport in Birmingham with my four children all leaning forward as he told a string of entertaining jokes. My journey through the dissertation has been a shared one. It is therefore appropriate that this family support was symbolically represented when Erin and Ben stood as paranymphs at my defence in May 2000. I also want to thank my son Ben for all the work he put into getting this manuscript ready for publication.

In conclusion I want to offer my thanks to God who I have come to know in Jesus Christ. It is fitting to end my preface on this note since I have learned so much from Newbigin about the centrality of Christ. If anything remains in my thinking from this study, it is that in Christ, God has acted to reveal and accomplish the end of history. And so, from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!

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