THE INFLUENCE OF NEWBIGIN'S MISSIOLOGY ON SELECTED

INNOVATORS AND EARLY ADOPTERS OF THE

EMERGING CHURCH PARADIGM

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

for the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Education

_____

by

Joe Randell Stewart

December 2013

APPROVAL SHEET

THE INFLUENCE OF NEWBIGIN'S MISSIOLOGY ON SELECTED

INNOVATORS AND EARLY ADOPTERS OF THE

EMERGING CHURCH PARADIGM

Joe Randell Stewart

Read and Approved by:

_____

Hal K. Pettegrew (Chair)

_____

Timothy P. Jones

Date _____

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife, Nancy. I will

always love you. Thanks for your constant encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSI   Church of South India

CASA   Christian Agency for Social Action

CWME   Committee on World Mission and Evangelism (WCC)

EACC   East Asia Christian Conference

GOC   Gospel and our Culture (Britain)

GOCN   Gospel and our Culture Network (North America)

IBMR   *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*

IMC   International Missionary Council

IRM   *International Review of Mission(s)*

SBC   Southern Baptist Convention

SBTS   Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

SCM   Student Christian Movement

SIUC   South India United Church

TEF   Theological Education Fund

USA   United States of America

WCC   World Council of Churches

YLN   Young Leader's Network

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

Such an endeavor as a dissertation requires the aid and help of a myriad of individuals. Hal Pettegrew, my supervising professor, was a constant source of encouragement, wise insight, and challenge. Professors Timothy Jones and Michael Wilder added valuable insights and encouragement as well. John Hogan was an indispensible source of grammatical and structural advice. My dad and mom played a significant role by providing a place of refuge and support.

A host of others have provided constant support. The congregation of Sabino Road Baptist Church, Tucson, Arizona, are a body of believers that continually and constantly support their pastor. Their prayer cover and faithful service of the Lord made it possible for this research to occur. I wish they knew how often their well-spoken words of encouragement were just what were needed at an opportune time. The cohort that traveled this journey with me spurred me on, and I will never forget their feedback and encouragement.

No words can express the debt of gratitude I owe my wife, Nancy, for her constant support and loving affirmation during this process. During times of intense spiritual warfare, she was always on her knees in support of this joint endeavor. Thirty-two years of marriage and a multitude of ministry challenges have never dimmed her view of the loving grace of God. I look forward to the journeys we will share in the future.

Finally, I continue to relish the fact that Jesus Christ has fully forgiven and redeemed my soul. Jesus is my very reason for living and the head of the church I love with my whole heart.   His power and presence is the source of any goodness or merit I have in my life. He deserves our ultimate allegiance and all praise for everything.

Joe R. Stewart

Tucson, Arizona

December 2013

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

Is the church out of touch? Extensive objective research by David Kinnaman

and Gabe Lyons of the Barna Group discovered that among eighteen to forty-year-olds,

the buster and millennial generation, that Christianity has an image problem. The

research of the duo shows that for many of those outside Christianity, especially among

younger adults, that there are significant attitudinal barriers in place that hinder the

willingness of this generation to commit their lives to Jesus Christ (Kinnaman and Lyons

2007, 11). The premise of the research is "the nation's population is increasingly

resistant to Christianity, especially to the theologically conservative expressions of the

faith" (Kinnaman and Lyons 2007, 39). The empirical research shows that outsiders

view Christianity as judgmental, hypocritical, homophobic, too political and sheltered-

harsh words that are particularly challenging to theologically conservative Christians and

are in all probability a caricature and misrepresentation of the perception of devoted

Christians. The image, however, persists.

Such images led to the birth of a protest movement among Christians known as

the emerging church. Much of the literature among emerging church proponents has

stressed the movement's deep dissatisfaction with the traditional church (Yaconelli

2003). Gibbs and Bolger have written a book length treatment of the phenomenon that

surfaced from their academic research of the emerging church paradigm (Gibbs and

Bolger 2005). After hundreds of interviews Gibbs and Bolger found that agitation was a

common theme as the task of the emerging churches was one of "dismantling first and then . . . rebuilding" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 28). A plethora of conversations, books, seminars, and conventions engaged the conversation throughout the beginnings of the movement and characterized it as dissent against the status quo. The protest centered around an examination of the negative legacy of Christendom and Enlightenment rationalism, an emphasis on the collective witness of the church in the kingdom of God as a corrective against what was framed as individualistic formulations of salvation, and the importance of a critical stance toward culture as the church engages society as salt and light (Goheen 2000, 245).

Different assessments have reached different conclusions about the validity and the viability of the emerging church paradigm. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger's work *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* stated that one of their aims was to "dispel the myths that the emerging church is simply a passing fad . . . or a new improved brand of marketing strategy" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 28). D. A. Carson in his critique of the movement, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church,* highlighted the "astonishing broad influence" the movement gained in a short time period (Carson 2005, 9). Phyllis Tickle, in her work *Emergence Christianity*, states, "What has happened in our lifetime seems to be more than just another semi-millennial shift. It seems akin to the Great Transformation of two thousand years ago" (Tickle 2012 209). Andrew Jones, a leader of the emerging church movement, marked 2009 as the year "when the emerging church suddenly and decisively ceased to be a radical and controversial movement in global Christianity . . . the movement has already been adopted, adapted, or made redundant through the traditional church catching up or

duplicating EC efforts" (Jones 2010; http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com). John

MacArthur suggested that "the so-called Emergent Church is now in a state of serious

disarray and decline. Some have suggested it's totally dead" (MacArthur 2011,

http://gty.org). The research will demonstrate that many proponents of the emerging

church paradigm in its early manifestations no longer want the label (Smith 2010, 59).

The baggage of theological liberalism that is now associated with the emerging church

and especially the "Emergent" moniker led many proponents to embrace other terms such

as missional.

The question concerning the continuing impact of the emerging church does

not diminish the impact of the purpose of this dissertation. This dissertation examines

and explores the influence of Lesslie Newbigin on selected innovators and early adopters

of the emerging church paradigm. Lesslie Newbigin's work as a missionary in India and

his retirement in England created a central question that resonates with advocates of the

emerging church paradigm and other missiologists (Newbigin 1989b, 15). The question

concerned how the church might relate the gospel to a society that was as resistant and

pervasive as the comprehensive story assumed in much of modern Western culture.

Newbigin's contention was "the basic story assumed in much of modern Western culture

is humanistic and has its roots in the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries" (Bartholomew and Goheen 2004, 19). Newbigin adamantly

maintained that such a posture maintained by the Enlightenment epistemology was

unhelpful and untrue from the context of the other comprehensive story to which he was

committed-the Bible. This clash of stories creates the context for Newbigin's work that

entails a more critical stance towards Western culture and a reframing of the church through a cohesive and collective witness in the kingdom of God.

This reframing or refreshing of the church created the ecclesiological and missiological phenomenon known as the emerging church. Extant research focuses on Newbigin's work in relation to missiology and theological influence (Stults 2008; Goheen 2000; Wainwright 2000; Hunsberger 1987; Thomas 1996; Veldhorst 1989). There is anecdotal evidence of his influence on the movement known as the emerging church (McLaren 2004a, 64, 110; Pettegrew 2006, 174-75). The study discusses the implications, applications, and limitations of Newbigin's influence on the emerging church paradigm in the current climate in the United States. This study attempts to identify the connection, if any, between Newbigin and selected seminal authors while noting nuanced and significant differences.

Introduction to the Research Problem

The emerging church necessitates much examination from both a scholarly and practical viewpoint. Almost every emerging church researcher in the early twentieth century began with the same theme: the culture is in the midst of rapid, extensive transformation at every level (Conder 2006, 12; Fullan 2006; Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 8; Hersey 2001, 377; Hirsch 2006, 247; Kotter 1996, 3, 161). The impetus for this type of change is often described in theological terms:

> North American culture is . . . moving through a period of a highly volatile,
> discontinuous change. This kind of change is a paradigm of change not experienced
> in all points in history, but it has become our norm. It is present and pervasive
> during those periods of history marked by events that transform societies and
> cultures forever. Such periods can be seen in events like that of the Exodus, where
> God forms Israel as a people, or the advent of the printing press, which placed the
> Bible into the hands of ordinary people and led to the transformation not just of the
> church but the very imagination of the European mind, or the ascendance of the new

technologies like the computer and the Internet and the emerging marriage of biology with microchips. (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2004, 11)

Newbigin's Influence on the Innovators and Early Adopters

Lesslie Newbigin's prescient perception of this upcoming upheaval is documented throughout his writings (Stults 2008, 58). Borrowing from the writings of Michael Polanyi, a scientific philosopher, Newbigin contemplated how paradigm shifts could transition Western culture to another dimension (Newbigin 1995, 39-44). In his return to the West after a career as a missionary for decades in India, Newbigin sensed tremendous dissonance between the claims of the gospel and its inability to impact the reigning plausibility structures (Newbigin 1989b, 3-8). The consequent result in regard to ultimate beliefs was that "each individual has to make a personal decision about ultimate questions" (Newbigin 1986, 10-11). The plausibility structure, as Newbigin viewed it, dissected society "between the public and private worlds, and in the dichotomy in thought between what are commonly called facts and what are called values" (Newbigin 1986, 35-36). This fissure led to a division between public facts knowable by all and private values that were left to the private opinion of each autonomous individual (Newbigin 1986, 79). The result of such a framework imprisoned the gospel in the cloistered enclave of religious experience (Newbigin 1986, 15). The emerging church seized on this divide between the secular and sacred to advocate a removal of this fissure and even to suggest that "there are no nonspiritual domains of reality" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 67).

The query that emerged in Newbigin's thinking as a result of his own dissonance in this divide was to determine what would be necessary to create "a

missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call modern Western culture" (Newbigin 1986, 1). Newbigin anticipated the philosophical onset of postmodernity. This philosophical underpinning combined with a blatant distrust of authority sparked missiological discussions of the sociological frameworks, the theological beliefs, and the philosophical assumptions that framed ecclesiological concerns among the church, gospel, and culture (Driscoll 2004, 19).

**Seminal Leaders of
the Emerging Church**

The dominant leaders of the emerging church also sensed what they termed a tectonic shift in the relationship among the church, the gospel, and the architecture of Western and American culture in the 1990s:

> While the church life we knew – both evangelical and mainline – was preoccupied with filling large churches and honing the methods thereof, early emergents were interested primarily in theologies that undergirded the practices of American Christianity. It seemed that the methodologies of the churches from which they had become disenfranchised were built on a whole host of assumptions, and these underlying assumptions had gone unchallenged for at least a generation. (Jones 2008, 47)

This desire for personal and ecclesiological transformation sparked conversations and conferences sponsored by Leadership Network in an attempt to reach Generation X (Conder 2006, 41; Driscoll 2006, 87; Grenz 1996, ix). In the mid 1990s, Dallas-based Leadership Network convened a Young Leader's Network led by Doug Pagitt and began some forums to explore the need to reach Generation X, a segment identified as 18-30 year olds. The charge to Pagitt by the Leadership Network was to gather the next cohort of evangelical leaders to reach the younger generation with the gospel (Jones 2008, 42).

One prominent think tank event occurred October 26-28, 1993, in Charlotte, North Carolina (Grenz 1996, ix). Initial conferences morphed into larger issues related to

6

being the church in a postmodern culture. The general consensus of this think tank was

that a transition within the church was taking place from a traditional, institutional, and

modern church (Church 1.0) to either contemporary and postmodern (Church 2.0) or an

emerging, missional, postmodern, glocal, and ancient church (Church 3.0) (Driscoll 2006,

87). A PowerPoint presentation from that era articulated ten significant issues from the

Generation X forum: the need for authenticity, a desire for new models not just tweaking

old ones, the importance of the integration of a new style of worship, the diversity of the

Generation X population, the use of narrative stories to communicate with Generation X,

going beyond the intellectual (orthodoxy) to the demonstration of the gospel

(orthopraxy), the use of process evangelism, a new paradigm for leadership based on a

nonhierarchical team, leadership development of lay leaders as a primary equipping role

of pastors, and the idea that there are no easy answers, few models, little resources, and

no single place that equips people for ministry in our culture (1995, leadnet.org/archive).

The Group of 20

A crucial turning point in these meetings occurred at a convocation at the Glen

Eyrie castle just outside Colorado Springs in 1997 (Jones 2008, 42). The conversation

shifted from generational theory and marketing strategies to dealing with cataclysmic

shifts in culture by exploring theories on postmodernism and deconstruction. The

purpose of the examination was to discover a means "to retain orthodoxy while at the

same time exposing the attachments and accommodations that existing forms of

Christianity make to conform to the reigning plausibility structures" (Stetzer 2009, 55-

56). A small team of innovators called the "Group of 20" splintered off from the Young

Leader's Network to explore theological concerns in an attempt to rescue the gospel from

the clutches of consumer culture (Stetzer 2009, 54; Jones 2008, 53). The tagline used by Leadership Network during this era was "advance scouts for the emerging church" (Kimball 2006, origintrm.html). The term "emerging church" slowly replaced other terms that were being used to represent people, ministries, and churches that were attempting to reach the shifting postmodern culture of Generation X.

Influential leaders included Brad Cecil, a volunteer pastor of young adults at Pantego Bible church; Tim Conder, a youth pastor at Chapel Hill Bible Church; Tim Keel, an intern finishing Denver Seminary; Andrew Jones, a church planter for Goths in Portland, Oregon; Karen Ward, a denominational employee at the Evangelical Lutheran Church; Mark Driscoll, a church planter in Seattle; Chris Seay, a church planter for Baylor students in Waco, Texas; Dan Kimball, a youth minister at Santa Cruz Bible Church, and Doug Pagitt (Stetzer 2009, 52-60; Jones 2008, 41-43; Driscoll 2006, 88-89). Early adopters were soon added to the group including a youth pastor, Tony Jones, from Minneapolis. Brian McLaren was another early adopter who joined the movement as the conversation continued about the interface between postmodern culture, the gospel, and the church. McLaren was a bi-vocational pastor and English professor who was about to launch a book that would have significant influence on the emerging church conversation called *A New Kind of Christian* (Stetzer 2009, 61-62; Jones 2008, 43-51). McLaren's addition to the team created an emphatic shift in the emphases of the movement.

Emerging versus Emergent

Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Tim Keel, Chris Seay, Brad Cecil and Tim Conder were pushed from the nest of Leadership Network in 1997 and promptly convened a conference call to explore a new name and identity (Jones 2008, xvii;

Driscoll 2006, 89). They formed a relational network that began a cohort and an internet

presence known as the Emergent Village and Terra Nova (Jones 2008, xx).   Another

early adopter working through the critique of the church was "The OOZE," a message

board that contained scathing words directed toward the institutional church. Spencer

Burke, the founder of "The Ooze," was convinced that ecclesial structures needed

examination, especially what he considered "the disproportionate financial commitment

to the Sunday event, creating more of a consumer construct than a place of spiritual

transformation and building community" (Stetzer 2009, 56).

   The divergence led to much confusion between the terms "Emergent" and "the

emerging church." The emerging church was seen as the broader term that described the

phenomenon as a whole (Devine 2009, 6). One author suggested a discussion of the

nomenclature to distinguish between the variant strains of the emerging church.

> "Emergent" refers to the network of leaders and laity who converse through the
> website of Tony Jones, Emergentvillage.com. Jones is a Princeton Ph.D. student
> whose forthcoming dissertation promises to combine insights from the work of
> Gibbs and Bolger with that of Jones's own research and extensive travel to engage
> face to face with emerging community leaders around the world.
> EmergentVillage.com represents a "conversation" (their word) and not a church
> movement as such. The governing board of Emergent Village includes Doug Pagitt
> (Solomon's Porch, Minneapolis), Brian McLaren (formerly of Cedar Ridge
> Community Church, Baltimore-Washington D.C.), and Tim Keel (Jacob's Well,
> Kansas City). "Emerging" refers to the broader phenomenon of churches and
> religious communities about which participants within Emergent Village converse
> but do not lead or control. These leaders and communities strive to create and
> nurture communities of believers found meaningful to the emerging generation, as
> they see it, the thoroughly postmodern generation. (Devine 2007, 3)

The emerging church and its constituents were also depicted as a movement, a

conversation, a friendship, and postevangelicalism (Stanford 1999). Other taxonomies

varied from a concept that sees the emerging churches as Relevants, Revisionists, and

Reconstructionists to another that classified emerging churches as ministering "to,"

"with," or "as" postmoderns (Driscoll 2006, 88; McKnight 2007, 3; Stetzer 2009, 72-73).

Research Connections

In correlation with Newbigin's assessment of the Western culture, the original

"Group of 20" arrived at the conclusion that the pagan culture of America was "far more

resistant to the gospel than pre-Christian paganism" (Newbigin 1986, 20). In challenging

the underlying assumptions of the evangelical church this "Group of 20" combed through

the works of missiologists such as David Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin, and Roland Allen

(Driscoll 2006, 88). These explorations led to some innovative ideas about attempting to

contextualize the gospel through the church to our culture.

The stated connection between the missiology of Lesslie Newbigin and

selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church needs much exploration.

No decisive research has been done that examined the direct influence. Missional essays

and examinations often note the connection, but the examination of primary sources of

both Newbigin and the emerging church leaders awaits further analysis.

Newbigin's Influence on the Missiology
of the Emerging Church

One of the primary influencers on the understanding of the connection between

the gospel, church, and the culture in Western settings is missiologist, Lesslie Newbigin

(Newbigin 1989b). Newbigin was not the only missiologist who influenced the

ecclesiology and missiology of the emerging church movement, but his writings and

ideas were representative of the myriad of writers who embodied these concepts.

Emerging church participants admitted digging through the works of Newbigin to glean

the "latest understandings of gospel and culture" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 63). Brad Cecil, one of the innovators of the emerging church paradigm, saw Lesslie Newbigin's work as having profound influence on his view of the postmodern transition of Western culture (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 257). Brian McLaren, one of the most prolific authors identified with the emerging church, identified "Lesslie Newbigin as one of the theologians who has helped me most" (McLaren 2004, 120). Newbigin's work was a pragmatic and paradigmatic model addressing the challenge of communicating the gospel in every culture with the church as a missionary in its local context.

Newbigin's Biography

James Edward Lesslie Newbigin was born in Newcastle upon Tyne on December 8, 1909 (Foust 2000, 98). Newbigin's early childhood was forged in the presence of devout and thoughtful Christian parents. His father was a pervasive influence who lived out his faith in the shipping business in North Umbria while advancing somewhat radical political views (Wainwright 2000, 3). Newbigin's transfer to a boarding school in a Quaker institution in Berkshire led the young Newbigin to abandon many of his preformed religious beliefs (Wainwright 2000, 3) as he found the idea of God was no longer "a tenable hypothesis" (Newbigin 1993c, 5). Having successfully gained entrance into Queens College, Cambridge in 1929, Lesslie Newbigin's exposure to the Student Christian Movement at that institution led to a life-changing experience (Weston 2006, 2). Involvement in a mission project to the unemployed in South Wales allowed him to see the depths of what he later called "structural sin," and Newbigin became acutely aware of his inability to change the situation (Newbigin 1993c, 7). It was a vivid vision of the cross of Christ "spanning the space between heaven and earth,

11

between ideals and present realities, and with arms that embraced the whole world" that led to somewhat of a spiritual awakening (Newbigin 1993c, 11-12). Newbigin later termed this experience as "born at the point of ultimate despair" and as a commitment made "when all other commitments end in a precipice" (Newbigin 1962, lecture). This commitment soon thrust him into the ordained ministry in the Church of Scotland and training at Westminster College, Cambridge.

Theological Training

Newbigin described his theological training at Cambridge as a time that "profoundly changed and deepened his understanding of the Christian faith" (Newbigin 1993c, 28). His personal exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans in the Greek text made a significant impact:

> I began the study as a typical liberal. I ended it with a strong conviction about the 'finished work of Christ' and about the centrality and objectivity of the atonement accomplished on Calvary . . . . At the end of the exercise I was much more of an evangelical than a liberal. (Newbigin 1993c, 29)

After marriage to Helen Henderson, Newbigin departed for the Madras mission in India in September of 1936 (Hunsberger 1998, 23). Newbigin attempted to implement insights developed by Roland Allen in a strategy to engage the movement of the gospel among cultural lines through the particular expression of local churches (Newbigin 1993c, 146-148). Such attempts led Newbigin to see a fatal dichotomy that often existed in Christian ecclesiology between church and mission (Shenk 1998, 6). Newbigin postulated that a missiological vision of the cross should allow an ecclesial dynamic that empowered the church to be an eschatological sign of God's reign and the means of witnessing to that reign throughout the world. This missionary impulse in the midst of

cultural plurality would become a defining motif in his life and writings (Hunsberger 1998, 25).

Ecumenical Grounding

Little by little, Newbigin's scope of responsibilities increased both at home with the birth of four children (1939-1947) and also with the expansion and maturing work of the mission in India (Weston 2006, 7). Biographical sketches and his own writings demonstrated that Newbigin was shaped by the theology, missiology, and ecclesiology of the early ecumenical movement (Goheen 2000, 6). This sense of ecumenicalism had been cultivated early on by his involvement in the Student Christian Movement and soon widened to a desire to see visible unity in the churches in South India and throughout the world (Hunsberger 1998, 28). Newbigin was instrumental in leading three denominations (Church of Scotland, United Methodists, and the Church of England) to merge into the Church of South India in 1947. It was in this setting that he served as bishop in Madurai for twelve years (Newbigin 1993c, 90-91).

His conviction that the widespread distinction between ecumenical and evangelical was an "absurd and irrational dichotomy" was soon tested on a more global scale (Newbigin 1982b, 146-51). Bishop Newbigin was appointed General Secretary of the International Missionary Council in 1952 with the goal of integrating the Council into the structures of the World Council of Churches, an event that happened in 1961. This vision of a united church was a driving force in Newbigin's life to the extent that his personal vision included the belief that "it is the intention of our Savior that all who bear his name should be united in one visible community" (Newbigin 1995d, speech). Even after his return to India in 1965 as bishop of Madras, Newbigin never abandoned his view

that the universal church should move toward unity even while advocating "a proper particularity in the life of each local church" (Newbigin 1977, 21).

Engaging Western Culture

The final chapter of Newbigin's life led to his retirement from India to engagement at a teaching post as a lecturer in theology, missiology, and ecumenism at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham in 1974. This return to Britain after his retirement led Newbigin to confront a form of Christianity that he found to be "profoundly syncretistic" (Newbigin 1986, 60). Common themes emerged in his encounter with a secularized Western culture leading to his assessment that "there has seldom been any awareness among Western theologians of the extent to which their own theologies have been the result of a failure to challenge the assumptions of their own culture" (Newbigin 1995b, 172).

Newbigin believed that the most aggressive paganism existed in the heartland of the developed world (Newbigin 1995b, 10). It was this observation that led Newbigin and others in Britain to establish a project known as the "Gospel and Our Culture Network" (Weston 2006, 13). During this post-retirement period in the United Kingdom, Newbigin published 15 books and over 160 smaller pieces, many of them an examination of the missionary challenge facing the Church in the West (Weston 2006, 13). Included in these publications were his most recognized works, *The Other Side of 1984* (1983)*, Foolishness to the Greeks* (1986)*, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989b)*, and Proper Confidence* (1995c). Inherent in each of these was the thesis that "instead of allowing the gospel to challenge the unexamined assumptions of our culture, we have co-opted Jesus into our culture by giving him a minor role in what we call the private sector" (Newbigin

1994, 100). Lesslie Newbigin died on January 30, 1998 at the age of eighty-eight. One

scholar suggested that Newbigin's work served as the catalyst for bringing the issue of

mission in the Western culture to the forefront of the agenda of mission studies (Hiebert

1997, 235).

The Scope of Newbigin's Influence

At the heart of Newbigin's ecclesiological concerns was a desire for clear

distinctions among the church, the gospel, and the culture (Driscoll 2004, 19). This

passion was articulated in numerous books and articles, but the practitioners of the

emerging church models have expanded Newbigin's vision.

Gospel

Conversion
Encounter
axis

Reciprocal
relationship
axis

Culture   Church

Missionary dialogue
axis
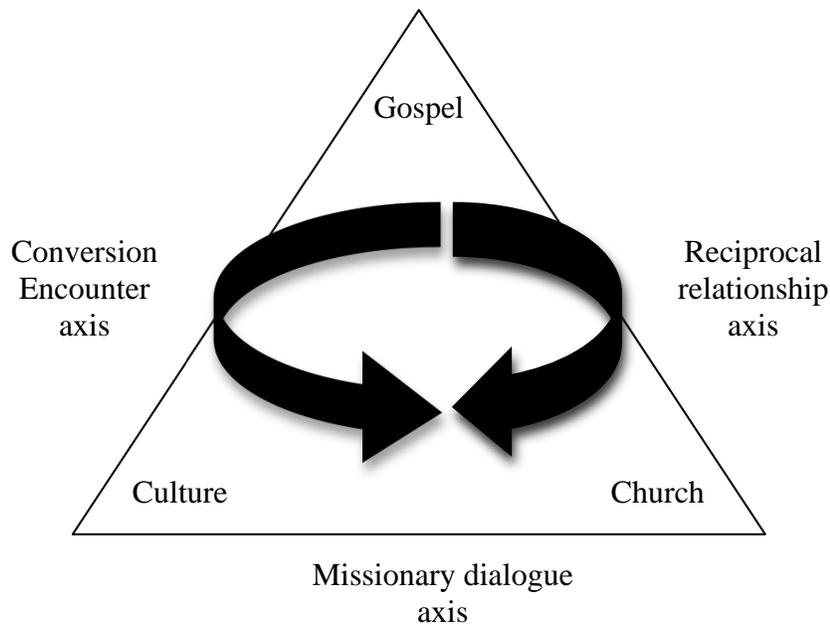
Figure 1. Lesslie Newbigin's triangular
movement of the gospel

Newbigin hoped to create a trialogue between the three that was demonstrated in George

Hunsberger's work on a theory of cultural plurality in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin

(Hunsberger 1998). In many ways, Newbigin along with David Bosch, Roland Allen,

and Darrell Guder created the missiological impulse of the movement. Alan Hirsch

offers this explanation of Newbigin's impact in the attempt to engage Western culture:

> The Gospel and Culture network began to try and build on Newbigin's insights and emphasized essentially that the work of mission involved what they called a "trialogue." They maintained that mission essentially involved an active ongoing conversation between three elements, namely, the gospel, the surrounding culture, and the church . . . . However, the trialogue was not happening, because the church was seldom in the conversation. (Hirsch 2006, 81-82)

Contextualization in Newbigin's Writings

It is partially Newbigin's understanding of the triangular movement of the

gospel that has led to an increasing desire among missiologists to contextualize the

gospel in the West in order to create maximum effectiveness. Theologians and

missiologists shifted from the concept of culture as an essentially neutral term in

missiology, and Newbigin contributed significantly to the shift (Kraft 1979, 113;

Ramseyer 1983, 114; McGavran 1974, 39). Shoki Coe used the word "contextualization"

in 1972 to describe the task of theological education in various cultural contexts (Upkong

1987, 161). This term was coined in the circles of the Theological Education Fund

replacing such terms as indigenization, adaptation, and accommodation (Goheen 2000,

104). Newbigin's adoption of the idea of contextualization implied an acknowledgement

that specific questions needed to be answered to embrace a missionary impulse that was

both faithful to the gospel and relevant to the plural expressions of the one gospel in

various cultures of the world. Newbigin believed that the value of contextualization was

that "it suggests the placing of the gospel in the total context of a culture at a particular

moment, a moment that is shaped by the past and looks to the future" (Newbigin 1986, 2).

Newbigin borrowed the idea of contextualization soon after it was coined. In a paper presented to the Society for the Study of Theology in 1977, using his extensive experience in missiological and ecclesial settings, he offered an extended treatment on the relationship between gospel and culture (Newbigin 1985, 245). Newbigin embraced the notion of contextualization because he felt it did not totally identify with the more traditional and conservative elements in the culture, as did indigenization. The Bishop also believed that contextualization did not imply that the missionary comes with a pure, disembodied gospel that had to be adapted only to its culture, as did adaptation (Newbigin 1986, 2-3). Newbigin neither resolved the tension between the church and culture by isolation from culture nor emulation of culture. The church cannot abandon the world, but neither can the church simply acclimatize itself to the current milieu. Newbigin attempted to settle this tension with the notion of the "challenging relevance" of the gospel (Newbigin 1992a, 78-82). The missiologist believed that faithful dialogue with a receptor culture developed relevance as the hearer was addressed in terms with which he had learned to understand the world. The challenge arrived as Jesus appeared within the familiarity of the culture and the Holy Spirit produced "by conversion a radical discontinuity with the convert's culture by virtue of the paradigm shift to embrace a new ultimate commitment" (Hunsberger 1998, 241). The triangular formulation suggested that incarnational praxis without the challenge of conversion would lead to syncretism; gospel challenge without embodiment would be irrelevant and ineffective. The

challenging relevance was maintained by allowing a gospel that "refuses to be either too fitted or too foreign to the culture taken as a present whole" (Hunsberger 1998, 240).

One scholar has concluded that the center of Lesslie Newbigin's diagnosis was a belief that congregations were becoming "domesticated by contemporary Western culture rather than working with a domestic missiology that can challenge this culture" (Hunsberger 1998, 170). Newbigin believed that Western culture had become irreversibly pluralistic with no reigning structure to tie the culture together (Newbigin 1983, 14). For Newbigin, contextualization occurred with the meeting of the gospel and culture within the life of the church. The church lived at the intersection of the story of the gospel and the reigning ethos of the culture. The gospel must be embodied in the culture by and through the church. Newbigin posited that the only means by which the gospel could be credible was in the context of a believing community. He suggested that the "only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it" (Newbigin 1989b, 227).

Church, Gospel, and Culture
in Newbigin's Thought

Newbigin described culture as "the sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another" (Newbigin 1983, 5). Sociology viewed culture as "consisting of four elements that are passed on from generation to generation by learning alone: values, norms, institutions, and artifacts" (Hoult 1969, 93). Hiebert defined culture as the "more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do" (Hiebert 1985, 30). Newbigin's desire was to "examine and analyze the underlying religious

18

assumptions of Western culture through the lens of the gospel" (Goheen 2000, 106). The

Gospel and Our Culture movement, birthed in a 1992 conference in Swanwick, was not

solely a critique of the culture of Christendom. Newbigin saw the task of the GOC as an

attempt to unmask the foundational cultural assumptions that crippled the church's

witness to the truth of the gospel (Goheen 2000, 107). In Newbigin's thought, the

dilemma that the Christian church faced in the West was "an advanced case of

syncretism. Instead of confronting our culture with the gospel, we are perpetually trying

to fit the gospel into our culture" (Newbigin 1994, 67).

> The Church has lived so long as a permitted and even privileged minority, accepting
> relegation to the private sphere in a culture whose public life is controlled by a
> totally different vision of reality, that it has almost lost the power to address a
> radical challenge to that vision and therefore to "modern Western civilization" as a
> whole. Looking at the world missionary situation as a whole, this failure is the most
> important and the most serious factor in the whole world situation, because this
> Western culture has penetrated into every other culture in the world and threatens to
> destabilize them all. (Newbigin 1983, 22-23)

This recognition of the cultural captivity of the gospel and the Bishop's call for a

"missionary encounter" between the gospel and modern Western culture through the life

of the church was a cardinal concern in Newbigin's thought (Newbigin 1986, 1).

The gospel in Newbigin's thought was "the announcement that in the series of

events that have their centre in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

something has happened that alters the total human situation and must therefore call into

question every human culture" (Newbigin 1983, 3). The gospel, according to Newbigin,

was primarily theocentric. It was centered on God and not on human desires or requests.

The gospel was incarnational because it came in the scandalous, historically particular

form of Jesus Christ and had been heralded through the flawed messenger of the church

(Newbigin 1969, 60-61). Newbigin also appealed to the gospel as "story" rather than as

doctrine or propositional strictures or structures. He perceived the prevailing orthodox

formulation of the gospel among evangelicals as a systematic framework of belief or as a

set of doctrinal points collected from the broader biblical texts, rather than as the

narrative or story itself (Weston 2002). A genuine missionary encounter between the

gospel and Western Culture posited a fundamental premise:

> There can never be a culture-free gospel. Yet the gospel, which is from beginning
> to the end embodied in culturally conditioned forms, calls into question all cultures,
> including the one in which it was originally embodied. (Newbigin 1986, 4)

The church played an indispensable role in God's work in the world as "the

bearer to all the nations of a gospel that announces the kingdom, the reign and the

sovereignty of God" (Newbigin 1983, 124). The church was essentially a missionary

church that incorporated three aspects of the church's essence as the key to ecclesiology.

The church must first of all be a perceptible mark of God's sovereignty and function as

the instrument of God's reign as it demonstrated an eschatological foretaste of God's

ultimate rule. It was not a privatized, individualistic safe place; but instead, it

dynamically interacted with the public world and called everything and everyone to

salvation. The church was central in Newbigin's thought as "the community, which has

begun to taste (even only in foretaste), the reality of the Kingdom which can alone

provide the hermeneutic of the message" (Newbigin 1980, 9). Newbigin consistently

claimed that Jesus did not write a book but formed a community to bear the gospel in life,

deeds, and words" (Newbigin 1989b, 277).

Evolving Concepts in Newbigin's Thoughts

Lesslie Newbigin's thoughts were not static and evolved through several major

shifts in his lifetime. His engagement with culture as a missionary in India, as an

ecumenical leader in a global context, and as a missionary to the West all formed his

thought and ecclesiology. Newbigin never accepted the title of scholar, and his theology

was first and foremost pastoral and contextual (Newbigin 1995c, vii-viii; Goheen 2000,

6).

Newbigin formulated a systematic approach for the church to develop "a

proper confidence" in the gospel story. Newbigin believed a proper confidence was

based on revelation that was essentially the personal self-disclosure of God that was

focused on relationship rather than the mere acquisition of abstract knowledge (Stults

2008, 61). Newbigin witnessed a conflict that developed in the Enlightenment

underpinnings of the West that identified reason and revelation as mutually exclusive.

The result required that Western culture dismiss childish dependence upon divine

disclosure and use reason to establish facts independent of God and revelation (Newbigin

1995c, 55). The unintended consequence of embracing Enlightenment values according

to Newbigin was that all claims of faith were relegated to private enclaves. This

plausibility structure led Newbigin to believe that a missionary encounter with the

paganism of the West was the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the church

(Newbigin 1993, 249).

The resulting missiological endeavor formulated by Newbigin and his

colleagues tried to "consider what would be involved in a genuinely missionary

encounter between the gospel and the culture that is shared by the peoples of Europe and

North America" (Newbigin 1995c, 39; Newbigin 1986, 1). One element of Newbigin's

schema was to forge a new relationship between evangelicalism and ecumenicalism in

missionary cooperation. Although Newbigin reckoned the church to be the visible,

tangible, and social community in "the concrete particularities of time and space," the church must still commit to palpable, organic unity (Wainwright 2000, 391). This emphasis led the Bishop to the concept of humble dialogue as a missional imperative because ecumenicalism was not a goal within itself but only a mindset that imitated a sending God (Goheen 2000, 57).

> Evangelical and ecumenical have become mutually opposing rallying calls, and the ecumenical movement has come to be seen by evangelicals as a threat rather than an invitation to all who confess Jesus as Lord to become one . . . .Yet nothing can remove from the gospel the absolute imperative of unity. (Newbigin 1985, 252-53)

Newbigin's concept of the ecumenical movement was more missional than theological, and this emphasis would be seized on by many of the participants in the emerging church paradigm.

Selected Concepts of Innovators and Early Adopters of the Emerging Church Paradigm

Newbigin's thoughts concerning a missionary encounter with Western culture were soon transferred to American soil as several consultations sponsored by the British Overseas Ministry Study Center stimulated interest in the missional questions Newbigin was posing. One such setting, the Warfield Lectures at Princeton in 1984, served as a discussion starter as these lectures were published as *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Van Gelder 2007, missionalchurch.pdf; Hunsberger 1998, 4-5). The resultant widening of the circles of interest created a network known as the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN). The coordinator of the GOCN, George Hunsberger, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Newbigin (Hunsberger 1987). Soon the network published what was considered an "official ecclesiology" of the GOCN in North America entitled *Missional*

Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America (Guder and Barrett 1998).

Three key features characterized the ecclesiology of the work by Guder and Barrett that galvanized a movement and imprinted the shaping leaders and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. These central traits included an examination of the negative legacy of Christendom, an emphasis on the collective witness of the church, and the importance of a critical stance toward culture (Goheen 2000, 435). These features were all hallmarks of Newbigin's writings and tied into his theory of the triangular relationship between the local culture, the Christianity of the missionary church, and the witness of the Bible (Hunsberger 1998, 237). Additionally, each of these traits characterized distinctives of the emerging church paradigm.

These three motifs formed the core concepts around which the emerging church conversation was framed in this research. Newbigin's concept that Christendom was derailing missionary consciousness in the West needed exploration. A corresponding corrective was the desire for the gospel to experience a radical conversion away from Cartesian certainty towards a more reasonable faith that was based on proper confidence. In addition, Newbigin's focus on the communal dimensions of mission and the hope for a reciprocal relationship between the church and gospel was a defining theme. Finally, Newbigin's biblical theology that viewed the church as a called community that formed a missionary dialogue embodying the challenging relevance of the gospel in Western culture was influential. The task at large was to demonstrate the influence of these motifs on the emerging church paradigm.

> Newbigin believes that Christendom is one of the primary factors that cripples a missionary consciousness in the church. He also emphasized the communal

dimension of mission: The central reality is neither word nor act, but the total life of the community enabled by the Spirit to live in Christ, sharing his passion and the power of his resurrection. The importance of a critical stance toward culture is captured by the numerous phrases he employs: discriminating nonconformists, radical dissenters, radical critics and misfits with a relationship of conflict, dissenting otherworldliness, and radical discontinuity with its cultural context. (Goheen 2000, 435)

Other scholars who examined Newbigin's work reinforced these concepts. One author suggested that Newbigin's epistemological view was geared towards throwing off the trappings of Cartesian certainty (Stults 2008, ix, 151). The Bishop's theology of mission culminated in his ecclesiology with a strong emphasis upon the community of faith as central to understanding and communication (Stults 2008, ix). Stults suggested that Newbigin believed "the church should be authentically Christian, which in itself would be a challenge to the cultural worldview" (Stults 2008, 201). Hunsberger noted that Newbigin described the fundamental public-private dichotomy that sorts things out according to whether things are facts or values as a pervasive value of the Christendom mindset (Hunsberger 1998, 1). The work also highlighted Newbigin's struggle to embrace "both the universality of the church called into being by the gospel and the particularity of the forms the church must inevitably bear because of the nature of the gospel and the salvation it announces" (Hunsberger 1998, 29). The central thesis of Hunsberger' s work was that the fabric of Newbigin's thought was bound up in the matter of culture and cultures so that it implies an implicit "theology of cultural plurality" (Hunsberger 1998, 33). Each of these views influenced the emerging church as they challenged the institutional church to take a more critical view of the methodologies and unchallenged assumptions that it adopted in its stance towards culture.

The Pervasive Impact of Christendom

The pervasive impact of Christendom on Western culture was captured in the emerging leaders' critique of the so-called "Institutional Church" in the midst of cultural plurality (Stetzer 2009, 56). Emerging church practitioners such as Brian McLaren studied Newbigin's nuanced critique of Christendom to formulate their own theologies and philosophies of "generous orthodoxy" and humble dialogue. The resultant call to speak with chastened humility rather than dogmatic certainty was seen as a move away from the modern, foundationalism impulses of the nineteenth and twentieth century (McLaren 2004, 15). The flirtation with modernity and Cartesian certainty that are embedded in The Enlightenment mindset were values Newbigin and McLaren have examined on a large scale.

> One can see that Descartes was building his new structure of indubitable knowledge on the foundation of skepticism, the skepticism that was the dominant intellectual climate of his time. He was thus reversing the method of Augustine. Doubt, not faith, was to be the path to knowledge. By relentless skepticism, the famous "critical principles," every claim to truth was to be put through the critical sieve in which only the indubitable would be retained. This was the body of knowledge. The rest was belief, faith, or at the most probability (Newbigin 1995c, 21)

Brian McLaren and Generous Orthodoxy

The writings of Brian McLaren have defined a representative motif of how emergent churches portrayed what they consider the evolving ejection from the Christendom mindset. McLaren was given the title "Papa Bear of Emergent" recognizing his soaring influence in the movement (Bohannon 2010, 45). His writings, informed by the thoughts of other emerging church authors, have formed a crux of concern in the emerging church paradigm. His book *A New Kind of Christian* followed the "conversion of Pastor Dan Poole, a burned-out, middle-aged evangelical pastor who is approaching a

crisis of faith and leadership" (Jones 2008, 49). Poole attempted to demonstrate in

parabolic fashion the journey of one pastor away from the homeland of modernity into a

postmodern world (Jones 2008, 49). For many, this book was an entry point into the

emerging church conversation (Stetzer 2009, 62). McLaren's first book, *The Church on*

the Other Side: Doing Ministry in a Postmodern Matrix (McLaren 1998), served as an

introductory conversation about postmodernism and ministry. This research examined

how this early adopter used Newbigin's thoughts concerning the captivity of the church

to what was termed the reductionist Enlightenment mindset as a springboard to his own

thoughts and writings. Primary reference was made to four influential works especially

germane to this issue: *The Church on the Other Side* (McLaren 2000b*), A New Kind of*

Christian (McLaren 2001), *A Generous Orthodoxy* (McLaren 2004), and *Everything*

Must Change (McLaren 2007).

Brian McLaren examined plausibility structures in many of his writings

(McLaren 1998, McLaren 2001, McLaren 2004a, McLaren 2007a, McLaren 2007b,

McLaren 2008). McLaren is a graduate of the University of Maryland with degrees in

English. He taught as a college professor and then served as the founding pastor of the

nondenominational Cedar Ridge Community Church from 1986 until 2006 (Devine 2009,

4). McLaren played an important part of the original Leadership Network's Young

Leader network. Upon the dismantling of the original YLN, the author actively engaged

in Emergent Village and was a founding member of Red Letter Christians. McLaren

gave credence to the influence of Newbigin's thoughts on his own ministry.

> I see my work very much in line with Newbigin's. My *The Story We Find*
> *Ourselves In,* for example, mirrors his telling of the biblical story quite strongly . . . .
> I can't think of any of my work that would signal a rejection of Newbigin's thought.
> My sense is that, as a balanced thinker, Newbigin is aware of dangers both on the

left and right (sorry to use those tired categories). His most popular book among conservatives (it seems to me) is *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society,* which along with *Foolishness to the Greeks* warns people about real dangers on the left. He has a special passion here because he felt that his own nation and tribe had drifted into a kind of unprincipled relativism during his time in India. But Newbigin was also concerned about dangers on the right, and that's where (it seems to me) books like *The Open Secret* or *A Proper Confidence,* or his commentary on John, *The Light Has Come*, strike an important balance. (McLaren, maclaren.net)

McLaren extracted thoughts from Newbigin to protest the Enlightenment's hold on the

missionary impulse of today's church.

The Demise of the Institutional Church

Much of the protest against what writers characterize as the Constantinian

endorsement of the church leading to the establishment of Christendom is highly charged

(Hirsch 2006, 58). Christendom was the title given to the religious ethos that has

dominated Western society since the fourth century (Frost 2006, 4). Emperor

Constantine's claim to have converted to the Christian faith moved Christianity from a

marginalized and persecuted community on the fringes of society to an institution that

was centralized and affirmed by society. One missiologist depicted a rapid

transformation of ecclesiological forms and functions of the church. He depicted a

convergence of insights merged that demonstrating the centrality of the reign of God in

the world rather than the church alone. This view posited that the biblical witness to the

gospel needed to interact with the rapid and radical change in our North American milieu

as we are ejected from Christendom (Guder 2000, x). Richard Stark offers this

characterization:

> Far too long, historians have accepted the claim that the conversion of the
> Emperor Constantine caused the triumph of Christianity. To the contrary, he
> destroyed its most attractive and dynamic aspects, turning a high-intensity,
> grassroots movement into an arrogant institution controlled by an elite who often
> managed to be both brutal and lax. (Stark 2003, 33)

The result, according to many in the emerging church movement, has been the institutionalization of the church resulting in descriptions of the existing church with terms such as stagnation, captivity, inflexibility, stuck in the moment, moralistic, exclusive, self-serving, inward, sanctimonious, missing the point, hierarchical, static, bureaucratic, overly religious, and passive. The implication of most was that the emerging church and its move back to mission was allowing "the Spirit to move in marvelous ways again. Movements are being sparked, and the established church is just beginning to wake up to itself and its missional calling" (Frost 2006, 71). The emerging church was pictured as a protest movement that was bringing a creative and pioneering spirit that contained the seeds of survival for a dying institution in the West.

Corrective analyses noted that the descriptive characterization of the emerging church using terms such as authentic character, missional living, narrative theology, and emulation of Jesus Christ contained an element of protest.

> There is a flip side to all of these attributes. If the emerging movement values these four attributes, it's because they regard the traditional church as full of fakery, non authenticity; individualistic and isolated, not missional; fixated on abstract doctrine, not narrative theology; and obsessed with the church, the Bible, and tradition, not Christocentric living. (Taylor 2006, ninemarks.pdf)

In contrast, advocates saw the movement as a protest against a polyglot of problems in the institutional church (McKnight 2005a). The protest was against entrenched divisions, absolute certainty, individualism, gospel marketing, hierarchical leadership, the secular/sacred divide, and the hypocrisy that happened in too many churches.

Protestation: Attraction and Subtraction

The emerging church movement was impossible to define without the context of the prevailing culture and the ecclesiastical milieu from which it evolved. Some

characterized it as a protest against evangelicalism's abusive past, modernism's rational

inflexibility, and the contemporary ecclesiological expressions of the church in seeker

sensitive and megachurch forms (Barna 2005; Carson 2005, 14ff.; Hirsch 2006, 268).

Many of the early leaders of the emerging church movement saw their journey as

characterized by a disconnection from the abuses of their past ecclesiological frustrations

and an adherence to a more authentic and biblical form of expression (Yaconelli 2003).

Spenser Burke's account of his evolution was "a discontent with contemporary

Christianity as an institution" and his rejection of what he termed spiritual McCarthyism,

spiritual isolationism, and spiritual Darwinism (Yaconelli 2003, 27-39). A perceived

arrogant and elite mentality of leadership combined with the abandonment of the urban

mission field by many megachurches and a church culture constantly preoccupied with a

'bigger is better' mentality led to protests against these prevailing trends. One of the

Emergent leaders wrote:

> I meet people along the way who model for me, each in a different way, what a new
> kind of Christian might look like. They differ in many ways, but they generally
> agree that the old show is over, the modern jig is up, and it's time for something
> radically new . . . . Either Christianity itself is flawed, failing, untrue, or our modern,
> Western, commercialized, industrial strength version is in need of a fresh look, a
> serious revision. (McLaren 2001, 23)

Newbigin's analysis of Christendom was more ambivalent than those in the

emerging/Emergent church paradigm. Newbigin noted positive features in the

Christendom settlement as a valiant attempt to transfer the eternal and universal claims of

Christ through the gospel into a missionary endeavor (Goheen 2000, 435). The emerging

church tended to suggest that the Enlightenment captivity necessarily distorted and

disfigured the mission of the church. McLaren and others neglected important emphases

in this vein in Newbigin's writings (Goheen 2000, 436). Some emerging church leaders

29

claimed that such deconstruction is necessary to facilitate a missionary encounter. Postmodernism by nature, they affirmed, emphasized a deconstructive spirit that disassembled the modern approach to life while seeking and creating a new order of existence minus modernistic underpinnings.

Communal Dimension of Witness:
The Church as a Hermeneutic of the Gospel

The communal dimension of witness, using the gospel to bear witness to the Kingdom, formed the second aspect of Newbigin's triangular formulation. Newbigin spoke of a "hermeneutic circle" operating within a believing community that led to a reciprocal relationship between the gospel and the church (Hunsberger 1998, 256-57). This construct suggested a relationship in which the Bible functioned as authority "only within a community that is committed to faith and obedience and is embodying that commitment in an active discipleship that embraces the whole of life, public and private" (Newbigin 1986, 58). Newbigin's formulation of the church as the only " hermeneutic of the gospel" intersected with the philosophies and theology employed by both Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt to help inform their own expression of the communal dimensions of the faith (Jones 2001; Jones 2006; Jones 2008; Pagitt 2004; Pagitt 2005; Pagitt, 2008). Emergents believed that a biblical call to unity by the gospel fosters an ecumenical spirit that espoused the belief that relational "envelopes of friendship and reconciliation must surround all debates about doctrine and dogma" (Jones 2008, 78).

> Emergents find the biblical call to community more compelling than the democratic call to individual rights . . . . Supplement this with the fact that every word of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures was written to human beings living in community (the nation of Israel in the former, the early church in the latter), and it becomes untenable for a Christian to base her life on the philosophy that 'it's all about me and my rights.' (Jones 2008, 81)

This call to community in a kingdom orientation was a highlight of the works of Newbigin and many of the early emergents.

New Kinds of Christian Leaders: Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt

Two representative innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm that exhibited this postmodern ethos were Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt. Primary references will be made to important works of Jones and Pagitt that are especially germane to Newbigin's concept of communal witness through the gospel: *Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Cultivating Authentic Community, Creating Holistic Connections* (Jones 2001); "The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church" (Jones 2006, 2011); *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emerging Frontier* (Jones 2008); *Church Reimagined* (Pagitt 2004); *Preaching Reimagined* (Pagitt 2005); and *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope-filled, Open Armed, Alive-and-Well Faith for the Left Out, Left Behind, and Let Down in Us All* (Pagitt 2008).

Tony Jones was an early adopter in the emerging church movement who wrote what many call the best inside look at the emerging church paradigm in *The New Christians* (Stetzer 2009, 49). Although many saw his work as definitive, others did not frame it as the authoritative articulation (Stetzer 2009, 49). Tony was the theologian-in-residence at Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis where Doug Pagitt served as the founding pastor (Tony Jones, tonyj.pdf). Tony Jones also taught as an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and Andover Newton Theological School. Jones wrote extensively of maintaining a distinctive identity while valuing an ethos of inclusion (Jones 2008, 71).

Doug Pagitt was an innovator who was hired by Leadership Network in the embryonic stages of the emerging church movement. Many of the Young Leadership Network became innovators and early adopters of the emerging church movement including: Brian McLaren, Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Chris Seay, Tony Jones and Andrew Jones. Pagitt has been known for his belief that the church should not depend on one person to formulate a message. Instead the collective people of God formulated the message from among the community of faith, which Pagitt called a "reimagined" way of communicating the gospel (Stetzer 2009, 75). This "progressional dialogue" involved the "intentional interplay of multiple viewpoints that leads to unexpected and unforeseen ideas" (Pagitt 2005, 52). Pagitt and the community rejected the educational and modern approach that they believed created a "bifurcated version of the gospel message, one that reduces the call to Kingdom life to simple belief about Jesus" (Pagitt 2005, 31).

Doug Pagitt was a member of the organizing group for Emergent Village and in the year 2000 emerged as founding pastor of Solomon's Porch, a self-described "holistic, missional, Christian community" (Shaddix 2009, 283). Pagitt is a graduate of Bethel Theological Seminary. The interplay allowed in Pagitt's church elevated the community of believers as an equal authority in the preaching event (Shaddix 2009, 283). Pagitt asserted that such hermeneutics mirrored the thoughts of Newbigin and allowed what many in the church believed was a search for authentic answers (Shaddix 2009, 284).

Demonstration:
Orthopraxy and Authenticity

Another term that was significant in the emerging church was authenticity. The demonstration of the gospel (orthopraxy) was preeminent or at least equal to

orthodox formulations of faith (McKnight, 2006, 13). A significant research effort, which

was collaboration between a doctoral research student and a professor, took five years in

interviews, case studies, and ethnographic research; and the compilers agreed on three

core elements and six biblical practices that were useful descriptors for the emerging

church.

> Emerging churches are communities that practice the way of Jesus within
> postmodern cultures . . . . Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2)
> transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these
> three activities, they welcome the stranger, serve with generosity, participate as
> producers, create as created beings, lead as a body, and take part in spiritual
> activities. (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 44-45)

The three core and six derivative emerging church indicators involved

activities which tended to reveal a preference of ethics against doctrine and the

prioritizing of orthopraxy above orthodoxy (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 44-45). What a

person did mattered more than what he or she believed. One author suggested that the

emerging church often believed that "a fixation upon exacting precision in the

articulation of an ever growing list of doctrines wastes energy better spent obeying God's

commands and following the way of Jesus" (Devine 2007, 7). In so doing, many of these

emerging believers adopted a belonging before believing rather than an "in versus out"

conception of church boundaries. Evangelical concepts of conversion made some uneasy

(Devine 2007, 7). The description of salvation was seen as more progressive rather than

a singular conversion experience.   The use of packaged techniques and programs for

evangelism often created discomfort for many in the emerging church movement leading

to a call for radical reformation of methodologies in the church. Lesslie Newbigin

wanted a transformation that led the church to become an alternative community with a

challenging message.

The Church as Sign, Instrument, and Foretaste

The terms Newbigin employed to describe the church implied a reformation was necessary in the ecclesiological realm: discriminating nonconformists, radical dissenters, radical critics and misfits with a relationship of conflict, dissenting otherworldliness, and radical discontinuity with its cultural context (Goheen 2000, 435). Newbigin argued that biblical unity for the church was both a gift and a task when the church realized its nature and function as the sign, foretaste, and instrument of salvation (Wainwright 2000, 110). Griffioen critiqued Newbigin for his critical role of the church and culture, and Bevans tagged Newbigin's contextualization model as countercultural (Bevans 1993, Griffioen 1996). In Newbigin's defense, he identified two sides to the calling of the church in its cultural milieu: solidarity and separation; affirmative incarnation and critical challenge; cultural development and antithesis (Newbigin 1995b, 141-54; Goheen 2000, 437). Many of the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm emphasized the role of the church as affirmative incarnation within the culture while adopting a critical stance toward the church as ensconced in the unchallenged assumptions of Western culture. This was a surprising twist on Newbigin's original thesis of "radical discontinuity with its cultural context" (Goheen 2000, 435).

The emphasis on the need for a reconstruction of the church's calling by the missional church movement was understandable and strategic. "When a fat man is sitting on one side of the seesaw, it is necessary to jump very hard on the other end." The viewpoint of the leaders of the emerging church paradigm speculated that the weight of the Christendom tradition led to a loss of distinctive identity in the church and this required jumping hard on the mission of the church (Goheen 2000, 438).

**Missional Philosophies
of Kimball and Driscoll**

One of the early innovators of the early church believed that the church must
"jump hard" because the church was marginalized in culture (Driscoll 2006b, 88). Mark
Driscoll used his sermons and writings to point to the fact that the traditional and
institutional church had lost a privileged place in the larger culture (Driscoll 2006a;
Kimball 2007a). Driscoll borrowed the three elements of Newbigin's missional triangle
to formulate a view of missional contextualization that he termed "reformission"
(Driscoll 2004, 18).   Driscoll stated that Lesslie Newbigin was "adept at helping us to
cross from church subcultures into the dominant cultures that surround us" (Driscoll
2004, 19). Driscoll demonstrated the unintended consequences that emerged if the
church was faithful only to one or two aspects of the triangle. An intentional or neglected
void that left out the church, gospel, or the culture buried the mission in one of three
holes: the parachurch, liberalism, or fundamentalism. Newbigin used a similar
formulation:

> I am referring to the deep and tragic split which divides Christians between those
> who are usually labeled liberals and fundamentalists . . . . There are on one hand
> those who seek to identify God's revelation as a series of objectively true
> propositions, propositions which are simply to be accepted by those that wish to be
> Christians. And on the other hand there are those who see the essence of
> Christianity in an inward spiritual experience, personal to each believer, and who
> see the Christian doctrines as formulated during church history as symbolic
> representations of these essentially inward and private experiences. (Newbigin
> 1989b, 22)

Driscoll's commitment to propositional truth was contra Newbigin, but the pastor still
attempted to apply Newbigin's third way between secular syncretism and irrelevant
fundamentalism.

Dan Kimball used similar strategies in his book *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Kimball 2007a). The book explored six common objections the postmodern generation maintained against the church. Kimball also portrayed many churches as adopting a siege mentality "content living in our little Christian subculture as citizens of the bubble" (Kimball 2007a, 45). Kimball said the ghetto mentality of Christians created a Christian subculture. This subculture trivialized Jesus on T-shirts, bumper stickers, coffee mugs, and domesticated the real Jesus into a small resemblance of who He was (Kimball 2007a). Kimball embraced Newbigin's concept of the church as the "community that confesses that Jesus is Lord has been, from the very beginning, a movement launched into the public life of mankind" (Newbigin 1995b, 16). Kimball said his corrective was to create a culture of missional Christians that incarnated the gospel in conversational and relational encounters (Kimball 2007a, 12).

**Biographical Briefs
of Kimball and Driscoll**

Dan Kimball, pastor of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California, authored *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations,* a primary work introducing the emerging church paradigm to the culture at large (Kimball 2003). Dan Kimball, one of the founding members of the Emergent Village, embraced a view of the church as authentic sharing of communal life by embracing narrative sermons and mystery in worship (Devine 2009, 6). Dan Kimball is a graduate of Western Seminary and has served as an adjunct faculty mentor at George Fox Seminary. Newbigin's connection to Kimball's missional mindset has been explored primarily in this research

through his works *The Emerging Church* and *They Like Jesus but Not the Church* (Kimball 2003, Kimball 2007a).

Vintage Faith launched in 2004 out of a hope to connect with the post-Christian culture. Prior to founding Vintage Faith, Dan Kimball served as a minister at Santa Cruz Bible Church where he led a Gen-X (church within a church) alternative worship service called Graceland (Kimball 2003, 32). Kimball found little value in services aimed at retaining young adults in the walls of Santa Cruz Bible Church so he collaborated with them to birth Vintage Faith. Kimball desired a novel way of church that would not frighten innovators from removing modernistic lenses to engage a generation that was interested in spirituality but not interested in church (Kimball 2003, 14-15). He described Vintage Christianity as a "refreshing return to an unapologetically sacred, raw, historical, and Jesus-focused missional ministry" (Kimball 2003, back cover).

Mark Driscoll is the founder of the fast growing Mars Hill Church in Seattle and the Acts 29 network that facilitated church planting with a stated goal of planting one thousand new churches in the next twenty years (Devine 2009, 8; Hammett 2009, 245). Devine characterized Driscoll as a participant in the doctrine friendly stream of the emerging church (Devine 2009, 8). Driscoll has attempted to "maintain intense interest in the implications of a postmodern, post-Christian West and commitment to fully orbed doctrinal statements" (Devine 2009, 17). Driscoll was open to cultural plurality that was characteristic of postmodern culture. This diversity lauded conversation as a necessary prerequisite to building community with postmodern people (Driscoll 2004, 44). Driscoll involved himself as an innovative presence in the initial formation of the emerging

37

church paradigm and his irreverent style led to a tag that often referred to him as the "cussing pastor."

Driscoll launched Mar's Hill in 1996 with approximately 150 people (Driscoll 2004, 15). His influence in the emerging church was as part of the initial emerging team that helped launch the movement into mainstream evangelicalism (Bohannon, 2010, 56). Driscoll credited the advent of his national teaching and consulting platform to the delivery of a conference sermon hosted by Leadership Network that explored ideas from Driscoll's college philosophy studies that emphasized the emerging culture of postmodernism (Driscoll 2004, 97). Driscoll continued to define himself and Mars Hill as an emerging evangelical church that is "missional in practice and evangelical and biblical in theology" (Driscoll 2006b, 23).

Mark Driscoll eventually distanced himself from the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm because of his increasingly conservative and Reformed theology (Jones 2008, 48). Driscoll's connection to Newbigin's concept of the challenging relevance of the gospel will be examined through his works *The Radical Reformission: Reaching Out without Selling Out,* "A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church," and *Confessions of a Reformission Rev: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Driscoll 2004; Driscoll 2006; Driscoll 2007). Driscoll and Kimball have attempted to forge a missional expression of the gospel.

Missional Activity

The gospel was to be embodied and experienced relationally more than rationally. Hence, one of the key terms in the emerging conversation was the term, "missional." Current research pinpointed (Minatrea 2004, 62) Charles Van Engen, a

38

Missiology professor at Fuller Seminary, with coining the term in 1991. An initial

discussion wrote that the *missio Dei* preceded the church as the mission of God, a

centrifugal, redeeming and prophetic influence (Gibbs and Bolger 2006, 50). Missional

represented God's active participation in the redemption of the world. Missional, in this

context, meant that the church rather than forming a mission was a missional community

itself. Two Australian church planters believed that a way to "say it more theologically is

that Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology" (Frost

and Hirsch 2003, 16). Hirsch also said that the idea for the term, "missional", originated

from the Gospel and Culture Network (GOCN), a group of North American practitioners,

missiologists, and theorists who were attempting to dissect the works of missiologist,

Lesslie Newbigin (Hirsch 2006, 81).

One early emergent author, McLaren, stated, "Rather than seeing missiology as

a study within theology, theology is actually a discipline within Christian mission"

(McLaren 2004a, 105). Theology was the church on a mission reflecting on its message,

its identity, and its meaning. A further work defined a missional church as

> a church that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose as an
> agent of God's mission to the world. In other words, the church's true and authentic
> organizing principle is mission. When the church is on mission, it is the true church.
> The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined
> to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows through every
> believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. To obstruct this is to
> block God's purposes in and through his people. (Hirsch 2006, 285)

In many ways the movement was holistic in that there was a broader social context to its

commitment to the *missio Dei* (mission of God) that included environmental care of

creation, reclaiming secular space, and engaging in issues of social justice. Driscoll said,

> This 'reformission' is a radical call to reform the church's traditionally flawed view
> of missions as something carried out only in foreign lands and to focus instead on

the urgent need in our own neighborhoods, which are filled with diverse cultures of Americans who desperately need the gospel of Jesus and life in his church. Most significant, they need a gospel and a church that are faithful both to the scriptural texts and to the cultural contexts of America. (Driscoll 2004, 18)

Missional leaders pointed out that orthopraxy, the way believers lived, was probably the most potent and persuasive aspect of our testimony to the world. What tied each of these types of emerging churches together was a missiological conversation about what a faithful church should believe and do to reach Western culture (Driscoll 2006, 90). This was Newbigin's philosophy reimagined and reinvigorated. The conversation was a valuable contribution to the missiological and ecclesiological discussions of the gospel.

Research Thesis

The aim of this research is to examine the influence of the missiological writings of Lesslie Newbigin on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm in the United States in order to understand how these writings helped form the emerging church in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.

Focus Statements

The research foci of this study in analyzing the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and his influence on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm are as follows:

1. To research Lesslie Newbigin's concept that Christendom is crippling the missionary consciousness of the church in Western culture while exploring the need for proper confidence in the encounter between the culture and the gospel and to discern the influence, if any, on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

2. To explore the emphases on the communal dimensions of mission and the reciprocal relationship between the church and the gospel in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and examine the effect, if any, on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

3.　To understand Newbigin's concept of the church as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the kingdom and his use of the challenging relevance of the gospel in the relationship between the church and culture and to examine his influence, if any, on selected early adopters and innovators in the emerging church paradigm.

4.　To explore the practices of the emerging church paradigm that emerged from Newbigin's influence on the emerging church, if any, in the current emerging culture in the United States.

Delimitations of the Study

This research is limited primarily to the extensive writings of Lesslie Newbigin and his impact on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. The writings of other missiologists and important authors are discussed only in relation to their influence on the formation of ideas in the development of the missiology of Lesslie Newbigin. The research does not attempt to characterize the effect on other emerging church adopter categories such as early majority, late majority, or laggards (Rogers 2003, 267-99). The research also is limited to the emerging church expressed in the United States and does not apply to other paradigms in other Western countries or other parts of the globe. The research also attempts to define the emerging church despite the contention of many prominent leaders who stated postmodernism and contextualization made the movement impossible to define (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 17). The exploration of the decision of emerging church practitioners to use this model in the current American evangelical culture is studied and conclusions are examined. This study examines only self-identified evangelical expressions of the emerging church paradigm and does not attempt to draw conclusions in other expressions in other settings.

Terminology

The following terms are used in the study to bring clarity in definition and use

of terms in the project:

Challenging relevance. A term borrowed by Lesslie Newbigin from A. G. Hogg. The challenging relevance of the gospel was an attempt to forge a third way between the paths of syncretism and irrelevance. The gospel, in its cultural concepts and forms, must be reinterpreted, set in a new context, and filled with biblical content (Goheen 2000, 348).

Christendom. The title given to the religious ethos that dominated Western society since the fourth century when the affirmation of Emperor Constantine moved Christianity from the fringes of society as marginalized and persecuted to an institution that was centralized and solid (Frost 2006, 4). "The system of church-state partnership and cultural hegemony in which the Christian religion was the protected and privileged religion of society and the church its legally established institutional form" (Guder 1998, 6).

Church. A church was a congregation of Christ's baptized disciples, united in the belief of what He has said, and covenanting to do what He has commanded (Patterson 2001, 3). It also has been defined as an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth (Stetzer 2006, 114). Newbigin defined the church as "the provisional incorporation of mankind into Jesus Christ" and saw the church as sign, instrument, and first fruit of the kingdom (Newbigin 1994d, 33).

Contextualization. Shoki Coe first used this term in 1972 to describe the task

of theological education in various cultural contexts (Upkong 1987: 161, 163). It has been further identified as the process whereby the constant message of the gospel interacts with specific and local situations to communicate the gospel in action and proclamation in an attempt to establish churches in ways that make sense to communities in their indigenous context (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 83). It was "the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as put forth in the teaching of Holy Scripture, and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 2000, 200).

Culture. The ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together formed a people's way of life (Macionis 2007, 40). According to Newbigin, culture was defined as "the sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another" (Newbigin 1983, 5).

Deconstruction. A form of literary analysis in which the underlying assumptions of a text are revealed and disassembled. Jacques Derrida, a postmodern philosopher, coined this term in the 1960's (Jones 2008, 40-41).

Dialogue. The emerging church movement eschewed blatant proselytizing on the one hand and idealistic objectivity on the other in favor of inter-religious dialogue as the *modus operandi* of choice when adherents of one religious tradition met those of another religious tradition. It argued that neither salvation nor publicly demonstrable truth was the most satisfactory goal of inter-religious interchanges-the proper goal (only achievable goal some would say) was peaceful, productive coexistence with the religions of the world exchanging competition with one another for harmony and, on some levels

43

at least, unity (Musk 2004, 44).

Early adopters. An ideal type in a social system that classified members based on the degree to which individuals adopted ideas, practices, or objects that are perceived as new by the individual. Early adopters were respected by his or her peers and made up about 13.5 percent of the population. These individuals embraced new technology, ideas, and practices before most of their peers (Rogers 2003, 267-99).

Ecumenicalism. The broad idea of establishing cooperation and better understanding among different religious denominations for the purpose of universal Christian unity. Ecumenicalism was derived from the Greek words *oikoumenē* ("the whole inhabited world") and *oikos* ("house," "family," "people") and can be traced from the commands, promises, and prayers of Jesus. It denoted the intentional movement of renewal, unity, and mission of Christians and churches of different traditions "so that the world may believe" (Van Engen, 1993).

Emergent. Emergent referred to the network of leaders and laity who conversed through the website of Tony Jones, Emergentvillage.com (Devine 2007, 3). The Emergent Village represented a "conversation" and not a church movement as such. The governing board of Emergent Village included Doug Pagitt (Solomon's Porch, Minneapolis), Brian McLaren (formerly of Cedar Ridge Community Church, Baltimore-Washington D.C.), and Tim Keel (Jacob's Well, Kansas City). It was "specifically referring to the relational network which formed first in 1997: also known as Emergent Village" (Jones 2008, xx).

Emerging. A movement that identified with the life of Jesus, transformed the secular realm, and lived highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they

welcomed the stranger, served with generosity, participated as producers, created as created beings, led as a body, and took part in spiritual activities (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 44-45). Emerging was the broad, umbrella term that identified the movement as a whole (Devine 2009, 7).

Enlightenment. An eighteenth century movement in the West that vaunted rationality as the primary basis for authority (Jones 2008, 38).

Ethnocentrism. This defined an attitude and belief that the culture imposing its values was better than the receptor culture (Van Rheenen 1996, 98).

Epistemology. The branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge. Epistemology questioned what knowledge was, how it was acquired, and the possible extent to which a given subject or entity can be known (Reymond 1976, 6)

Evangelicalism. Four marks have been the central qualities that included: "conversionism," the belief that lives need to be changed; "activism," the expression of the gospel in the effort; "biblicism," a particular regard for the Bible; and "crucicentrism," a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Bebbington 1989, 1-17).

Foundationalism. The idea or theory that at the base of all human knowledge was a set of self-inferential or internally justified beliefs; in other words, the foundation was indisputable and indubitable and required no external justification (Jones 2008, 19).

Fundamentalism. A term defined as a rigid adherence to what was considered foundational to a religion. In American Christianity, fundamentalism began in the early twentieth century as a reaction to modernism and produced the "Five Fundamentals of the Christian faith: the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Jesus, physical resurrection at the end of time, substitutionary atonement by the death of Jesus on the

45

cross, and the Second Coming of Jesus in the eschaton" (Jones 2008, 12).

Generation X. A group of people defined as respondents born during the years 1968-1979 (Crowley 2003, 1) that have inherited several derogatory nicknames such as slackers and the 'Me Generation." Billy Idol and novelist Douglas Coupland first used the name in popular culture (Coupland 1991).

Gospel. The gospel was "the announcement that in the series of events that have their centre in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ something has happened that alters the total human situation and must therefore call into question every human culture" (Newbigin 1983, 3). The gospel was the word about Jesus Christ and what he did for us in order to restore us to a right relationship with God (Newbigin 1969, 60-61).

Gospel and our Culture Network. Lesslie Newbigin founded the Gospel and our Culture movement in Britain in 1984 to formulate a strategy to engage Western culture with a genuine missionary encounter with the gospel (Newbigin 1993c, 250-56). The Gospel and Culture network began to try and build on Newbigin's insights and emphasized essentially that the work of mission involved what they called a "trialogue." Building on this concept of dialogue, in which there are two parties to a conversation, they maintained that mission essentially involved an active, ongoing conversation between three elements, namely, the gospel, the surrounding culture, and the church (Hirsch 2006, 81-82).

Inclusivism. This view shifted from particularism and posited that God's grace and salvation that are inherently based on the unique and normative presence of Jesus Christ made salvation available and efficacious through other religions (Netland 2001,

51-52).

Indigenization. A form of missiology in which the native church that was planted found itself ready to govern, support, and reproduce itself. The mature church was seen to be culturally and theologically rooted in the culture in which it finds itself (Van Rheenen 1996, 186).

Inerrancy. The inerrancy of Scripture confirmed that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that was contrary to fact (Erickson 2001, 67).

Innovators. An ideal type in a social system that classified members based on the degree to which individuals adopted ideas, practices, or objects that were perceived as new by the individual. Innovators were venturesome members of society who were able to cope with a high degree of uncertainty about an innovation and fit into the first 2.5 percent of individuals in a system to adopt the innovation (Rogers 2003, 267-99).

International Missionary Council. This missionary association originated after the world missionary conference met in Edinburgh in 1910. It was officially organized in 1921 and was a compilation of fourteen interdenominational agencies and missionary societies. It eventually merged into the World Council of Churches in 1961.

Mainline Church. These are the older, established Protestant denominations that include Presbyterians, United Methodists, Episcopalians, and the United Church of Christ. They are also known as "name-brand" Christianity. Mainliners tended to lean to the left, both theologically and politically (Jones 2008, 7).

Megachurch. This generally refers to any Protestant congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2000 persons or more in its worship services (Hartford Institute for Religious Research).

Metanarrative. Jean-François Lyotard coined the term as a reaction against a strictly modern and rationalistic phenomenon that created grand stories that are legitimatized by objective and rational means (Smith 2006). Some inferred that metanarratives make grand, totalizing claims about reality with universal pretensions (Middleton and Walsh 1995, 70-71).

Missio Dei. "Mission is not the invention, responsibility, or program of human beings, but flows from the character and purposes of God . . . . Mission is defined, directed, energized, and accompanied by God" (Murray 2001, 39). The idea of *missio dei* (not the exact term) surfaced at the Willingnen Conference of the IMC in 1952. Mission was defined as being derived from the very nature of God in his Trinitarian being as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sent the church into the world. Mission was not so much an activity of the church, but mission was an attribute of a missionary God. There was a church because there was mission, not vice versa (Bosch 2007, 390).

Missiology. This term described the overt, intentional, and ongoing reflection on the doing of mission, which included the theories of mission, the teaching of mission, as well as the research, writing, and publication of works regarding mission (Neely 2000, 633). Comprehensively, it was known as the study of "the worldwide church's divine mandate to be ready to serve this God who is aiming his saving acts toward this world" (Verkuyl 1978, 5).

Missional. Missional described a church, organization, or individual that defined and organized life around its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world and attempted to reproduce communities of authentic disciples who in turn were sent out by God to live and proclaim His Kingdom in this world (Minatrea 2004, 8;

48

Hirsch 2006, 285).   In other terms, missional viewed the church's authentic principle as

the church as mission. The mission of God flowed directly through each believer and

every community of faith to extend the mission of a Trinitarian God (Hirsch 2006, 285).

The phrase "missional" started in the work of a group of North America practitioners,

missiologists and theorists, called the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN), who

came together to try and work out some of the implications of the work of Lesslie

Newbigin.

Modern. As an adjective, modern can mean current or up-to-date. Modern

also referred to an era in Western society following the Enlightenment and the Industrial

Revolution and was reflective of the values of those social upheavals (Jones 2008, 4).

Paradigm. A term that occurred originally in the context of scientific

advancement as a "series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent

revolutions," and in those revolutions "one conceptual world view is replaced by another"

(Kuhn 1962, 10). It morphed into a broader idea as a "set of assumptions, concepts,

values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that

shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline" (Harmon 1970).

Particularism. A viewpoint that said Christianity has a distinctive nature in

relationship to other world religions by affirming the unique nature of special revelation,

Jesus Christ as the exclusive domain of salvation, and the fact that God's saving grace

was not mediated through the practices, teachings, or institutions of other religions

(Netland, 2001, 48).

Paternalism. The idea of the dominance of the sending culture over the

mission process (Van Rheenen 1996, 181-82).

Pluralism. A simple recognition of the fact that there were many different

faith and religious groups active in a nation which in some circles has evolved to the idea

that multiple religions or secular world views were legitimate and valid social

constructions and true within its own culture (Eck 2006, 16).

Plausibility Structure. A plausibility structure represented "a central concept

for an understanding between society and consciousness; a deep-seated pattern of beliefs

and practices that are widely accepted and unquestioned. It was a "cultural fishbowl"

embedded in our way of life (Berger 1979, 36)

Postmodernism. Term to describe an intellectual attitude and mood expressed

in a variety of cultural expressions that called into question the ideals, principles, and

values that lay at the heart of the modern mindset (Grenz 1996, 12).

Proper Confidence. The concept that all eternal truths and all our

metanarratives were products of particular human histories and were socially and

historically embedded. The assertion that all truth claims were embedded does not entail

the false belief that none of them makes contact with a reality beyond the human mind.

The key was a total commitment of the whole person to that which was affirmed in a

verbal statement (Newbigin 1995, 74).

Secular. Secular was derived from the Latin *saeculum* meaning century or age

and incorporated the idea of being 'of this age' or even used to denote worldly affairs

(Hinnells 2005, 292). George Jacob Holyoake coined the term in 1846 to define a "form

of opinion which concerns itself only with questions, the issues of which can be tested by

the experience of this life" (Holyoake 1860).

Syncretism. The term referred to the reshaping of beliefs and practices of

Christians by cultural accommodation so that they consciously or unconsciously blended with those of the dominant culture (Van Rheenen 1997, 173). It was also seen as the attempt to blend and merge elements of different religious systems into a coherent and cohesive body of beliefs and practices that were singular (Kraft 1989).

Student Christian Movement. The SCM came into being in 1889 as a loose network of students dedicated to missionary work overseas. It rapidly expanded and became the largest and most influential in the United Kingdom. They were instrumental in the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 that birthed the modern ecumenical movement (Wainwright 2000, 4).

Western. Cultures that were derived from European culture that often shared fundamental political ideologies including the rule of law, human rights, and religious tolerance were labeled as Western. The West was often characterized by the tradition of rationalism, a biblical-Christian cultural influence, and political pluralism (Thompson and Hickey 2005, 45).

Research Assumptions

One of the assumptions framing this work is the idea that Christianity can never be separated from its context. Various assumptions color the premises and foundational ideas that undergird the framework of church growth models. The very existence of paradigmatic shifts is an evolving theory that assumes sociological and philosophical shifts and alterations in history. Lesslie Newbigin attempted to demonstrate that the relationship between the gospel and culture included various dimensions. Fitting the gospel to the existing mosaic of a culture often is, in reality, a capitulation to the unexamined assumptions of that culture. The study of the emerging

church movement attempts to examine the biblical and cultural contexts that create a tension in the minds of many faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

The various suppositions that provide the grid for interpreting the significance and viability of the emerging church movement are numerous. These presuppositions have influenced the research and ongoing exploration of the emerging church paradigm. The focus statements have led the ongoing inquiry, and the following ideas serve as the assumptions behind the research:

1. The study of the emerging church is a valuable enterprise that enables followers of Jesus Christ to evaluate and emulate viable and biblical methodologies that enables the church to reach individuals for Jesus Christ.

2. The Bible is both perspicuous and propositional in its inspired revelation. Inerrant Scripture and a humble posture are used to evaluate experiences and ideas.

3. A sufficient amount of writings of Lesslie Newbigin and selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm exist so that this research was a worthwhile endeavor.

4. Contextualization in a pluralistic society is needed to guide followers of Jesus Christ.

5. Leaders, theologians, pastors, and church planters should not dismiss or adopt the emerging church paradigm without examining both unintended consequences and beneficial assets.

6. This research assumes that selected leaders were influenced by the core missiological beliefs of Lesslie Newbigin. The research also assumed the evolving nature of the writings of selected authors and attempted to acknowledge nuances of belief while settling on current theological positions.

Procedural Overview

The research aims not only to catalogue the influence of Lesslie Newbigin on the developing emerging church paradigm, but it also attempts to analyze and critique certain aspects of the theological, missiological, epistemological, and ecclesiological implications of the emerging church in Western culture. The specific ideas generated by

52

Lesslie Newbigin serve as a catalyst for the purpose of this work, which seeks to provide a comprehensive, albeit selective, description and analysis of the emerging church in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses in light of Scripture and culture. Innovators and early adopters are identified with several practitioners used as representatives of this beginning group, including Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Tony Jones, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll. Selected works of these authors were then compared to Newbigin's concepts and ideas to explore the aim of this research which was to determine the amount of influence the ideas of Lesslie Newbigin had on the initial formation of the emerging church paradigm.

This researcher used the classification system of Everett M. Rogers in *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.) to classify the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. This touchstone work attempts to explain the process, the reason, and the rate that new ideas and technologies spread through cultures. Rogers states that diffusion is the method by which an innovation is communicated and dispersed through selected channels over time among members of a social system (Rogers 2003, 11). The categories of adopters, that follow an S curve when plotted over a length of time, are: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers 2003, 150). The innovation must be widely adopted to lead to lasting change and in order for a movement to be self-sustaining. Representative examples of the emerging church paradigm were chosen using the ideas of diffusions of innovation by examining the formation of the group through Leadership Network work groups and subsequent advocates of this viewpoint.

The research has made extensive use of the primary sources of Lesslie

Newbigin and the emerging church practitioners and also has examined relevant works that informed their understanding. Chapter two examines the concept that Christendom and Enlightenment rationalism crippled the missionary consciousness of he church. Attention is paid to the epistemological and pluralistic turns that Newbigin believed were necessary to create proper confidence in the gospel. Brian McLaren was used as a selected representative of the need to debug modernity and reestablish a new orientation of the church to culture. Chapter three searches out the communal dimensions of mission that Newbigin thought necessary to formulate a reciprocal relationship between the church and the gospel. Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt were representatives of Revisionist emerging church innovators that have explored the communal aspects of the emerging church paradigm. Chapter four explores the triangular dialogue Newbigin examined as a model to establish the challenging relevance of the gospel. This budding concept develops a missional facet of the church, and the dialogue has used Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll as representatives of the Relevant faction of the emerging church paradigm. The final chapter contains observations, applications, and implications for the analysis of the emerging church paradigm along with recommendations for future study.

The movement or conversation known as the emerging church continues in a variety of perspectives. The consequence is a discussion of the health of the church in Western culture. Some diagnoses of the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church are often iconoclastic and the prescriptions are drastic, but some of the analysis is time and again a needed corrective that Christians in the West need to heed. Time will tell if what emerges from the discussion is faithful to God's design that the church will proclaim the gospel to the end of the ages and the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER 2

NEWBIGIN'S IDEA OF CHRISTENDOM'S CAPTIVITY
OF THE CHURCH IN THE WEST

Throughout his life, Newbigin developed an epistemological viewpoint that
Western culture was imprisoned in the presuppositions of the Enlightenment (Newbigin
1995c; Goheen 2000). Newbigin surmised that the Enlightenment concept believed that
the "metanarrative of the gospel and the metanarrative of the Enlightenment could be
fused into the single story of the march of Christian civilization" (Newbigin 1998,
lecture). Newbigin also theorized that the Enlightenment attempted to relegate claims of
religion to the private sphere instead of the public arena of facts (Newbigin 1997, 8).
Newbigin believed the vision of the Enlightenment was a world ruled by universal reason
accessible to all human beings of whatever race or creed and made available through
universal education (Newbigin 1994d, 98). His concept of personal knowledge was an
attempt to dissect and dethrone Cartesian certainty and move to what he entitled "proper
confidence" (Polanyi 1962; Newbigin 1995c).

Lesslie Newbigin wanted Christians to embrace a missionary conversation
with Western culture. Newbigin encouraged Christians to examine the cultural milieu
that had its genesis in the Enlightenment (Newbigin 1986, 22). The impact of the
Enlightenment was a retreat into "pietism, a religion of the soul, of the inner life, of
personal morals, and of the home" (Newbigin 1983, 22). In Newbigin's mind, this
withdrawal led to Christians accepting relegation to a permitted and privileged minority
in an isolated enclave or religious ghetto. Newbigin asserted that the church should

55

commend the gospel as public truth, the way reality operated, not just a private opinion or a religious option (Smith 1999, 8). Newbigin's contention was that the Enlightenment created an epistemological turn in the wrong direction (Newbigin, 1995, 73).

Focus Statement Synopsis

This research considers Lesslie Newbigin's concept that Christendom was crippling the missionary consciousness of the church in Western culture while exploring the need for proper confidence in the encounter between the culture and the gospel and to discern the influence, if any, on the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

Epistemological Turn

An epistemological turn was created by the Enlightenment mindset that empiricism and rationalism are foundational for the way truth is discovered and confirmed. Epistemology creates a roadmap of a person's train of logic. It includes the origins, structure, methods, and validity of how knowledge is discovered (Reymond 1976, 6). Primarily, the turn was more in how humanity discovers truth than the ideas it generates.

> A more useful way of starting to look at the genesis of our modern culture and especially at the decisive point where it becomes fully conscious of itself, the point which those who experienced it called "the Enlightenment." That word is itself a very significant pointer to the nature of the experience that created modern Western culture. It expresses the joy and excitement of those who have seen the day dawn over a dark world, for whom what was obscure and confusing is now clearly seen as it is, for whom the unexplained has been explained – or at least made explicable. It is a conversion word; not, however, the experience of an individual – like the enlightenment of the Buddha – but one of whole peoples. (Newbigin 1986, 22-23)

The result of this enterprise, according to Newbigin, was a "shift in location of reliable truth from the story told in the Bible to the eternal truths of reason" (Newbigin 1995, 73).

This epistemological turn, in Newbigin's thought, was the creation of "a picture of a world from which purpose has been eliminated" (Newbigin 1986, 78). This blanket elimination, according to Newbigin, set aside the question of intention for the pragmatic question of cause (Newbigin 1987a, 33). The idea of meaning was removed as an option in the Enlightenment mindset because the aim of creation or humanity could not be directly observed (Newbigin 1991, 21), and a false dichotomy was set up between knowing and believing.

This removal of purpose was caused by an attempt to replace an appeal to ancient authority, "the iron grip of dogma" (Newbigin 1986, 23) with pure reason and empiricism (Newbigin 1994c, 29). Two vital centers created the core of Enlightenment epistemology: the new developments in science associated with the names of Galileo, Bacon, and Newton and the "new method of philosophy opened up by Descartes" (Newbigin 1986, 23). This empirical mindset led to a belief that "nature – the sum total of what exists – is the really real" (Newbigin 1986, 25).

> A missionary encounter with our culture must bring us face to face with the central citadel of our culture, which is the belief that is based on the immense achievements of the scientific method and, to a limited but increasing extent, embodied in our political, economic, and social practice – the belief that the real world, the reality with which we have to do, is a world that is to be understood in terms of efficient causes and not of final causes, a world that is not governed by an intelligible purpose, and thus a world in which the answer to the question of what is good has to be left to the private opinion of each individual and cannot be included in the body of accepted facts that control public life. (Newbigin 1986, 79)

Precursors of the Enlightenment

Several elements combined in Newbigin's mind, to create the Enlightenment and the need to in turn confront Western culture as a missionary. The hangover of the Enlightenment created a climate that made the necessity of an effective missionary

engagement with modernity both a pressing and difficult task. Newbigin was particularly concerned with the "unique power this culture has to erode and neutralize the Christian faith" (1994d, 186). The issues that faced mission to the West were not merely methodological, but the deeply imbedded presuppositions of Western culture (Stults 2008, 26). One of those deeply imbedded biases concerned the conflict between reason and revelation that the Enlightenment saw as mutually exclusive (Stults 2008, 71). This conflict called on culture "to put away a childish dependence on divine revelation, and to use the God-given gift of reason to establish the facts for themselves" (Newbigin 1995c, 55).

Two currents of thought created the foundations of European intellectual history: classical philosophy and the history of Israel (Newbigin 1995c, 2). The oscillating tension between these dual streams reverberated into Western culture. The tension before the onset of the Enlightenment was communicating a clear gospel through classical thought without the gospel losing its distinctiveness. Newbigin believed that "neither at the beginning, nor at any subsequent time, is there or can there be a gospel that is not embodied in a culturally conditioned form of words" (Newbigin 1986, 4). Newbigin stated that the introduction of the gospel story distinguished Europe from Asia as the biblical narrative shaped the mental pictures of early European tribes following the fall of Rome (Stults 2008, 123). In addition, Western culture believed in a contingent creation, a biblical concept that allowed an objective view of the cosmos "formulated on the basis of belief in the divine revelation given in Scripture and supremely in the work of Christ" (Newbigin 1995c, 7). The self-evident truths of the Enlightenment piggybacked on a thousand years of Christian teaching. This intellectual climate combined with a

variety of other actors that led to the epic change known as the Enlightenment. The antecedents created an environment for the flourishing of the paradigm shift in thinking.

A swing in systems of thought was precipitated by the advent of Aristotelian philosophy through the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. The thinking of Aquinas was sparked by the translation of Aristotle in Latin along with the writings of Islamic philosophers Avicenna and Averroes. This influence brought a new way of assessment into Western Christian thought "a new kind of rationalism that challenged the traditional ways of thought" (Newbigin 1995c, 17). Newbigin believed Aquinas turned epistemology in an erroneous direction as he conceded a "distinction between things that can be known by reason alone (such as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul) and things that could be known only by faith through divine revelation" (Newbigin 1995c, 17). Aquinas taught that the existence of God could be proven by reason alone yet the 'God' that emerged through the effort of philosophical reasoning hardly resembled the God who encountered us in Scripture (Stults 2008, 131). Newbigin observed that Aquinas pried faith and reason apart instead of creating the synthesis that Aquinas hoped for.

> There is a kind of knowledge for which one does not have to depend on faith, and there is another kind, which is only available by the exercise of faith. It does not need to be pointed out this dichotomy has run deep in our culture to this day. Certain knowledge is one thing; faith is something else . . . . Here one can see the origins of the split which gives rise to what C.P. Snow called the two cultures and which runs through every university campus separating the buildings devoted to science and those devoted to other purposes. (Newbigin 1995c, 18)

This intellectual curiosity led to the rise of the universities and an increase in skepticism, the impetus of the Renaissance with its humanistic leanings, and the fierce theological and sociological controversies of the Reformation that created the breakdown of religious consensus (Smith 1999, 12; Newbigin 1995c, 23). The time was ripe for a

new way of thinking initiated by a reluctant practitioner as a precursor to the Enlightenment: Rene Descartes.

The Dualism of Descartes

Descartes posited the famous phrase "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am"), but he never intended his theory on epistemology to jeopardize the Christian faith. Descartes sought passionately for a firm foundation for knowledge in the 1600's since most believed science could be founded only on possibilities. Descartes discovered an epistemology that saw human reason as possessing a certain degree of autonomy (Bosch 1991, 263). Descartes wanted a heritage that provided an underpinning that was independent of tradition or presupposition. Newbigin believed that this premise became basic to the shaping of Western culture as Rene Descartes detailed a fresh starting point of thought (Newbigin 1991, 25).

Descartes lived in an age of profound skepticism that made certainty in thought impossible. The centerpiece of Descartes' approach for ascertaining certain knowledge was the critical method (Newbigin 1993b, 231). Descartes' system said that, "doubt, not faith, was the path to knowledge" (Newbigin 1995c, 21). The method was to put every truth claim through the critical sieve of the scientific method leaving only certainty. The remainder was categorized as belief, faith, or at most probability. Descartes' logic, Newbigin claimed, "has been found to have in itself the seeds of its own destruction as the critical principle turns upon itself and eventually destroys itself" (Newbigin 1993a, 343). This systematic skepticism exposed revelation, dogma, and supposed truths to "the acids of critical doubt" that supposedly guaranteed certainty on all matters of knowledge (Newbigin 1989b, 25).

Newbigin observed that, "we in our particular culture are all heirs of Descartes" (Newbigin 1991, 27). Newbigin alleged Descartes' fatal flaw was seeking a basis of certainty in his own mind and not in the faithfulness of God.

> In a sense – I hope not overdramatizing – one could say the new Cartesian starting point, which has been so foundational for all that has followed, was a small-scale repetition of the Fall. Adam is not content to trust God. He wants to have his own certitude, based on an experimental test of the validity of God's promise. Descartes is the first inductive theologian. (Newbigin 1991, 79)

According to Newbigin, there are three major results of the philosophy of Descartes on popular culture. First, it reinforced the dualism that the mental (or spiritual) and the material are two separate worlds. This separation begins the process that removes God as a factor in the physical world. The material world was a closed entity "that God, who belongs to the mental or spiritual world, cannot influence" (Newbigin 1995c, 37). The second consequence was the "divorce between the objective and subjective poles in human knowing and the consequent polarization between objectivity and subjectivity" (Newbigin 1995c, 22). The findings of science were categorized as objective facts relegating religious truths to the realm of subjective, personal experience. The final effect of Cartesian dualism "has been to reinforce the dichotomy, already referred to, between theory and practice" (Newbigin 1995c, 23). Newbigin thought that this way of understanding was foreign to the Bible, but it was now embedded in our culture (Newbigin 1995c, 38-9). Newbigin said that such dualism sabotaged the biblical call to a "single action comprised of hearing, believing and obeying" (Newbigin 1995c, 39).

Newbigin's conclusion was that "the Cartesian program has run into difficulties," in that, it created a prejudice of doubt over faith which he called absurd (Newbigin 1995c, 23). The skepticism that Descartes attempted to eradicate became the

de facto approach to truth in our culture (Smith 1999, 25). Enlightenment's embrace of doubt eventually led to a postmodern paradigm that stated "there are no timeless truths; there are only metanarratives which falsely claim to explain the human story as a whole, but which are in fact themselves simply products of particular human histories" (Newbigin 1995c, 74). The Enlightenment's quest for total certainty left an empty shell of subjectivism and the "nihilism into which our society is visibly sinking around us" (Newbigin 1993a, 343). The Enlightenment framework proved inadequate even though it enriched us mentally to an extent unrivaled by any period of similar duration. "Its incandescence has fed on the combustion of the Christian heritage in the oxygen of Greek rationalism, and when the fuel was exhausted, the critical framework itself burned away" (Newbigin 1983, 21). The foundation of rationalism was gradually put in place as a framework was established that could give scaffolding to a new intellectual and philosophical system of thought. The proponents of the Enlightenment had begun to speak of their age as the age of reason that would not "bow before any other authority other than what it calls facts" (Newbigin 1986, 25).

Facts and Values

The Enlightenment framework that Newbigin saw as contradictory created a dichotomy of faith and reason that led to the development of two realms in Western culture (Stults 2008, 143). Reason and scientific method created the objective world of facts while faith was relegated to the subjective domain of values.

> A strange fissure thus runs right through the consciousness of modern Western man. The ideal that he seeks would eliminate all ideals. With dedicated zeal he purposes to explain the world as something that is without purpose. And, as I have suggested, this fissure becomes visible in two ways: in the dichotomy (one of the outstanding marks of a "modern" society) between the public and private worlds, and in the

62

dichotomy in thought between what are commonly called "facts" and what are called "values" (Newbigin 1995c, 35-36).

Descartes and his dualistic philosophy led to a distinction between two worlds, one public and the other private. The public world was enamored with facts that are applicable to everyone. The private world was the domain of values that were matters of personal choice. The fissure "expresses itself in the search for value-free facts, and for a science of human behavior that shall be objective in the sense that no value judgments are allowed to have a place in its operations" (Newbigin 1986, 36). The implication was that the only important things were so-called value-free facts that had enormous consequences in the public life of modern societies. The result was the existence of a public realm of facts verified by reason and the scientific method and a private realm informed by "religion" where people are free to form and follow their own personal convictions and preferences.

These two realms, distinct in the Western mind, offered "the centerpiece of the plausibility structure by which our culture seeks to sustain itself" (Newbigin 1986, 17). Plausibility structure was a term, borrowed from sociologist Peter Berger, referring to the set of assumptions that created the conditions determining "what beliefs are plausible within the society in question" (Newbigin 1986, 10). The guiding plausibility structure in the West was the one where "facts are what is true and indisputable, verifiable according to the scientific method, but values are wholly private and unverifiable" (Smith 1999, 23). Newbigin believed this schism "the public world of what our culture calls facts, in distinction from the private world of beliefs, opinions, and values" was the operative plausibility structure of the modern world (Newbigin 1986, 14). This plausibility structure was foundational to the way a culture viewed reality. The impact for believers

63

in such a framework was either to demythologize faith, or loudly affirm dogmatic views, or find "religious certainty is only located within the enclave of religious experience" (Newbigin 1986, 11-1

3).

This separation of value from fact had enormous consequences for the church that in large measure accepted the dichotomy and withdrew into the private sector. The new framework suggested humanity, with all the new powers science contributed, created an earthly utopia replacing the heavenly city (Newbigin 1983, 35). Secular hope displaced God and concentrated on a public life in which society created here on earth what once was thought of as the domain of heaven (Stults 2008, 143). The inevitability of progress led to modernization in categories of material possession, consumerism, and economic advance. The emancipated, autonomous individual displaced the community and the church as central in relationships. The church, in an attempt to influence the choice of values, often retreated into a pietistic corner as a permitted and even privileged minority (Newbigin 1983, 23). Statements of ethics and morality were not permitted in social arenas where there were no right or wrong lifestyles, and moral pronouncements were denounced as intolerant and condemning diatribes. Christians were implored "not to talk of right and wrong; we speak of values" (Newbigin 1988a, 191).

> What seems to have happened in our culture is a falling apart, a disconnection
> between the subjective and the objective poles. We have on the one hand the ideal,
> or shall I call it the illusion, of a kind of objectivity which is not possible, of a kind
> of knowledge of what we call the "facts" which involves no personal commitment,
> no risk of being wrong, something which we have merely to accept without
> question; and on the other hand a range of beliefs which are purely
> subjective, which are, as we say, "true for me," are "what I feel," but which are
> a matter of personal and private choice. To suggest that these latter beliefs ought to
> be accepted as true for all is to be guilty of the unforgivable sin – dogmatism.
> (Newbigin 1989b, 23)

64

Newbigin realized such a separation negated the opportunity to speak real truth to real people.

Speaking Truth to Caesar

The need to speak public truth with utmost confidence multiplied in Newbigin's life when traveling with his wife, Helen, on the land route from India to Europe by local transport (hitchhiking when necessary) carrying two suitcases and a rucksack on his retirement in 1974 (Newbigin 1993d, 239). In Eastern Turkey at Cappadocia, once the nursery of Christian theology, Newbigin could not find a single Christian to share Sunday worship with. Newbigin stated we "tried to come to terms with the fact that a great living church can be completely destroyed as the relics of a long-obliterated Christendom" (Newbigin 1993d, 241; Stafford 1996, 24). When Newbigin returned to the British Isles he was further shocked by the rapidity of change in Western culture. No longer was Christianity the so-called established religion, instead the West was a mission field. According to Newbigin, the missionary consciousness of the church had been crippled because of the arrangement known as Christendom.

Newbigin acted as an advocate to reclaim the missionary nature of the church by returning churches to a "sent" context. Bishop Newbigin reflected a deep concern for a "sharp separation from the contemporary confusion between the gospel and the values of Western civilization" (Goheen 2000, 21).   Newbigin pondered a book by Hendrik Kraemer that sounded a fundamental theme that led the gospel to be bracketed with false causes and interests:

> Kraemer's book was – by implication – a direct repudiation of this attempt to domesticate the gospel within Western, European, and American values. It was an affirmation of the uniqueness, the decisiveness, and the sufficiency of the gospel – of those mighty acts of God, which have their centre and climax in the incarnation,

ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Newbigin 1988b, 327)

Newbigin was haunted by a perplexing thought for the next decade of finding "a perspective on one's own culture" (Newbigin 1993d, 250). This consideration gave birth ultimately to a group known as the Gospel and Our Culture (GOC) movement that originated with a goal to examine and analyze the underlying religious assumptions of Western culture through the lens of the gospel (Goheen 2000, 106). The analysis was intended to unmask foundational cultural beliefs that crippled the witness of the church to the public truth of the gospel. Jesus Christ acted decisively and definitely in the cross and resurrection in a particular act with a universal intent, according to Newbigin. The work by the GOC examined what turns would be necessary to proclaim a credible gospel "that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross" (Newbigin 1989b, 227). The loss of focus on the missionary context created by Christendom was directly related to the fact that the "church had a vested interest in the status quo – politically, economically, socially – and it can be easily captivated by the powers, institutions, the spirits, and the authorities of the world" (Guder 1998, 113).

Christendom and Western Culture

Christendom was molded by changes after Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity early in the fourth century and sanctioned Christianity. From the time Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in A.D. 392 the merging of Christianity into the established church had huge ramifications. Hemmed in by Islam to the south and to the east, Christianity became an "ordinary religion for European peoples" (Newbigin 1966, 102). Newbigin's interpretation of the missionary

66

history of the Western church was demonstrated in three eras: "the pre-Constantinian church, the *corpus Christianum,* and the church in modern, post-Enlightenment culture" (Goheen 2002, 352; Newbigin 1966, 102-07). The pre-Constantinian church was a missionary community that saw itself as a "movement launched into the public lives of the world, challenging the *cultus publicus* of the Empire, claiming the allegiance of all without exception" (Newbigin 1980, 46). This made a collision with the imperial power unavoidable – as inevitable as the cross (Newbigin 1986, 100).

The transition to the Constantinian period occurred when "the imperial power lost its will to continue and the emperor turned to the church to provide the spiritual cohesion for a disintegrating society" (Newbigin 1986, 100). Newbigin asserted that Western culture was a product of Christendom, "the synthesis between the gospel and culture . . . by which Christianity had become almost a folk religion of Western Europe" (Newbigin 1954, 11). Newbigin wrote, "the church had become the religious department of European society rather than the task force selected and appointed for world mission" (Newbigin 1966, 103). Christendom, also known as *corpus Christianum*, forfeited the idea that the church was "a body sent into the world, a body on the move existing for the sake of those beyond its borders" (Newbigin 1961b, 110). In many ways, Christendom was the fact that "various churches contributed to the formation of a dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral values" (Guder 1998, 48). The church, in many ways, lived in uncritical identification with the world around it. Christian rhetoric shaped and legitimized public discourse. The result was membership in society, by fiat, identified a person as a

Christian (Feddes 2012, 14; McLeod 2003, 1). This lack of distinctiveness led to tremendous losses that Newbigin bemoaned in his writings.

Negative Impact of Christendom

Bishop Newbigin believed that the history of Christendom demonstrated that the outcomes of a partnership between church and state led to a tragic loss of tension between the gospel and culture that emasculated the church's identity. Michael Goheen postulated three negative effects that Newbigin's works articulated for the missionary understanding of the church: "non-missionary ecclesiological reflection, non-missionary patterns of churchmanship, and the loss of antithetical tension with the culture" (Goheen 2002, 352). Newbigin assumed that the church lost its confessional ecclesiology within the context of Christendom because of its lack of context with the pagan world (Newbigin 1954, 1-2). The result was the congregation was seen as a gathering place for the faithful to be edified rather than a staging post for witness to the outside world (Newbigin 1961b, 110-11). Theology was not framed in the context of a "struggle between the gospel and the non-Christian culture but shaped over rival interpretations of the gospel" (Goheen 2002, 353).

The early church moved from an inconsequential place to one of the foremost institutions in society; from a position of frailty to one of strength and prominence; from poverty to immense wealth; and from being an outlawed religion to the only religion of the state. Christianity had practically ceased to be a missionary religion, and this led to two wrong relationships with the prevailing culture. First, the church lost sight of its countercultural calling to be a community distinct and separate from the world and instead became a "protected and well decorated chaplaincy in the camp of dominant

68

power" (Newbigin 1984a, 4). The result was that the Constantinian establishment identified "the Christian dogmatic framework with the supreme political power" (Newbigin 1983, 30).

> We are painfully aware of the consequences of that (Constantine's) conversion; for centuries the Church was allied with the established power, sanctioned and wielded the sword, lost its critical relation to the ruling authorities. (Newbigin, 1980, 47)

In addition, another faulty attitude was the posture of accommodation the church was forced to assume with the established culture. Newbigin contended that a missionary church adopted neither of these attitudes. Instead the church must be a distinct body that attempted to influence the surrounding milieu (Newbigin 1963, 8).

According to Newbigin, a distinctiveness formulated contra the pagan culture created a common unity of the body of Christ instead of the splintered churches that feasted on one another. Christendom shaped a context that allowed rival interpretations of the Christian faith as they defined themselves one against another (Goheen 200, 195). According to Newbigin, the divisions in the church were "a violent contradiction of its own fundamental nature" (Newbigin 1963, 9). The separation of the church into rival bodies was seen as incompatible with the central truths of the gospel. Within Christendom, Newbigin asserted that the church accepted disunity as a matter of fact, but the context of the missionary call made that position untenable.

Christendom had enduring impact on modern culture in that it colored the lenses through which the church looked at culture. Newbigin believed that "modernity is itself a product of Western Christendom, and that the parent and the child have lived in the same house for so long . . . that the grown up child effectively runs the household" (Newbigin 1989a, 214). The concomitant results from a mission perspective was the precipitous decline in the lands once called Christendom as the "acids of modernity"

dissolved even the most enduring beliefs while in Asia and Africa Christianity was

rapidly spreading (Newbigin 1987a, 25). The culture Christians attempted to sustain was

rapidly disintegrating.

Positive Impact of Christendom

Newbigin did not solely concentrate on the negative results of the era of

Christendom. As critical as he was of the Christendom arrangement, he insisted that we

must also make careful assessment of its positive dimensions. He believed the church

was accurate in taking responsibility for the cultural, social, and political life of early

medieval Europe (Goheen 2000, 195). He remarked,

> Much has been written about the harm done to the cause of the gospel when
> Constantine accepted baptism, and it is not difficult to expatiate on this theme. But
> could any other choice have been made? . . . Should the church have refused the
> appeal and washed its hand of responsibility for the political order? It could not do
> so if it was to be faithful to its origins in Israel and in the ministry of Jesus. It is easy
> to see with hindsight how quickly the church fell into the temptation of worldly
> power. It is easy to point . . . to the glaring contradictions between the Jesus of the
> gospels and his followers occupying seats of power and wealth. And yet we have to
> ask, would God's purpose as revealed in Scripture have been better served, if the
> church had refused all political responsibility, if there had never been a "Christian"
> Europe, if all the churches for the past two thousand years had lived as tolerated or
> persecuted minorities like the Armenians, the Assyrians, and the Copts? I find it
> hard to think so. (Newbigin 1986, 100-01)

Newbigin's time in India, a culture dominated by a different worldview,

allowed him to appreciate how Scripture had positively shaped Western culture. Other

movements arose within Christendom including modern science and the rise of modern

historical study that led many in some respects to comprehend Scripture in a more

comprehensive fashion (Newbigin 1977b, 118). Newbigin reiterated a common theme

throughout his writings that culture lived on the spiritual capital that was generated in the

era of Christendom. Newbigin's early thoughts embraced the spiritual capital that arose in secularization, but these views soon morphed.

Newbigin shifted from a more positive view of secularization to one more skeptical while his view of Christendom morphed from ambivalence to a more optimistic viewpoint (Feddes 2012, 36-37). He emphasized the existence of divine purpose, the eschatological view of spirituality, the teleological view of human history culminating in Jesus Christ, and the existence of relational ethics as all positive contributions of medieval society (Newbigin 1986, 26-30). In addition, the church provided an integrating power for a new social order that yielded "enormous consequences for good . . . it created the Christian civilization of Europe" (Newbigin 1989b, 222). Newbigin argued the experiment with Christendom had to be done, and "its fruits include the creation of Christian Europe out of which the modern world was made" (Newbigin 183, 34).

Bishop Newbigin contended the experiment ended in the conflict generated by futile religious wars. He stated, "there is no way back to the Constantinian alliance between church and state" (Newbigin 183, 34). He framed the new task as finding a way to embody in the life and teaching of the church the claim that Jesus was supreme over all creation without falling into an improper symbiotic relationship with the state. He insisted the way to avoid the Constantinian trap was "a return to the biblical vision of the last things which must govern all our secular obedience" (Newbigin 1983, 36). Christians were called to follow the way of Christ both in their adamant claim for the Lordship of Christ and in their complete vulnerability. Newbigin believed the way of coercion must be rejected as well as the way of withdrawal. Thus Christian discipleship

71

"does not invest in any political programme . . . there can be no repetitions of

Constantine, either on the left or on the right" (Newbigin 1983, 37).

> And of course we cannot go back to that period of the Church's life which was inaugurated with the baptism of Constantine – that long period which created the civilization of Europe. Nostalgia for Christendom is understandable but futile. We do indeed have to be grateful for those great centuries in which the barbarian tribes of the western peninsula of Asia were at least partially Christianized and the civilization was created of which we are the heirs and beneficiaries. To understand that period is essential if we are to understand ourselves. It was a sustained attempt to realize the reign of Christ in the actual life of the world. But it broke down, and we cannot try to reconstruct it. (Newbigin 1991, 68)

One of the consequences of the meshing of Christianity with modern society

was a radical anthropocentric view of life. The separation of facts and values created a

unique hope in the ability of humanity and the benefits of progress. Faith in humankind

flourished along with an insatiable appetite for freedom. This freedom quickly was

absorbed into the religious realm. The result was an attempt to stand outside of religions

and study them objectively and impartially without a commitment to the subjective world

of belief (Thomas 2011, 242). The consequence was a persistent argument for the unity

of religions in an effort to reduce all religions to a similar phenomenon, hence the rise of

religious pluralism.

Newbigin's Concept of Pluralism

Newbigin's mature consideration of pluralism critiqued the popular three

paradigms of particularism, inclusiveness, and pluralism that have been used to

categorize theologies of religion. The first reiterated that only Christians were guaranteed

salvation, as faith in Jesus was the only way to God. Inclusiveness believed that

salvation was indeed through Jesus. However, some who are adherents of other faiths

were included, by God's grace, in the salvation that was offered through Jesus, even

though they never made a declaration of Christian faith. Pluralism stated that all

religions were legitimate but unique ways to achieve agreement with God. Newbigin

said that his own stance contained features of all three: Jesus Christ for him was unique,

and salvation was exclusively and distinctively through him. However, other individuals

may indeed be "saved" even though they stay outside the church.

> The position which I have outlined is exclusive in the sense of affirming the unique
> truth in the revelation of Jesus Christ, but not in the sense of denying the possibility
> of salvation to those outside the Christian faith; inclusive in the sense of refusing to
> limit the saving grace of God to Christians, but not in the sense of viewing other
> religions as salvific; pluralist in the sense of acknowledging the gracious work of
> God in the lives of all human beings, but not in the sense of denying the
> unique and decisive nature of what God has done in Jesus Christ. (Newbigin
> 1989b, 182-83).

Newbigin believed that for anyone who lived in society influenced by the

Enlightenment culture, religious pluralism that "relativizes all the differing belief

systems" was a result of the reigning plausibility structure performing its normal function

(Newbigin 1989b, 57). Pluralism was conceived to be a proper characteristic of a secular

and free society. It was a society "not controlled by dogma but characterized by the

critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (and even skeptical)

examination" (Newbigin 1989b, 1). Each person could be free to choose but are never

asked whether such a "belief is true, but whether a person is sincere in holding the belief"

(Newbigin 1989b, 15).

> What it makes plain is the fact of what is usually called "pluralism." In contrast to
> traditional societies, modern Western society leaves its members free, within very
> wide limits, to adopt and hold their own views about what is good and desirable,
> about what kind of life is to be admired, about what code of ethics should govern
> one's private life. As a natural extension of this, with the growing presence of
> Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists in areas formerly designated as
> Christendom, it is assumed by a large number of Christians that the rule of pluralism
> applies here also. The rival truth-claims of the different religions are not felt to call
> for argument and resolution; they are simply part of the mosaic – or perhaps the

kaleidoscope – of different values that make up the whole pattern. (Newbigin 1986, 16)

The outcome led to a conclusion by some that "the essence of Christianity is the same as that of the other world religions" (Newbigin 1986, 18). Newbigin asserted such beliefs were "sinking into a kind of pluralism which is indistinguishable from nihilism – a pluralism which denies the possibility of making any universally justifiable truth claims on any matter, whether religious or otherwise" (Newbigin 1993c, 227). The central issue for Newbigin was the ability in a pluralistic culture with a myriad of religious options to claim the public truth of the gospel.

The reigning plausibility structure made the public proclamation of the gospel as truth a tougher task. Newbigin thought that the fact and value divide created pluralism in the arena of beliefs but not in the realm of facts (Newbigin 1989b, 112). Sequestering truth to the enclave of personal experience in the theological enterprise created a dichotomy in the human quest for truth (Newbigin 1994d, 160). Newbigin contended that this closed system the church inhabited was the place pluralism reigned, "The words true and false are out of place. Here the talk is of experience, about values, about what is personally meaningful to oneself" (Newbigin 1994d, 16). Newbigin's hope was to proclaim the gospel as public truth that rested on a repudiation of what he saw as an improper use of pluralism. This improper use precipitated a distinction between pluralistic viewpoints.

Types of Pluralism

Newbigin quickly acknowledged the existence of cultural pluralism "which welcomes the variety of different culture and lifestyles within one society and believes this is an enrichment of human life" (Newbigin 1989b, 14). However, Newbigin strove

to clearly distinguish between the fact of plurality and the ideology of pluralism. Western society was classified as tolerant and free, so there were a myriad of religions, philosophies, and ideologies, making it pluralistic. Such a view did not disqualify one particular religion or philosophy from truth claims, even while others held partial truth or no truth at all (Stults 2008, 152). The ideology of pluralism, however, held "the view that that since no one can really know the truth we must be content with a multiplicity of opinion" (Newbigin 1987a, 6).

> We must reject the ideology of pluralism. We must reject the invitation to live in a society where everything is subjective and relative, a society which has abandoned the belief that truth can be known and has settled for a purely subjective view of truth – "truth for you" but not truth for all. (Newbigin 1989b, 244)

This ideology of total pluralism, according to Newbigin, "leads inevitably to anomie, to lostness, to a meaningless life in a meaningless world" (Newbigin 1991, 55). Newbigin realized that society plunged into despair without any criteria to evaluate truth claims or discriminate between cultural norms.

Newbigin denoted this phenomenon as "agnostic pluralism" because "truth is regarded as unknowable, in which there are no criteria for judging different kinds of belief and behavior" (Newbigin 1991, 56). This type of agnostic pluralism bought Christians a seat at the table at the price of making everything relative. In contrast, Newbigin advocated a "committed pluralism" that was somehow "saved from the absorption into the culture of that place and enabled to represent to that place the universality, the catholicity of God's purpose of grace and judgment for all humanity" (Newbigin 1989b, 152). Such pluralism argued for a place in the public sphere that was based on the understanding that one's ultimate commitment defended its claim to truth over against other truth statements. Different commitments cannot be brought under the

umbrella of a single framework. Instead with committed pluralism, Newbigin stated,

Christians interacted with and "shaped the plausibility structure within which people

made their decisions and come to their beliefs" (Newbigin 1991, 85). The gospel was

proclaimed as part of the conversation that shaped society. It was proclaimed, "not as a

package of estimable values, but as the truth about what is the case, about what every

human being and every human society will have to reckon with" (Newbigin 1991, 64).

This reckoning with religious pluralism was not a novel experience because

"Christianity was born in a religiously plural world, but what is new, at least for

Christians in the old Western Christendom, is the discovery that this is so" (Newbigin

1993c, 227). The early church refused to allow the gospel to solely become another

option an individual might choose. The difference was that the apostolic church refused

the choice of relegating faith to a private cult of personal salvation. The church instead

confronted men and women with the gospel message that Jesus Christ, not the emperor,

was Lord. Newbigin's mandate refused to allow the name of Jesus to be subjugated to

modernity that created a loss of confidence in the uniqueness and importance of the

gospel. Newbigin believed that once prepared positions in distinct religious traditions

were acknowledged that interfaith dialogue occurred. Presuppositions were identified

and made explicit as these belonged to the very "grammar and syntax" of the thoughts of

participants (Thomas 2011, 328).

Dialogue with Other Faiths

Newbigin's presuppositions rejected the concept that religious dialogue was

not confrontational. Newbigin pointed out that such an idea necessitated the viewpoint

that it was "axiomatic that there is one reality behind or within all the varieties of

religious experience" (Thomas 2011, 332). Instead of a mutual confirmation of each other's position, the idea of the gospel was a confrontation that encompassed the thought that Jesus Christ was not one of a variety of ways to explain reality, but instead remained the only way ultimate reality was comprehended. Non-Christian religions were not vehicles of salvation because of the "particularity of the work of God in Christ" (Thomas 200, 325). This informed the purpose of a Christian dialogue with people of other faiths. "This purpose can only be obedient witness to Jesus Christ" (Newbigin 1995b, 182).

> In this missionary dialogue the church both learns new things and provides the place where witness is borne to Christ as the head of the human race, and where he is seen more and more for what he is, as new tongues confess him as Lord. Thus a true understanding of the gospel itself ought to enable Christians to be firm in their allegiance to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, and also to be ready to enter into a genuinely listening dialogue with those who do not give this allegiance but from whom they know that they had to be ready to learn. (Newbigin 1986, 139)

Newbigin rejected a dialogue, which took as its presupposition, a common core of reality within all varieties of religious experience (Thomas 1996, 296). Newbigin noted that, according to this perspective, it was clear that there remained a single reality behind or within all forms of religion (Newbigin 1977a, 131). Newbigin advocated a purposeful dialogue that realized the necessity "to face the difficult question which arise when this commitment was brought into contact with other unconditional commitments of the same kind" (Newbigin 1995b, 160). Who decided what a faithful response was for those who adhered to other commitments? Newbigin's conclusion was that "dialogue is part of obedient witness to Jesus Christ" (Newbigin 1995b, 182).

Newbigin's assertion was that a Christian that participated in dialogue could not accept a viewpoint that ascribed that "commitment to Jesus Christ precludes him or her from seeking the truth" (Newbigin 1995b, 167).

> Here we come to the heart of the issue for Newbigin, his constant refrain becomes the reiteration of this given fact: there is no standpoint above every other standpoint. Whether one stands outside of the religions to offer a unifying perspective or understanding, or whether one offers a proposal for unity from within a religious commitment, the result can never provide escape from the "precariousness" of particularity, which is our fundamental human predicament. (Hunsberger 1998, 221)

A variety of religious truths do not become absolute by being combined, instead the illusion of neutrality was eradicated because there was no point of view above all other perspectives. The only possible response, according to Newbigin, in the face of religious plurality was the acknowledgment of the reality of possessing diverse and even contradictory ultimate commitments and the readiness to discuss them candidly. Every religion offered a way of salvation, but believers only participated in dialogue as they "make truth claims, affirmations about what is the case, and these claims are in many cases mutually irreconcilable" (Newbigin 1990, 143). Therefore, Christians rejected the notion that what we "affirm in the Christian creeds is no more than one among a number of different points of view" (Newbigin 1990, 137).

Newbigin formulated conditions of dialogue from his own experience of teaching Hinduism to college students. The first condition was to forthrightly reveal one's own religious commitment rather than pretend a neutral, objective viewpoint that did not exist. Second, he encouraged the immersion of students in the teachings of the religion being taught to examine the problems all humanity wrestled with. Finally, he allowed a discussion of the issues raised as the participants came to conclusions. Above all, the discussion concerned questions of truth. These conditions were his contribution to mutual acceptance in interreligious dialogue (Wainwright 2000, 221). These viewpoints were part and parcel of a larger connecting thought: proper confidence in the gospel.

Proper Confidence

When Newbigin returned to the United Kingdom to teach missiology and pastor an inner-city church after his missionary endeavors in India and abroad, he encountered a chastened and timid church. "In the subsequent years of ministry in England I have often been asked: What is the greatest difficulty you face in moving from India to England? I have always answered the disappearance of hope" (Newbigin 1983, 1). He postulated that Christians had lost confidence in their own validity and that the missional nature of the church was more vital than ever because "in the areas dominated by modern Western culture (whether in its capitalist or socialist political expression) the church is shrinking and the gospel falls on deaf ears" (Newbigin 1986, 3). The analysis Newbigin offered was to report what was involved in a "genuinely missionary encounter between the gospel and the culture that is shared by the peoples of Europe and North America" (Newbigin 1986, 1). The central thesis connected to the heart of Newbigin's desire to see Western culture experience a missionary confrontation with the gospel and turn wholeheartedly to Jesus Christ.

> Who will confront this culture of ours with the claim of absolute truth, the claim that Jesus Christ is the truth? Who will be bold enough to say, not that the Christian message can be explained in terms of the facts as we know them, but rather that all so-called knowledge must be tested among the supreme reality: God incarnate in Jesus Christ, present yesterday, today, until the end, in the power of the Spirit? What will it mean to call for a missionary confrontation with this culture? (Newbigin 1994d, 72)

This missionary confrontation required a radical conversion, a paradigm shift, and a change in the plausibility structure. Newbigin asserted that it necessitated "a clash with contemporary culture as it challenges the fiduciary framework within which our culture operates" (Newbigin 1983, 53). This shift needed a change in the mind so things were seen differently and a change in the will so that things were done differently. The

existing détente between the church and Western culture needed Christians to unmask the

epistemology and ideology that supported, permeated, and steered the culture by offering

a contrary perspective of the human situation. Rather than attempting to understand the

biblical message in light of modern thought, Newbigin believed that the church was

required to attempt the much more difficult task of trying to understand modern thought

in the light of the biblical story (Stults 1988, 156).

> The ideology which we have to recognize, unmask, and reject is an ideology of
> freedom, a false and idolatrous conception of freedom which equates it with the
> freedom of each individual to do as he or she wishes. We have to set against it a
> Trinitarian faith which sees all reality in terms of relatedness. In explicit rejection of
> an individualism which puts the autonomous self at the center and sees other selves
> as limitations on our freedom, we have to set the basic dogma entrusted to us,
> namely that freedom is to be found by being taking into a community of love given
> and received which is eternal reality from which and for which all things exist.
> (Newbigin 1996, 75-76)

Unmasking this ideology called for a fundamental commitment to the gospel as public

truth.

Gospel as Public Truth

Newbigin called for the church to offer a radically new commitment to a

fiduciary framework articulated in the public realm (Stults 2008, 156). He was

concerned about "a loss of confidence in the uniqueness and importance of the gospel"

(Newbigin 1990a, 336). This proclamation was a paradigm shift as it encountered the

presuppositions and biases of Western culture. The division between public facts as the

only way to describe reality was countered by a public proclamation of the gospel as

public truth (Newbigin 1992a, 1-2). The definition of "facts" needed to return to the

original Latin meaning as "something done or accomplished" rather than the modernistic

conception as things that were tangible and measurable (Newbigin 1995c, 55). Facts

were not solely being relegated to the domain of rational thought.

> God had acted in a way that, if believed, must henceforth determine all our ways of
> thinking. It could not merely fit into existing ways of understanding the world. It
> could not form any worldview except one of which it was the basis. (Newbigin
> 1995c, 4)

Newbigin contended that this was how the gospel operated before the

syncretism of Western culture "perpetually tried to fit the gospel into our culture"

(Newbigin 1994d, 67). The gospel was an Archimedean point from which the early

church challenged the prevailing culture.   The gospel had to be "embodied in a society

(the church) which is both abiding in Christ and engaged in the life of the world"

(Newbigin 1995c, 39). The historical events of God's action in Jesus Christ were the

hinge that framed human history. The gospel was universally significant and historically

particular (Newbigin 1992a, 1). God revealed himself in Christ and "because the

authority of Jesus is ultimate, the recognition of it involves a commitment that replaces

all other commitments" (Newbigin 1995b, 14). Newbigin believed that the gospel

obligated Christians as those chosen by God. This election was not a matter of exclusive

privilege, but instead to be chosen by God was to be chosen for service. This and other

truths of the gospel story were essential to the ministry of the church as it offered

reconciliation in Christ (Newbigin 1989b, 127). The necessity, according to Newbigin,

was to proclaim the gospel as public truth by adopting a revised epistemology that

embraced this fact.

This epistemological turn would require a few steps in an opposite direction of

the prevailing philosophies. The first entailed a reversal of the plausibility structure that

suggested science was the only bastion of objective truth. Newbigin asserted that the

81

central belief of Christianity, the Easter story, made more sense of the human experience than did the reigning Enlightenment viewpoint (Stults 2008, 157). Secondly, the church by necessity needed to proclaim a gospel that called people to accept Jesus as Savior and made it equally clear that "discipleship means commitment to a vision of society radically different from that which controls our public life today" (Newbigin 1986, 132). Newbigin believed this task was difficult because Western culture "without possibility of question is the most challenging missionary frontier of our time" (Newbigin 1987a, 6). The modern scientific worldview, according to Newbigin, penetrated and disrupted the gospel with the acids of modernity. The epistemological necessity that drove the missionary task was to announce the gospel as an echo of the apostle Paul by saying, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12) and challenging Western culture with conversion.

Newbigin believed the most fundamental task at stake was to question contemporary assumptions of what it meant to know. The biblical vision placed a crisis at the center of human relationships by calling for a personal commitment to a reality much greater than us. As a result, Newbigin assumed knowledge was both personal and relational.

> What's at stake is the meaning of "knowing." It is a question of the way in which human beings are enabled to come to a true understanding of and a practical relation to the realities with which human life is set. Science does not give and does not pretend to have a complete answer to that question. But the scientific achievements of the past two hundred years have been so awe-inspiring that we have been tempted to believe that the methods of science are the sufficient key to knowledge in all its fullness. That belief has led us to the brink of disaster. (Newbigin 1983, 60-61)

Newbigin searched for allies in spiritual, sociological, epistemological, and scientific domains to strengthen his charges.

Personal Knowledge

Newbigin alleged the mechanical conception of the universe and the value-free ideology of science had not only been challenged by Christians, but by the advocates of new physics as well (Stults 2008, 176). Science had tremendous benefits, Newbigin said, as his confrontation was with the philosophical statement of relentless materialism and unhinged skepticism that were often opponents of religious truth claims (Stafford 1996, 20). With a major contribution from scientist Michael Polanyi, Newbigin tried to demonstrate that the mechanical model that science commonly portrayed was false. Neither the scientist nor his work can be understood apart from the personal commitment of the scientist.

In that vein, Newbigin cited the epistemological insights of Polanyi who used the term "personal knowledge" with the "precise intent of affirming that the objective-subjective dualism is false and that all knowing of reality involves the personal commitment of the knower as a whole person" (Newbigin 1995c, 39). Newbigin reiterated Polanyi's fundamental claim that all knowing was a personal commitment (Newbigin 1991, 32). Polanyi challenged the idea that knowledge was "impersonal, universally established, and objective" (Polanyi 1962, vii.)

> As a scientist, Polanyi is impressed by all the subjective factors which are involved in the work of scientific investigation. These include social factors: the tradition of scientific work into which young scientists are apprenticed, which establishes guidelines and sets limits, which provides the concepts, methods, and tools with which scientists do their work. And there are the personal elements of intuition, imagination, sound judgment, courage to take risks, and sheer pertinacity without which great scientific work is not done. It is, says Polanyi, absurd to ignore all of this and treat the work of science as though the scientist did not exist, as though the findings of science were simply a transcript of reality, "objective" truth in which the human subject has no place. (Newbigin 1991, 31)

Hence Newbigin postulated, "the whole scientific tradition is a fiduciary framework" (Newbigin 1995c, 41). As scientists indwelled the tradition they developed an awareness or intuition that a problem and a solution was hidden in the haphazardness of empirical reality (Newbigin 1995c, 41). These insights and decisions were as much intuitive as rational, according to Polanyi. The accumulated insights formed what Polanyi called "tacit knowledge" defined as the vast amount we know that was not formal and explicit but somehow hidden.

The parallels between Polanyi's work and Newbigin's thoughts led Bishop Newbigin to adopt and transfer the concept of personal knowledge to his own epistemological framework. The designation of knowledge as the responsibility of a person who was required to make risky and costly commitments reaffirmed the idea of certainty as tied to personal commitment (Newbigin 1995c, 46). People believed in order to know. Polanyi emphasized the idea that all knowing was a form of activity. This activity included the concept that knowing was something humanity achieved not something that happened haphazardly. This meant Christians were given a summons, a call, and an invitation not only to intellectual assent but active response (Newbigin 1995c, 65). Newbigin contended that there was no intellectual certainty without involvement of both faith and obedience (Newbigin 1995c, 66).   There was no indemnity against real risk, Newbigin stated, as anyone made a personal commitment to a risen Lord as an act of personal faith. This was true not only in the private enclaves of religious life but also in risking such an encounter in the public square. This risk of personal knowledge entailed public and personal confidence in the gospel as public truth in all arenas of society.

Evaluation of Newbigin's Views

Newbigin claimed to find his Archimedean point, a perspective from which to look critically at his own culture during his retirement years while reading Western thinkers focusing on the impact of the Enlightenment (Newbigin 1993d, 250-51). Newbigin's thought often tied the current malaise of the role of the church in culture to the Enlightenment mindset that painted rationalism as a relentless and ruthless enemy of the Christian faith. Such a broad brush tended to deemphasize other contributing factors. Elaine Graham and Heather Walton argued that the process of industrialization was a more preeminent factor than the epistemology of the Enlightenment (Graham and Walton, 1-7). Newbigin often made sweeping generalizations about the intellectual history of the West and "the potential trickle-down effect that a new missionary epistemology could have" (Feddes 2012, 219). He characterized these thoughts as recent but in actuality Newbigin expanded on views that had been formulated in connection with intellectual mentors in the early 1930's. In 1933, Newbigin saw the West was a mission field and was certain of "the radical departure of Europe from the Christian faith when it followed Descartes and the pioneers of the Enlightenment" (Newbigin 1993d, 25-26).

Many accused Newbigin of advocating modern arguments to create a fiduciary framework. Although Newbigin advocated personal knowledge much of his stated point of view used rational arguments to urge faith commitments. Had Newbigin not severely overstated the rational character of faith and understated its fiduciary nature? In a similar sense, Newbigin's incipient hope that envisaged the gospel as public truth seemed farfetched because of the minority voice of the church. Many claimed such a stance created sectarianism as the church attempted to voice faith as fact. In a society that

advocates religiously neutral accounts of the facts, "confident affirmation of the Christian faith as public truth is regarded as sectarian and dogmatic" (Newbigin 1985c, 48). The idealistic conception of the early, pre-modern church as authentically Christian underplayed the real difficulties and challenges they faced. In another vein, Newbigin's reluctance to tackle the status of unbelievers in the eschaton showed timidity that was not usually his modus operandi. He often seized on sociological insights and infused them with theological meaning without careful balance in the transition. Still the breadth and insight of his contributions added distinction to the missiological discussions in three arenas: the validity and nature of cross-cultural mission in a pluralistic world, the basis and mode of interreligious dialogue, and his analysis of modern epistemology as imprisoning the gospel. These extraordinary contributions in exhaustive ways laid a foundation for both current and future interaction.

McLaren's Postmodern Turn

Brian McLaren has been best known for propelling the emerging church paradigm into the spotlight of Christian discourse. Many espoused his instrumental role in the evolving church conversation. "In the same way that Martin Luther became the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great Reformation, so too has Brian McLaren become the symbolic leader and spokesman for the Great Emergence" (Tickle 2008, 164). McLaren grappled with the evolving forms of doing ministry in the postmodern milieu in his book *The Church on the Other Side*. He opined, "As Christians who want to live and love on the other side, we had better get a feel for postmodernity from the inside, because in many ways postmodernity is the other side, and it defines reality for more and more people" (McLaren 2000b, 159). McLaren stated he was on a "quest for new ways

86

to believe and new ways to live in the way of Jesus, a quest for a new kind of Christian

faith" (McLaren 2010, 18). McLaren's thesis mirrored Newbigin in many aspects as he

claimed that those who have not entered the postmodern transition were the "institutional

children of the era of Sir Isaac Newton, the conquistadors, colonialism, the

Enlightenment, nationalism and capitalism" (McLaren 2010, 8). The only alternative in a

dynamic framed in such a fashion was to enter into the postmodern mindset.

McLaren adopted five core truths of this new postmodern mindset: being

skeptical of certainty, sensitive to context, more humorous toward approaching life,

highly valuing subjective experience, and focusing on similarities more than divisive

differences (McLaren 2000b, 162-66). McLaren stated that this new approach to ministry

required a paradigm shift to a more feasible paradigm structure as the church needed to

"debug its faith from the viruses of modernity" (McLaren 2000b, 189). He affirmed the

primary influence of Lesslie Newbigin in this enterprise:

> No one I know of understands this better than Lesslie Newbigin. In *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship,* Newbigin retraces our modern love affair with the critical methods of rationalism in a lust for scientific certainty. From Descartes through Kant to Nietzsche, modern thinkers have been striving to find a ground of certainty without any recourse to faith. But the love affair has ended somewhat bitterly after all these years, Newbigin says in nihilism. Scientific certainty of the kind we find in mathematics breaks down when we bring it from abstraction and theory to real life. Ultimate, unshakable, noncontingent certainty is surely available to God, and perhaps to angels, but part of our human predicament, postmoderns acknowledge, is the gap between our aspiration for absolute, autonomous knowledge and our ability to attain it. (McLaren 1998, 181-82)

McLaren, in writing of change in the context of postmodernism, has been

classified in the category of a Revisionist in the emerging camp by Ed Stetzer who

developed a three-layered taxonomy of emerging churches (Stetzer 2000, 72).

Revisionists differed from Relevants. Relevants attempted to communicate orthodox

views of the Bible in culturally relevant ways in the second category. Reconstructionists

that inhabited the third area wanted to deconstruct ineffective and irrelevant forms of

church to create more incarnational approaches to ecclesiology through modes like house

churches. Revisionists, on the other hand, declared a strong pathos to reach the emerging

postmodern culture by revisiting both methodology and theology including holding

loosely and questioning deeply orthodox teachings on subjects such as substitionary

atonement, the reality of hell, views of gender, and the very nature of the gospel (Stetzer

2000, 72-73). Another taxonomy, devised by Doug Pagitt, classified these three streams

as: Relevants minister to postmoderns, Reconstructionists minister with postmoderns,

while Revisionists minister as postmoderns (Stetzer 2009, 76).

Relevants - Minister "to" Postmoderns

Reconstructionists - Minister "with" Postmoderns

Revisionists - Minister "as" Postmoderns
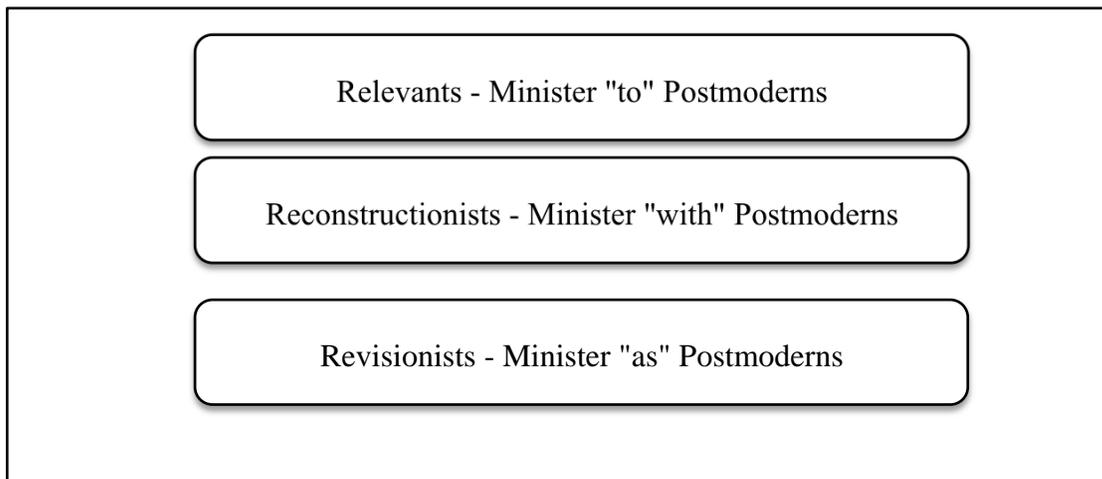
Figure 2. Three streams of the
spectrum within the emerging church

McLaren stated that he favored the Revisionist approach: "You'll notice I

didn't say we must be willing to abandon our central Christian doctrines . . . . Instead of

88

rejecting these doctrines, we need to rediscover, reenvision, and reformulate them in a post imperial, postcolonial, post-Christendom way" (McLaren 2012, 101). Bohannon stated that it was the impact of McLaren's fictional format, *A New Kind of Christian,* which vaulted the English professor turned pastor into the national conversation (Bohannon 2010, 47). He also characterized the difficulty pinpointing McLaren's revisionist perspective:

> Identifying McLaren's message (theology) may prove the most challenging among the selected emerging church preachers. The reason lies with his communication of choice – purposeful provocation and ambiguity. For McLaren, perspicuity is simply not the aim of proclamation, be it oral or writing . . . . Yet despite communicating with intentional fuzziness and uncertainty, McLaren no doubt holds theological convictions, albeit loosely, that can be extrapolated from his writings and sermons. (Bohannon 2010, 61).

This ambiguous perspective colored the approach of McLaren and distinguished him from Newbigin's more coherent and cogent arguments on the purpose of confronting Western culture with the gospel.

McLaren on Modernity

Provocative has been a term best detailing the posture of McLaren's writing style. Others have noted that McLaren's style was not clarity but provocative and ambiguous (Bohannon 2010, 61).

> A warning: as in most of my other books, there are places here where I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated, and that shock, obscurity, playfulness, and intrigue (carefully articulated) often stimulates more thought than clarity. (McLaren 2004, 27)

McLaren concurred with Lesslie Newbigin that the epistemological turn created by the Enlightenment mindset was encapsulated in the age of modernity. He confirmed that the Enlightenment "enthroned rationalism and exiled spirituality" in the vein of Lesslie

89

Newbigin (Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer 2003, 149). McLaren stated that

Newbigin's concept of proper confidence provided "an alternative to the excessive and

dangerous certainty of colonialism/rationalism/fundamentalism/absolutism on the one

hand and the excessive and identity-eroding uncertainty of relativism on the other"

(McLaren 2009, ctbi.org.uk). McLaren affirmed, "Objectivity has great value. But like

analysis, in the modern world it became a narcotic to us . . . . Like *Star Trek's* Spock, we

believed that cool, emotion-free objective logic would be our salvation (McLaren and

Campolo 200, 260).

   In his work, *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two friends on a Spiritual

Journey* McLaren's controlling thesis was that modernity with its emphasis on

empiricism and rationalism had so impacted Christian thought that it had shifted away

from the Bible to modern thinking. "Either Christianity itself is flawed, failing, untrue, or

our modern, Western, commercialized, industrial-strength version of it is in need of a

fresh look, a serious revision" (McLaren 2001, xv). Elsewhere, through the character of

Neo, McLaren stated: "all that we currently understand being a Christian to be has been

conditioned by our being modern. All of our theologies . . . are basically modern, having

been created in the modern world" (McLaren 2001, 21). McLaren used Neo to suggest

that modern Western Christians were oblivious to how enmeshed their version of faith

was with modernity. McLaren claimed that a preoccupation with rationalism had foisted

upon the church the mindset that we must have absolute, bombproof certainty in our

Christian beliefs.

> As we've seen, much of the strong/hostile/oppositional identity we find in the
> Christian faith today springs from the history of Western Roman-Imperial
> Christianity in the tradition of the Emperor Constantine . . . . What might happen if
> we were to run our contemporary versions of Christian faith through a debugging

program where we scanned for and removed all imperial viruses? Such a debugging process would no doubt be long, hard, complex, and highly contested. (McLaren 2012, 100)

Such a debugging in McLaren's thought tackled what was classified as the postmodern transition. McLaren viewed the Christian community, Scripture, Jesus, God, and history as locked in the comfortable captivity of "a real life version of the classic movie *The Truman Show*" (McLaren 2010, 31). Professor McLaren viewed contemporary Christians as "moderns, children of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment" (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 77). McLaren also claimed that the "modern Western straitjacket" had corseted contemporary thought, especially when it came to Scripture. McLaren posited what was needed was a "move from a western culture unified in the modern western mindset to a global culture with multiple perspectives sharing a more diverse postmodern mindset" (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 78).

> There is something after the modern world – a postmodern world. To speak this way, we have to stop thinking of modern as now, and we have to distance ourselves from the now we have grown up in and think of it as a then, a period of the past. This is where the prefix "post" is so helpful . . . to be postpubescent means to have passed through puberty, to have been changed by it, and by virtue of having experienced it, to be now different, to be postpubescent: no longer a child; now an adolescent. Similarly to be postmodern doesn't imply being anti-modern or nonmodern, and it is certainly different from being premodern (though it is similar in some ways). To be postmodern means to have experienced the modern world and to have been changed by the experience – changed to such a degree that one is no longer modern. (McLaren 2001, 22-23)

The emerging church, according to McLaren, saw "modernity with its absolutisms and colonialisms and totalitarianism as a kind of static dream" (McLaren 2004, 325). The result was "in Christian theology, this anti-emergent thinking is expressed in systematic theologies that claim (overtly, covertly, or unconsciously) to have final orthodoxy nailed down, freeze-dried, and shrink-wrapped forever" (McLaren

2004, 325). In this vein, McLaren in his inimitable style, attempted in the fashion of

Newbigin to chart a course between what he entailed as the perils that "run between

Scylla and Charybdis, between dangers to the left and right" (McLaren 2004, 325).

Brian McLaren, in his quest to navigate a middle way between fundamentalism

and liberalism, created stark contrasts and paradoxes that often confounded readers and

stymied critics from pinning down his thoughts. McLaren admitted that pluralistic

relativism was not the ultimate answer, but he also confessed that relativism was a

response to modernistic rationalism that was "a kind of needed chemotherapy . . .

something that saves a life by nearly killing it. It's dangerous medicine – but stagnancy,

getting stuck in the cocoon, is dangerous too" (McLaren 2004, 325). McLaren, as a

result, often claimed that declarations to objective truth were merely veiled assertions to

power.

McLaren and Scripture

McLaren has addressed his view of Scripture in both *Adventures in Missing the*

Point and *A New Kind of Christianity* as culture transitioned from modernity to a new

postmodern world (McLaren and Campolo 2003; McLaren 2010).

> The Bible is an inspired gift from God – a unique collection of literary artifacts that
> together support the telling of an amazing and essential story. The artifacts include
> poetry, letters, histories, and other genres that we don't have labels for. Even a
> familiar category like history needs to be used carefully, because we must avoid
> imposing modern biases and tastes on these ancient documents: they need to be
> taken and appreciated on their own terms. (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 75-76)

The modern biases, according to McLaren, impose a viewpoint that creates discontinuity

between the Bible and postmodern outlooks that emphasize global and varied

perspectives (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 78). McLaren stated that a Greek

philosophical mindset impacted the modern mind in three ways akin to Newbigin's

thoughts: habitual dualism, an inherent belief in the advantage and supremacy of the human mind, and the idea that Western culture was inherently superior (McLaren 2010, 39). McLaren, in a myriad of books, argued without the nuance of Newbigin that the age of modernity and Christendom was a negative experience that ended in the extinction of native peoples, the subordination of women, a holocaust, apartheid, and the dropping of nuclear bombs (McLaren 2010, 23). The consequence for McLaren was a negative evaluation of the age of Christendom that most often refused to mention any positive contributions (i.e. scientific breakthrough and moral uplift) that the context provided.

This context, McLaren argued, has led modern Christians to pay four compliments to Scripture "which have damaged as well as enhanced the Bible's reputation" (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 76). First, the Bible was lifted unto a pedestal alongside other valued items like encyclopedias, blueprints, constitutions, and rulebooks that created a "false expectation and hope that the Bible is the end all how-to-manual for life" (Bohannon 2010, 62). McLaren suggests, "we read and use the Bible as a legal constitution" (McLaren 2010, 79). This led to modern Christians reflecting the spirit of our age and adopting an inordinate preoccupation with reductionist analysis:

> Similarly, when theological conservatives tried to understand the Bible, we generally analyze it. We break it down into chapter, paragraphs, verses, clauses, phrases, words, prefixes, roots, suffixes, jots, and tittles . . . . Now we have conquered the text, captured the meaning, removed all mystery, stuffed it and preserved it for posterity, like a taxidermist with a deer head. (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 79)

McLaren instead believes the Bible is best viewed in a Neoorthodox fashion as an inspired library that "preserves, presents, and inspires an ongoing vigorous conversation with and about God, a living and vital civil argument into which we are all invited and through which God is revealed" (McLaren 2010, 83). McLaren believes God revealed

himself not "under the text, as conservatives tend to do, or lift us over the text, as liberals often seem to do. Instead I hope (my approach) will try to put us in the text" through which God reveals Himself (McLaren 2010, 96). God's revelation happened as we enter the text. Ultimately, "the real authority lies in God, who is there behind the text or beyond the text or above it . . . the authority is not in what I say the text says but in what God says the text says" (McLaren 2001, 50).

Second, McLaren believed contemporary Christians offered an oversimplified sales pitch of Scripture as a commodity like other modern products. "It's easy! It's fast! It's convenient!-and in so doing, we unintentionally sanctioned misunderstanding and bastard readings" (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 78). McLaren posited that pitching Scripture in such a fashion with exaggerated claims "may make a fast sale, but customers are soon dissatisfied, and eventually buyer's remorse sets in, along with a lasting distrust of the salesperson who overpromised and underdelivered" (McLaren 2007b, 65). Third, the Bible was presented as a repository of sacred propositions and abstractions. The outcome of such an exercise was leaving Scripture devoid of intrigue and mystery leaving behind sterile doctrines, that were seen as "interesting as grass clippings" to postmoderns instead of a more narrative approach akin to Newbigin (Bohannon 2010, 63; McLaren and Campolo 2003, 77).

Finally, McLaren has suggested the mass production of Scripture through technological advances led to a tainting of the Bible as "cheap and common" and led away from the appraisal of Scripture as sacred text. The consequence was a need to debug Scripture from modern viruses.

> The Bible had to be expunged of all these primitive – that is – non-modern
> elements, sanitized to fit the restricted and bland tastes of modernity. The Bible was

94

put through the colander of Enlightenment modernity, and only what fit through the very small holes could be accepted: no pulp, no substance, just the filtered version of the Bible remained. (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 78)

As a result only a few Christians, according to McLaren, because of a hermeneutical fixation with analysis ever really encounter the Word. Even a coauthor, Tony Campolo, challenged McLaren's position at this point suggesting, "I think he tends to minimize the importance of the objective truths of the Scriptures. Unlike Brian, I believe that objective, propositional, ultimate truth is of absolute importance" (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 270). McLaren suggested the only means to clarify such a stance was to welcome a transfer of authority from the text to that of the audience.

McLaren and Epistemology

This transfer of authority from the text to the audience has been part and parcel of McLaren's thoughts about epistemology. McLaren stated that the best thinker on the relationship between faith and knowledge "to date is Lesslie Newbigin. See his *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* or *The Open Secret*" (McLaren 2007b, 70).

> We are increasingly aware of the ways our presuppositions and subjectivity color our perception, interpretation, understanding, and communication of "the truth"— and as a result, we aren't at all sure if what we have at the end of the day is even worth calling "truth." In my opinion, the problem we face is less with the word "truth" than it is with the word "knowledge." Few if any of us doubt there really is something "out there" called truth, even though many of us are suspicious of humans' ability to perceive, interpret, understand, and communicate what's out there with a degree of certainty worthy of the word "knowledge." (McLaren 2000a, 53)

McLaren adopted the view of Lesslie Newbigin, who borrowed the concept from scientist Michael Polanyi, when he advocated personal knowledge that embraced the idea that all knowing involved a personal commitment. McLaren reported after reading Polanyi's work "feeling a chill as I read the words practical wisdom is more truly embodied in action than expressed in rules in action" (McLaren 2008, 125).

95

McLaren also used the linguistic formula set forth by Lesslie Newbigin of tacit knowledge comparing the "deepest level of human knowledge" with the robin's instinctive knowledge of how to build a nest (McLaren 2004, 96). McLaren continued, "This is the kind of inwardly formed learning that Jesus, as master, teaches his apprentices; a knowledge about how to live that can't be reduced to information, words, rules, books, or instructions" (McLaren 2004, 96). McLaren adopted Polanyi's idea of tacit knowledge in that "orthodoxy . . . is seen as a kind of internalized belief, tacit and personal, that becomes part of you to such a degree that once assimilated, you hardly need to think of it. We enter it, indwell it, live and love through it" (McLaren 2004, 38). This tacit personal knowledge "couldn't be memorized from a book or gained from a lecture. It required the kind of knowledge an apprentice gained working elbow to elbow with the master" (McLaren 2008, 124). McLaren believed that the church had experienced a "hardening of the categories" lapsing into a predictable mania for "boundary maintenance and propositions and mandates codified in books and lectures at the expense of practical wisdom embodied in elbow discipleship" (McLaren 2008, 125). According to McLaren, this preoccupation with propositional thought interferes with the necessity of knowledge embedded in a fiduciary framework.

McLaren's adoption of a fiduciary framework, in the vein of Newbigin, evoked the writings of Albert Einstein suggesting "the mechanics of discovery are neither logical nor intellectual. It's a sudden illumination, almost a rapture . . . initially there is a great leap of the imagination" (McLaren 2007c, 67). McLaren believed that knowledge and belief could be partners much like what happened in the creative process of science.

McLaren quoted Newbigin in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society,* "There is no knowing

without believing, and believing is the way to knowing" (McLaren 2007c, 66).

> What then is the relationship between faith and knowledge? What if faith, instead of being a step back from the limits of ability to know and understand, could actually be a flight beyond the rim? What if the word "knowledge," used to denote certainty gained by rationalistic and empirical means, is actually only appropriate for mundane facts, pedestrian inquiries, common commodities? What if there is another category of reality in the universe, no less real just because it doesn't shrink itself to our instruments and portals of "knowledge"? (McLaren 2007c, 67)

McLaren states that faith is the only vehicle Christians have. "We can only aspire to

relative certainty, which involves relative uncertainty . . . which leaves room for – no,

more, which actually requires – faith" (McLaren 2007c, 67).

McLaren indicated that Christians are unable to achieve an objective vantage

point, in that the viewpoints of believers are limited, contingent, changing, and not

privileged (McLaren 2002, 76). McLaren suggested that in postmodern thought believers

are unable to achieve a neutral point from which they know truth because no one escapes

background, perspectives, and historically situated conditioned experiences (Smith 2005,

118). This postmodern viewpoint contradicted Newbigin's assertion of the gospel as

public truth that "we must affirm the gospel as truth, universal truth, truth for all people

and for all times" (Newbigin 1989b, 10). According to Newbigin, the historical events of

God's action in Jesus Christ, was a proper public truth (or metanarrative) both universally

significant and historically particular in the sign of the cross. Newbigin hoped that this

declaration of the gospel as public truth would be so compelling that it represented the

culture's dominant plausibility structure. McLaren often targeted such a view as an

exclusive and arrogant reduction of the gospel to a rigid epistemology. Such a need, for

objective certitude in interpreting Scripture, according to McLaren, was a betrayal of the

gospel. What was needed, according to McLaren, was a more inclusive and realistic faith that refused to confine individuals to a closed system in a closed world.

A Multi-Faith World

Brian McLaren has used his provocative and ambiguous style in order to reposition and reframe the gospel away from what he called a truncated view of "getting individual butts into heaven" instead embracing the gospel as more holistic (McLaren 2001, 83). Bohannon fixed McLaren's thought as stating that "the good news, rather than being fixated into an air tight formula – abstract principles, universal concepts, and/or disembodied absolutes should be reincarnated back to its original context, the kingdom of God" (Bohannon 2010, 680). This idea of the reframing the gospel as correlated to the kingdom of God was central in McLaren's ministry manifesto that included a soteriological vision for this kingdom that embraced fruitful and inclusive living in the here and now (McLaren and Campolo 2003, 25). This multifaceted, multilayered, narrative approach to the kingdom and gospel anticipated a central thought for McLaren as it did for Lesslie Newbigin: the identification of what it meant to be Christian in a multi-faith world (McLaren 2012, 13).

This search for Christian identity in a multi-faith world led McLaren to adopt what he called a "conflicted religious identity syndrome" (McLaren 2012, 15). McLaren states that "Newbigin's approach to interfaith dialogue has been catalytic for many of us in that important endeavor" (McLaren 2009, ctbi.org.uk). This syndrome occurred, because in the manner of Newbigin, McLaren acknowledged the fact of pluralism and the necessity of religious dialogue. In a similar vein to Newbigin's assertion of the necessity of risk in dialogue, McLaren restated his belief that "in its encounter with other faiths . . .

the word that best characterizes the Christian witness is vulnerability" (McLaren 2004, 279). Newbigin acknowledged such a view when he stated that as we participate in interfaith dialogue that we are vulnerable to other viewpoints as they become a frame of reference (Newbigin 1995b, 184). McLaren reiterated that different religions are here to stay, and Christians needed to "accept the coexistence of different faiths in our world willingly, not begrudgingly" (McLaren 2004, 289).

> Different religions are here to stay. Having acknowledged and accepted the coexistence of other faiths, Christians should actually talk with people of other faiths, engaging in gentle and respectful dialogue . . . . We must assume that God is an unseen partner in our dialogues who has something to teach all participants, including us . . . . We must learn humility in order to engage in religious dialogue. (McLaren 2004, 290-91)

According to both Newbigin and McLaren this interfaith dialogue must be rooted in the Christian doctrine of election. By the term "election" Newbigin referred to God's choice of Israel to be God's particular people and to God's choice of the incipient church to be witnesses to the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. McLaren said that this analysis by Lesslie Newbigin that "to be chosen by God is to be chosen on behalf of others, to be blessed so can one bring blessing to them. That simple insight struck me as revolutionary when I first got it" (McLaren 2009, ctbi.org.uk). McLaren claimed that that the insight on election was a revelation of importance as Newbigin believed that "the most stubborn heresy in the history of monotheism is the belief that God chooses people for exclusive privilege not missional responsibility" (McLaren 2004, 218).

This missional motif allowed an interaction with a plurality of religions. Brian McLaren adopted a stance similar to Newbigin that he entitled "empirical pluralism" (fact of plurality) and "philosophical pluralism" (ideological pluralism) (Carson 2005, 31).

Empirical pluralism was defined as simply the fact that the world was a diverse society with many expressions of religious faith. Philosophical pluralism stated that no religion had the right to pronounce itself right or true and the other competing faiths false, or even relatively inferior. In later works, McLaren decided that any truth claim that asserted absolute truth was totalitarianism that needed to be abandoned (McLaren 2012). McLaren's stated a preference for deeper conversations instead of what he termed superiority or hostility toward other faiths in the context of evangelism and missions. This tied into the emerging church idea that belonging precedes belief. Rather than placing doctrine as the guardian of the gate of community the emerging church emphasizes involvement in community (Conder 2006, 148). This preference for conversation was a constant refrain of emerging churches that embraced Revisionist developments in the realm of religious pluralism's role in the kingdom of God.

McLaren and the Kingdom of God

McLaren has acknowledged the influence of Lesslie Newbigin on his development in the arena of religious pluralism, and he also has connected his understanding of Newbigin's work to his concept of the kingdom of God. McLaren believed the heart of the message of Jesus on the kingdom of God had been lost to the church and needed to be recovered. The answer to privatized faith was regaining a robust view of the kingdom of God and a recovery of the public realm (McLaren 2004, 49). McLaren's overrealized eschatology deemphasized the theology of the cross and overemphasized what Martin Luther called a theology of glory. The theology of the cross posited the actions of Jesus on the cross as the only source of knowledge of God's character and salvific actions. A theology of glory, by contrast, placed much greater

emphasis on human action in the kingdom of God (Lull 2005, 50). Some observed a

nuanced version of this in Newbigin's writings in his constant assertions of the corporate

dimensions of salvation (Thomas 2011, 316). McLaren developed another dimension of

this concept, the gospel as the kingdom, in a heightened fashion. According to McLaren,

the gospel of the kingdom was not principally a note about salvation from God's wrath

and future blessedness with Christ. McLaren's emphases overwhelmingly have

concentrated on the kingdom as present, to the relative neglect of the kingdom as

eschatological.

> The kingdom of God doesn't need to wait until something else happens. No, it is
> available and among you now . . . . Invite people of all nations, races, classes, and
> religions to participate in this network of dynamic, interactive relationships with
> God and all God's creation! (McLaren 2006a, 64)

McLaren's accent was overwhelmingly on the social and political scope of the kingdom

to the relative neglect of its individual and spiritual dimensions. McLaren referred to this

as a third way called "purposeful inclusion" that the kingdom of God "seeks to include all

who want to participate in and contribute to its purpose" (McLaren 2006a, 167).

This purposeful inclusion in the kingdom of God has significant implications

for the development of interfaith dialogue.

> Jesus came to announce a new kingdom, a new way of life, a new way of peace that
> carried good news to all people of every religion. A new kingdom is much bigger
> than a new religion, and in fact has room for many religious traditions within it.
> This good news wasn't simply about a new way to solve the religious problems of
> ontological fall and original sin . . . . It wasn't simply information about how
> individual souls could leave earth, avoid hell, and ascend to heaven after death. No
> it was about God's will being done on earth as in heaven for all people (McLaren
> 2010, 138).

McLaren argues that this kingdom narrative would transform evangelism away from an

imperialistic mindset of individual salvation and the proclamation of the inherent

superiority of the Christian religion. Additionally, kingdom living would "no longer

require hell-fire and brimstone scare tactics or slick promotional campaigns, as if Jesus and the gospels were products under exclusive proprietary licensure to the Christian religion" (McLaren 2010, 216). Instead the good news of the kingdom of God would be the same good news of the kingdom of God that McLaren believed Jesus proclaimed. Primarily, according to McLaren, this included saving the world from human evil, both personal and systemic.

The implication for McLaren in this muted emphasis on the eschaton has been an inclusivist perspective on other religions. McLaren's perspective stated that such a thought called people everywhere to be reconciled in the kingdom of God. This reconciliation was universal because it called for such a status regardless of class, ethnicity, culture, or religion. In fact, McLaren implied this universal offer with instant availability was obtainable in God's framing story and seemed to separate the kingdom of God from its fulfillment in the historical work of God in Jesus Christ offered in the gospel (McLaren 2007a, 98). This eschatological jump qualified many secular activities as both ethical and evangelistic in the form of bringing God's justice into the world.

Often, McLaren's viewpoint have separated the eschatological tension between the already and not yet and dampened the enthusiasm for engaging others for transformation that God was bringing through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather than a solution of the sin problem Jesus planned to "become the Savior of the world, meaning he came to save the world and all it contains from its ongoing destruction because of human evil" (McLaren 2007a, 79). The outcome was a call to mutual obligation by religions to inhabit the kingdom by cooperating to solve global concerns such as poverty, environmental destruction, and increasing violence. The consequence in McLaren's

102

works is an inclusive perspective that negates the call to what Newbigin called radical

conversion. Instead the dream of the kingdom inhabits what McLaren entitled a

scandalously inclusive perspective that includes not only Christians, but also Jews,

Hindus, Muslims and any other people who have a relationship with God or follow the

ethics of the Sermon on the Mount (McLaren 2006a, 191-93). Conversion really was not

necessary.

> Then I must add, though, that I don't believe making disciples must equal making adherence to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts. This will be hard, you say, and I agree. But frankly, it's not at all easy to be a follower of Jesus in many "Christian" religious context, either. (McLaren 2004, 260)

At this point, McLaren sharply diverges from Newbigin and committed evangelicals that

believe it is possible to extend benevolence, recognize clear differences, and that also

attempt to persuade others that Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life.

Newbigin and the Kingdom of God

The variance from McLaren in this domain was more in Newbigin's viewpoint

that the secular announcement of the gospel was "the publication of the divine plan to

sum up all things in Christ" (Newbigin 2003, 24). Newbigin's view of the kingdom

included a decided emphasis on the eschatological day of the Lord stating that "belief in

eschatology without belief in a literal eschaton is like belief in religion without belief in

God" (Newbigin 2003, 34). Much like Brian McLaren, Lesslie Newbigin asserted the

need for interreligious dialogue and both refused to speculate about the ultimate status of

non-Christians, a question that Newbigin asserted only God could answer (Newbigin

1989b, 176). They diverged as Newbigin poked holes in the edifice of ideological

pluralism stating, "the opinion that doubt is more intellectually respectable than belief is

merely one of the prejudices of our culture; it rests upon a confusion of thought" (Newbigin 2003, 64). This countered both McLaren's ambiguity in his writing style and his assertion that evangelism by Christians was arrogant and imperialistic.

According to Newbigin, true dialogue was made promising not by weak affirmations that papered over fundamental differences, but by the participants' efforts to convince others of the truth as they perceived it. This persuasion naturally led Newbigin to the call to radical conversion, a summons that cannot be immobilized by the multiplicity of human cultures. On the contrary, culturally conditioned presentations of the gospel were inevitable (Newbigin 2003, 89-90). What was not acceptable was separation of the kingdom of God from the particular and historical circumstances of the gospel identified in Jesus Christ. The very charge that Newbigin formed against liberal Christians in the 1920's was what McLaren succumbed to in the 2000s - separating the kingdom of God from the name of Jesus (Newbigin 1980, 32).

> That era, says Newbigin was so eager to talk about the coming of the kingdom but very reluctant to speak of the second coming of Jesus. It was eager to pray 'Thy Kingdom come' but was reluctant to pray 'Come, Lord Jesus.' The problem of this separation was the name of Jesus was seen as sectarian and divisive, but the notion of the kingdom was seen as all-inclusive. Separating Jesus from the concept of the kingdom of God has created an ideology with a vision of the worldwide spread of what was called modern civilization. The centerpiece should be the personal discipleship of Jesus and the total fact of Jesus – his life, ministry, death and resurrection. (Thomas 2011, 70)

The variance with McLaren concluded with the necessity of a final and decisive claim that was made in Christ. Jesus Christ, in Newbigin's thought, was the final and unique revelation of God (Newbigin 1969, 48). The gospel was a secular announcement of an event that was decisive for all in the whole of their lives. The gospel was an event that was "not a religious message which brings to completion and perfection the religious teachings of all the ages" (Newbigin 1969, 49). The gospel was not a

private message; instead the gospel was a message about the goal of cosmic history that was summed up in Jesus Christ. The necessity of the confrontation of any individual with the mighty work of the cross where the kingdom of God was both hidden and revealed was a total mental revolution: to turn around and believe the gospel. This, according to Newbigin, necessitated faithfulness in word and deed at whatever cost in bearing witness in the Holy Spirit to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

> 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 . . . . He insisted that the missionary task of the church to make known the gospel where it is not known must remain an indispensable task 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. (Goheen 2004, 90)

This missiological impulse was central to all of Newbigin's works.

Dissecting Truth and Mission

Newbigin and McLaren shared common missiological, ecclesiological, epistemological, and spiritual perspectives that were enhanced by McLaren's scrutiny of Newbigin's work as an early adopter in the emerging church. Although the thought of *missio Dei* was not addressed in this chapter both regarded this Trinitarian and communal aspect of mission as essential in the life of the church. They both advocated a view of election not as privilege but responsibility as bearing the witness of the Spirit for the sake of the world. Both suggested that the content and invitation of the gospel was most fully enhanced by the establishment of authentic Christian communities indwelling and living the life of Jesus as the hermeneutic of the gospel. Jesus left a community not a text was a common catchphrase for both. This hermeneutic, according to Newbigin and McLaren,

should be expressed in all dimensions of life intersecting with culture through holistic

intentions that impacted the community through various avenues. This encounter would

be enhanced by a humble and generous orthodoxy in the presence of other religions.

Both believe the narrative approach to God's story enhances their witness to a waiting

world.

Coalescence of Thought

Newbigin and McLaren have shared a common bond that did not demand a

restrictive posture concerning salvation for those who have never heard the Gospel or

those in other religions. They both saw inerrancy as the residue of commitment to an

Enlightenment mindset and posited that the existence of fundamentalists and liberals was

a reaction to both the objective and subjective sides of the poles of knowledge. Liberals

lived on the subjective side of personal experience. Fundamentalists, according to both,

tended to embrace the objective side by declaring Scripture as inerrant which enabled

them to declare it as authoritative. Proper confidence for Newbigin and McLaren was not

the assertion of demonstrable and indubitable knowledge. Instead it was the confidence

of one who had heard and answered the call that emerged from God in a fiduciary

framework.

> [Christ's disciples] witness has come to us in varied forms; we know about very few
> of the words and deeds of Jesus with the kind of certainty Descartes identified with
> reliable knowledge. To wish that it were otherwise is to depart from the manner in
> which God has chosen to make himself known. The doctrine of verbal inerrancy is a
> direct denial of the way in which God has chosen to make himself known to us as
> the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Newbigin 1995c, 89)

Both McLaren and Newbigin seemed to mistakenly define inerrancy of Scripture with

absolute certitude in understanding God's Word. Inerrancy did not rely on man's

judgment but biblical testimony rooted in God's character (DeYoung and Kluck 2008,

106

76). Although Newbigin and McLaren have dovetailed on many issues there are arenas where large gaps existed in the philosophical, ecclesiological, missiological, and especially theological concerns of both authors.

Divergence of Thought

The largest deviance between McLaren and Newbigin has occurred in the schema addressing the proclamation of the gospel as public truth in a postmodern context where absolute truth assertions have been met with profound skepticism. McLaren believed that the modern form of Christian faith was no longer plausible in a postmodern society. The need for absolutism and certainty had scarred an encounter with the gospel and Jesus. McLaren, along with other Revisionist emergents, argued that human perceptions of truth inevitably differed from truth, as it actually existed. McLaren stated that reality as seen by culturally bound humans was limited and Scripture affirmed that believers only know in part. He even advocated pluralistic relativism as a temporary chemotherapy for the absolutist and exclusivist models of modern Christianity. It's at this point that McLaren, in requiring all beliefs to be indubitable and certain, parted company with Lesslie Newbigin. Along with other emerging church practitioners such as Tony Jones who claimed that no one objectively approached a text, McLaren posited that " all is contextual . . . that no meanings can exist without context" (Jones 2001, 74; McLaren 2001, 106). Newbigin never asserted that believers are somehow trapped behind the text and cannot ever have cognitive contact with objective reality (Smith 2005, 137).

McLaren's stated desire was for a new kind of Christianity and a whole new way of Jesus. Increasingly McLaren's embrace of the kingdom of God as separate from

the historical particularity of the gospel of Jesus Christ led to a reluctance to trade in the coinage of truth or metanarratives. McLaren countered with a statement of his innate desire to dialogue with postmoderns in the complexities of the linguistic games of our culture. This viewpoint also impacted his view of pluralism in a global society as McLaren progressively abandoned strict concepts of the gospel as public witness. This divergence from Newbigin suggested that Christians needed to "critically revisit" even central doctrines and "rediscover, reenvision them in a postimperial, postcolonial, post-Christendom way" (McLaren 2012, 101).

In opposition to McLaren, Newbigin's central contention was that confidence in the gospel as public truth was available by switching to a certainty derived from the work of Jesus in history as confirmed in God's revelation. Rather than retreating to private enclaves or embracing ambiguity in a chastened epistemology, Newbigin affirmed a full-throated defense of the certainty of the gospel that affirmed and declared that the events of the gospel were valid and valuable in framing public life. The fact value split of the Enlightenment was not allowed to govern the place or proclamation of the church in Western culture. Newbigin believed that the assertion of the gospel as a metanarrative within the totally pluralized culture of Western society was legitimate epistemologically and valuable as a countercultural proposition to competing power claims.

Truth, proclaimed as personal knowledge, was not subjective but tacit and plausible as a forming structure for society. The gospel authentically testified both to and as truth. The church needed to constantly proclaim the gospel and engage the culture so that they might be seen as both an alternate and eventually dominant plausibility

structure. This belief of the necessity of the church to radically convert was not a return to imperialistic dogmatic pronouncements but the formation of an alternative group of resident aliens. Newbigin continually asserted that the gospel could be emphasized as public truth within the pluralized context of modernity because the gospel was personal knowledge that appealed to the fact of Jesus Christ who challenged "all the powers, ideologies, myths, assumptions and worldviews which do not acknowledge him as Lord" (Newbigin 1989b, 221).

The final major difference has been seen in the trajectory of influence in the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin and Brian McLaren. Newbigin testified that his evolution in his Christian life was from a committed liberal to an ecumenical evangelical. McLaren's trajectory has been viewed in a counter direction from a moderate evangelical to evolving views that some critics claimed abandoned the gospel. The scope of their impact also trekked in divergent directions. The passing years saw the increase of Newbigin's sway in a myriad of religious settings while Brian McLaren's influence declined to increasingly fewer religious venues. The emerging church paradigm lost momentum and much of its public presence. Many have abandoned the term "emerging church" because of negative connotations connected to Revisionist emerging church practitioners such as McLaren, and they adopted new monikers such as "missional" or "contextual" and "confessional" Christianity. In fact, the missional movement, in many ways more faithfully inhabited the thoughts and practices of the whole scope and nuances of the missiological ideas and imperatives articulated by Lesslie Newbigin.

CHAPTER 3

NEWBIGIN'S VIEW ON THE COMMUNAL DIMENSION
OF MISSION AS A HERMENEUTIC OF THE GOSPEL

The focus of this chapter is to explore Newbigin's contention that a communal

dimension of mission is needed to form a hermeneutic circle operating within a believing

community that leads to a reciprocal relationship between the gospel and the church

(Newbigin 1986, 55-56; Hunsberger 1998, 256-57). This relationship creates a dynamic

in which the Scriptures are an authority within a local community that is committed to

active discipleship. Tony Jones has suggested that the belief of Emergents is that the

"awareness of our relative position to God, to one another, and to history breeds biblical

humility, not relativistic apathy" (Jones 2008, 115). The impetus for many of these

thoughts by the emerging church innovators and early adopters has been attributed to

Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin stated, "The only hermeneutic of the gospel is a

congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it" (Newbigin 1989b, 227).

There is also correlation between Newbigin's thoughts on the reciprocal

relationship between the gospel and the culture with emerging church leaders although

most have neglected his affirmation on the primacy of Scripture. Doug Pagitt has stated

that the "sermon is an act of poetry – of putting words around people's experiences to

allow them to find deeper connections in their lives" (Pagitt 2005, 166). This affirmation

of contextualization also adds similar pronouncements about the need for theological

revision:

It has been fashionable among the innovative (emerging) pastors I know to say, "We're not changing the message; we're only changing the medium." The claim is probably less than honest . . . in the new church we must realize how medium and message are intertwined. When we change the medium, the message that's received is changed, however subtly, as well. We might as well get beyond our naïveté or denial about this. (McLaren 1998, 67)

The reciprocal relationship between the gospel and the community of faith, in Newbigin's thought, saw the Bible as authority only in churches that were obedient to His call. Tony Jones suggested, in contrast, that "emergents believe that theology is local, conversational, and temporary" (Jones 2008, 111).

Focus Statement Synopsis

This research explores the emphases on the communal dimensions of mission and the reciprocal relationship between the church and the gospel in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and examines the effect, if any, on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

The Communal Nature of Mission

At the heart of Newbigin's contention about the church was that Jesus formed a community and gave them these parting words: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). Newbigin believed that "the Bible comes into our hands as the book of a community, and neither the book nor the community are properly understood except in their reciprocal relationship with each other" (Newbigin 1986, 55). This context suggested Scriptural authority was not only founded in God's self-revelation, but also the community was continuously shaped by the attention it gave to the Bible. Newbigin believed Scripture was only authoritative "within a community that is committed to faith and obedience and is embodying that commitment to active

111

discipleship that embraces the whole of life, public and private" (Newbigin 1986, 58).

He called this relationship "the hermeneutical circle operating within the believing

community" (Newbigin 1986, 56). The church was defined as a "community which

remembers, rehearses, and lives by the story which the Bible tells" (Newbigin 1989b,

147). Scripture functioned dynamically as it interacted with the community. The Bible

always had primacy.

Newbigin grounded authority in the gospel of Jesus Christ, a public news

announcement for all people that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ revealed and

accomplished salvation. Newbigin contended for Jesus Christ as absolute truth by which

"all so-called knowledge must be tested" (Newbigin 1994d, 72). God's truth in Jesus

Christ was to be "appropriated and propagated not in timeless systems of thought but in a

story conveyed by the church" (Feddes 2012, 202).

> Jesus did not write a book. He chose, called and prepared a company of people, he
> entrusted them to his teaching, and he promised them the gift of the Spirit of God to
> guide them in the matters which were beyond their present horizons. (Newbigin
> 1994c, 70)

Newbigin constantly affirmed that Jesus wanted to create a community that would

communicate the gospel faithfully and continue His life in the world. Newbigin thought

that Jesus entrusted his teaching to the church "in an oral culture that did not rely on the

written word but knew how to tenaciously treasure, preserve, and hand on the teaching of

Jesus" (Goheen 2000, 124). Newbigin believed that in the missionary encounter between

the gospel and the culture, "the first party will be represented by a community for which

the Bible is the determinant clue to the character and activity of the one whose purpose is

the meaning of history" (Newbigin 1986, 62). The community that named Jesus as

supreme was a missionary movement launched to "act out the whole life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all" (Newbigin 1995b, 17).

This missionary encounter would result in incarnational praxis as Newbigin asserted, "it is less important to ask a Christian what he or she believes about the Bible than it is to inquire what he or she does with it" (Newbigin 1995c, 87). Even his beliefs, ideas, and concepts were formed and tested "by the practical requirements of a preacher, pastor, and bishop" (Thomas 1996, 24). Newbigin emphasized that such orthopraxy occurred in the life of the local church as people were shaped by continual interaction with Scripture. The challenge in Scripture moved the community called the church into the world as the Bible was lived out.

> As part of this community that shares in this struggle, we open ourselves continually to Scripture, always in company with our fellow disciples of this and former ages and in the context of the struggle for obedience; and we constantly find in it fresh insights into the character and purpose of the one who is "rendered" for us in its pages. (Newbigin 1986, 60)

Praxis demonstrated by incorporation into the community of faith with relational components was a key aspect of Newbigin's thought. This challenge would be demonstrated in three fashions: developing the church as the hermeneutic of the gospel, a radical conversion of the community, and an articulation of the principalities and powers of the reigning plausibility structure.

Hermeneutic of the Gospel

This decisive interaction among disciples, the community of faith, the culture, and the gospel created an environment for the creation of a dynamic premise in Newbigin's thoughts. Newbigin contended that the Greco-Roman world in which the New Testament was written offered a myriad of societies for those who wanted to join a

private religious cult that offered personal salvation by way of knowledge, self-discipline, or religious practices. The church, according to Bishop Newbigin, never adopted any name for itself that somehow depicted the church as a private enclave. From the inception of the church it was a movement "claiming the allegiance of all peoples, and it used with almost total consistency the name *ecclesia* – the assembly of all citizens called to deal with the public affairs of the city" (Newbigin 1995b, 16). In the New Testament *ecclesia* was accompanied by the phrase "*tou Theou*" or this idea was assumed. The significance of this modifier was this public gathering was called by God. The Triune God was acting in Ephesus, Rome, Corinth, and throughout the world calling the church as "the assembly of God, God drawing people by the power of the Spirit into the allegiance of Christ" (Newbigin 1984b, 7). This assembly demonstrated that not even the imperial claim of Caesar overrode the "public, universal claim that was bound eventually to clash with the *cultus publicus* of the empire" (Newbigin 1995b, 17).

This cultural clash needed to return, in Newbigin's thought, for the church to make an impact as a believing community. Lesslie Newbigin, from 1980 until 1988, served as a part-time pastor of a small congregation of twenty members that was slated for closing in Birmingham. Pastor Newbigin's worry was that the abandonment of the urban context for the easier circumstances of the suburbs forfeited any claim to be a missionary church (Newbigin 1993d, 248). Newbigin's fundamental hope, as a pastor and a missionary, was to create an authentic, believing congregation (Stafford 1996, 31). Thus this drumbeat of confession in community sounded in all his work.

> How can this strange story of God made man, of a crucified savior, of resurrection and new creation become credible for those whose entire mental training has conditioned them to believe that the real world is the world that can be satisfactorily explained and managed without the hypothesis of God? I know of only one clue to

the answering of that question, only one real hermeneutic of the gospel: congregations that believe it. (Newbigin 1994d, 42)

This community constituted an alternative plausibility structure based on the belief that the clue to history's meaning and humanity's future was revealed in the gospel. Newbigin believed the credibility of the gospel was centered in a "company of people who live in the biblical story so that they know it as their own story and as the clue to the whole human story" (Newbigin 1994d, 146). The church was not understood in terms of its place in a certain society, but the church was defined by its relation with its creator and sustainer, a Triune God. The whole thrust of biblical history, as related by Newbigin, was the story of the calling of the people of God to be a visible community that demonstrated both God's plan of salvation and God's desire to bear light to the nations (Newbigin 1954, 27).

Throughout the last three decades of his life, Newbigin frequently used a working definition of the church as "the provisional incorporation of mankind into Jesus Christ" (Newbigin 1973b, 110). This definition encompassed a historical reality of the risen Lord Jesus who founded the kingdom of God. Incorporation into Christ, according to Newbigin, entailed participation in the kingdom as humanity was related to the historical Jesus. This eschatological focus refused to prevent the church from its present ministry, as the living Lord was at work in their midst (Goheen 2000, 171). The church was provisional in two senses: "in the sense that not all humankind is so incorporated, and in the sense that those who are incorporated are not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ" (1994d, 53). The focus of the church, according to Newbigin, was forward in two ways: the full formation of Jesus Christ in all its members and to the incorporation of all believing humanity.

115

It enjoys communion with the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit – the blessing that will be fully known at the end. However, this enjoyment of the powers of the age to come must be understood in terms of the church's task to continue the sending of Jesus into the world. As he is made known through the kingdom in his life, deeds, and words under the sign of the cross, so the church must continue that mission. This can only happen as the church abides in Christ as branches abide in the vine. Only in communion with Christ can the life of Jesus become evident in the life of the church. This definition highlights the close tie between the eschatological and the missionary nature of the church. As the church is incorporated into the reign of God in Jesus, it is constituted as a community called to continue that same kingdom mission. (Goheen 2000, 172)

This eschatological and missiological dimension led Newbigin to the necessity of the church as the hermeneutic of the gospel.

Radical Conversion

Newbigin often used a vivid illustration that demonstrated that a believing community inhabited the new and different world that the Father intended (Newbigin 1973a, 39-40). Alice, of *Through the Looking-Glass* fame, was found gazing at the mirror that restricted her world from the one on the other side. Newbigin suggested that the resurrection of Jesus was rather like that mirror. The resurrection cannot be explained by experiences in the world Christians currently inhabited. Instead, the resurrection was to be understood by the possibilities it opened up of new experiences and powers ultimately in a new world. The resurrection was the boundary line between two worlds: in one death reigned supreme, in the other, a new humanity, a new heaven, and a new earth were waiting at the end (Newbigin 1973a, 41). The only way through the mirror, in Newbigin's thought, was at the cost of your life. In a very real way you arrived at the end of your life and started again. You died and were born again.

Newbigin thought that this imagery helped depict the paradigm inhabited by the community of faith (Newbigin 1986, 62). The community of faith underwent what

Newbigin described as a call to radical conversion. The problem for most Christians was that they had been brought up bilingual, as they dwelled in the two worlds of facts and values. Newbigin stated that Western culture trained Christians in a "language which claims to make sense of the world without the hypothesis of God" (Newbigin 1991b, 49).

> It follows that the missionary encounter of the gospel with the modern world will, like ever true missionary encounter, call for radical conversion. This will be not only a conversion of the will and of the feelings but a conversion of the mind – a 'paradigm shift' that leads to a new vision of how things are and, not at once but gradually, to the development of a new plausibility structure in which the most real of all realities is the living God whose character is "rendered" for us in the pages of Scripture. (Newbigin 1986, 64)

The community of faith, Newbigin postulated, represented a viewpoint for which the Bible was the ultimate clue to the character and activity of God whose purpose was the final meaning of history (Newbigin 1986, 62). Those who belonged to this community because of radical conversion, which can occur in a myriad of ways, inhabited a different plausibility structure than their contemporaries for which the Bible was not authoritative. In other words, things that were mythical nonsense for others were God's power activated in real history. A visible community, in contrast to the reigning plausibility structure inhabited by the scientific worldview that left out of the picture the matter of purpose, was an essential feature in the ecclesiology of Newbigin (Hunsberger 1998, 158). An assessment of culture, Newbigin believed, was done within the context of a faith community.

The relationship of the Christian community to the society at large was characterized in Newbigin's thought by the Greek word *metanoia*, which was a turning around, changing one's mind, and breaking with aspects of culture that were not Christian (Newbigin 1986, 58). This radical conversion entailed a sharp break in order to recognize and participate in the dawning reality of God's reign. The frame of reference,

117

cultural givens by which the world made sense, entailed both a pattern of conduct and a visible fellowship (Hunsberger 1998, 160). Newbigin believed the church's relationship to the culture was a missionary encounter because "the church embodies the gospel as an alternative way of life to the culture in which it is set and thereby challenges the culture's fundamental assumptions" (Goheen 2000, 365). Alternatively, he argued that the gospel demonstrated a radically different vision of society than that inhabited by all cultures apart from the gospel. "The church, therefore, as the bearer of the gospel, inhabits a plausibility structure which is at variance with, and which calls into question, those that govern all human cultures without exception" (Newbigin 1989b, 9).

> The church that embodies the gospel must necessarily clash with contemporary culture. It must challenge the whole fiduciary framework within which our culture operates. It must call unequivocally for radical conversion, a conversion of the mind so that things are seen differently, and a conversion of the will so that things are done differently. It must decline altogether the futile attempt to commend the biblical vision of how things are by seeking to adjust it to the assumption of our culture. (Newbigin 1983, 53)

This relationship inhabited both individual and corporate dimensions.

Principalities, Powers, and People

This corporate nature of community heavily influenced Newbigin's belief that the gospel addressed the false ideologies of the age (Thomas 2011, 29). He summarized that it was a fallacious illusion perpetrated by the Enlightenment mindset that suggested the gospel was only addressed to individuals and not to societies, nations, and cultures (Newbigin 1989b, 198). The belief in the radical autonomy of the individual and the consequential privatization of our ethical thinking colored and clouded the biblical thought that the "relation between individual behavior and the behavior of societies is not one way; it is reciprocal" (Newbigin 198b, 199). The society shaped people as much as

118

people shaped society. Ethics, in Newbigin's mind, flowed from the community one embraced.

Newbigin condemned the scholarly conclusions that dismissed the teachings in Paul's letters about principalities, powers, thrones, authorities, rulers, and angels as a "thought world which we have grown out of" (Newbigin 1989b, 200). The modern plausibility structure dismissed these as fantasies of imagination, while Newbigin proclaimed the powers represented the authority behind political and economic structures and the given structures within which human life was lived (Thomas 2011, 29). These invisible powers contained the capacity to be either malevolent or benevolent and reflected a reality that was disarmed by Jesus Christ but not destroyed (Colossians 2:15). The powers were anything outside of Christ that claimed to control human destiny and history (Newbigin 989b, 118). These principalities were under the supreme dominion of Jesus Christ. Believers still wrestled with them in the overlap of the "already" and "not yet" dimensions of the kingdom.

In Newbigin's thoughts these powers were "norms, roles and structures" embodied in visible and tangible realities: flesh and blood (Newbigin 1989b, 206).

> What I have called the structural elements in the world as we know it, from the basic structures of the nations, to the customs and traditions by which human beings are normally guided, to what sociologists call the 'plausibility structures' by which all human thinking is guided: all of these are part of God's good ordering of his creation. Yet it was these things which at the decisive denouement, the movement when they were confronted by the living God in person, by him in whom the fullness of Godhead was present bodily, were found ranged in unanimous and murderous hostility against him. The death of Christ was the unmasking of these powers. Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate were not uniquely wicked men; they were acting out their roles as guardians of the political and moral and religious order. They acted as representatives of what the New Testament calls the world, this present age. When God raised the crucified Jesus, this present age and its structures was exposed, illuminated, unmasked – but not destroyed. (Newbigin 1989b, 208)

Newbigin believed these principalities and powers of the invisible world were not

individuals who performed the roles in the institutions of state and market economies. The insistence on overthrowing individuals and seizing the levers of power and control were insufficient. Instead the gospel, announced in word and embodied in deed, needed to unmask, disarm, and render powerless the entire mystique behind the system of ideological and spiritual power. This was not a benign battle because "the powers that be, both in their outward form as the established religious and cultural and political structures, and in their inward reality as the principalities and powers of this age, are challenged and fight back" (Newbigin 1989b, 105). This battle included the church in both naming and rejecting the false ideologies of our age. Such a battle cemented the church's role in the culture and served as a lever for the launch of the church into decisive mission.

Missio Dei

The idea expressed in *missio Dei* articulated the concept that mission originated with the initiative of God, and Christians were God's sign and instruments in that endeavor. The starting point of *missio Dei* was a Trinitarian God: mission was the purpose and action of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The calling of God through the principle of election was understood as a responsibility rather than exclusively privilege. The internal relationships of the Trinity also embodied the way God acted in the world. The church, as a community of God's called out people, was an instrument of God rather than the proprietor of the action. Mission then moved from something that churches did for the sake of God to understanding the very nature of God as missionary at heart.

The subtle but decisive shift toward understanding mission as God's mission or the concept of *missio Dei* surfaced as an idea (not as the exact term) at the Willingnen

Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 (Bosch 1992, 390).

Newbigin drafted the common text of the meeting and grounded "in all but name a notion

. . . namely that of *missio Dei,* whereby the origin of mission was traced to the Father's

sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world for its redemption, moves that were

rooted in the very being of the Triune God" (Wainwright 2000, 165). Mission was

understood as being derived from the very nature of God. God was a missionary God.

> The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God
> the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another
> 'movement': Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. As far
> as missionary thinking was concerned, this linking with the doctrine of the Trinity
> constituted an important innovation. (Bosch 1992, 390)

Even though Newbigin neglected the use of the term *missio Dei*, "Newbigin's

understanding of the church was firmly rooted in an understanding of the redemptive

work of the Triune God that was commonly referred to as the *missio Dei"* (Goheen 2000,

115). Newbigin preferred the use of the terms "missionary character of the church" and

"missionary nature of the church" (Newbigin 1995, 1). He affirmed the concept of the

church as mission as the church participated in or carried on the mission of Jesus.

Newbigin believed the mission of the church was to participate in the *missio*

Dei by inhabiting the mission of Jesus throughout the world until the eschaton. Two

implications flowed from Newbigin's understanding of the missionary church: the role

the church played and the place the church occupied in the biblical story. The role the

church played was grounded in what Newbigin identified as the "logic of mission"

(Newbigin 1989b, 116-27). The logic of mission suggested the mission of the church

was rooted in the gospel itself instead of some missionary mandate. "The mission of the

church in the pages of the New Testament is more like the fallout from a vast explosion, a

radioactive fallout which is not lethal but life-giving" (Newbigin 198b, 116). The church

was chosen to witness to all mankind what God was doing and will do. The second

implication of Newbigin's understanding of the missionary church was the place the

church occupied in the biblical story. The church was summoned to bear the good news

to the ends of the earth between the incarnation and the *Parousia* of Jesus as its place in

redemptive history.

Newbigin argued "we have corrupted the word 'Church' (and distorted the

life of the churches) by constantly using it in a non-missionary sense" (Newbigin 1954,

42). Church was conceived in Christendom to be a society devoted to worship, to the

spiritual care and nurture of its members, and typically represented by a building.

Mission was conceived to be a society devoted to propagation of the gospel, but the

implications of such a division were that missionary obligation was done after the needs

of the church at home were realized. Newbigin embraced the concept that an

unmissionary church, rather than just failing at one of its tasks, ceased being the church at

all. This relinquishment of a missionary existence led Newbigin to observe, "an

unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church" (Newbigin

1954, 148). Newbigin argued that the church was not the purpose or goal of the gospel,

but rather its instrument and witness to the center of revelation history, Jesus Christ. As

the sign of the coming kingdom, the church functioned as a bearer of blessing.

The Scandal of Particularity

The church, as the instrument and witness to Jesus Christ, was wrapped up in

what was known in Newbigin's works as "the scandal of particularity" (Newbigin 1989b,

72). This scandal affirmed that God had revealed the scope of his mission, mind, and

purpose to some (but not to all) people through some events in history (but not all) and

declared here God acted; here God revealed his purpose. "The scandal of particularity is at the center of the question of missions" (Newbigin 1995g, 67). Newbigin contended that from the first pages of Scripture humanity was presented with the story of a universal purpose carried out through an ongoing series of particular choices. The method by which God related these twin themes of particularity and universality was through the doctrine of election. "The one (or the few) is chosen for the sake of the many; the particular is chosen for the sake of the universal" (Newbigin 1989b, 68).

This privileged position, according to Newbigin, was not for a position of pride or prestige but for the sake of the world into which the church was sent as witnesses. The notion of election employed by Newbigin was distinctively biblical and missionary (Hunsberger 1998, 46). Newbigin asserted that the Bible stated consistently that God chose Israel to be his people and the church to be his witnesses so that God's saving grace was passed on to others.

> The source of election is in the depths of God's gracious will "before the foundation of the world"; its context is "in Christ"; its instrument is the apostolic mission to the ends of the earth; its end is to sum all thing in Christ; and its means, seal and token is the presence of God's Holy Spirit – opening men's hearts to believe the Gospel, knitting them in love into the fellowship of the body of Christ, giving them in foretaste the powers of the age to come and sealing them as Christ's until His coming again. The life of the visible Church on earth is thus the reality within which alone the doctrine of election is to be understood. The church on earth is no mere earthly shadow of an invisible and heavenly substance. It is both the first-fruits and the instrument of God's gracious election, for His purpose is precisely the re-creation of the human life in Christ. (Newbigin 1954, 103)

The role of the church in Newbigin's view of election highlighted important differences from a more traditional Reformed view. Michael Goheen states four points that describes Newbigin's understanding of the point of election in the mission of the church (Goheen 2000, 167). First, Newbigin viewed election corporately rather than individually. Newbigin argued God's purpose was not to pick an individual here and

there for the Kingdom of God, but rather God chose and recreated a people for His

purposes. Second, Newbigin saw election not as an eternal decree but the belief that "we

have to take as our starting point, and as the controlling reality for all our thinking on this

as on every theological topic, what God has actually done in Jesus Christ" (Newbigin

1989b, 86). Newbigin's thought was not a designation of God's eternal decree, but rather

God acting personally at the cross so that the community called the church, chosen

beforehand, could communicate the fact of the cross. Third, election in the attitudes of

God's people was for responsibility, not privilege. When the church started to think of

"election in terms of spiritual privilege rather than missionary responsibility, then she

comes under His merciful judgment as Israel did" (Newbigin 1954, 149). The feeble and

foolish body called the church had the responsibility of bearing the secret of God's reign

through world history (Newbigin 1989b, 87). Fourth, Newbigin asserted that God

formulated election with a missionary character.

> To be elect in Christ Jesus, and there is no other election, means to be incorporated
> into his mission to the world, to be the bearer of God's saving purpose for his
> whole world, to be the sign and agent and the firstfruit of his blessed kingdom
> which is for all. It means, therefore, as the New Testament makes abundantly clear,
> to take our share in his suffering, to bear the scars of the passion. It means, as Paul
> says elsewhere, to bear in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of the risen
> Jesus may be manifest and available for others. (Newbigin 1989b, 86-87)

This missional representation distinguished Newbigin from other perspectives

because of his unique sense of the scandal of particularity and election's central purpose:

bearing the witness of the Spirit. Hunsberger demonstrated that Newbigin's

understanding of election was characterized by an inner logic and the necessity of the

method of election (Hunsberger 1998, 103). Central to this inner logic was the place of

the community of God's people for God's redemptive work that was demonstrated in

three closely related areas: election was required by the nature and destiny of humanity,

because of the personal character of God, and due to the nature of salvation. Newbigin explained that God created humanity to be intimately connected through relationships. "It follows that this mutual relatedness, this dependence of one on another, is not merely part of the journey toward the goal of salvation, but is intrinsic to the goal itself (Newbigin 1989b, 82). Election demonstrated that one particular event could have significance for the whole. In addition, God's personal character required that humanity be related to the person and character of God. God acted particularly in revelation and history so that such was necessitated in election. Finally, election's necessity was found in the nature of salvation. Salvation was a matter of the holistic restoration of the entire creation. Since God created us as social creatures that can know God in a personal way then the consummation of salvation by necessity involved a restored human family "reconciled to each other and to God in the midst of history . . . if the call to this salvation is to be consistent with the nature of salvation itself, it must be made by a community already experiencing this reconciliation to God and to each other" (Goheen 2000, 170).

Trinitarian Mission

For Newbigin, one of the key texts in the New Testament that demonstrated the basis for a Trinitarian missiology was found in John's gospel. In John 20:21-22 Jesus says, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit." This passage exemplified the continuity between the kingdom of the Father and the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Spirit to the presence of the Kingdom in Jesus. Newbigin said, "The mission of the Church is to be understood, can only be rightly understood, in terms of the Trinitarian model" (Newbigin 1989b, 118). Newbigin based his concept of

the mission of the Triune God in both Christocentric and eschatological terms, but the intricacies and particulars of the Trinitarian framework were never fully developed. Nevertheless, Newbigin's prophetic insights about the necessity for a Trinitarian missiology remained one of his important legacies. His emphatic declaration was Jesus Christ was the personification of mission in the world; the Father was the Sender, the "Lord of the harvest"; and the Holy Spirit was the divine, empowering presence as the foretaste of the kingdom of God.

The launching point for the discussion of Trinitarian mission, in Newbigin's mind, was the person of Jesus Christ. "He is the Son, sent by the Father and anointed by the Spirit to be the bearer of God's kingdom to the nations" (Newbigin 1995b, 24). Lesslie Newbigin observed "that the mission of Jesus was not only to proclaim the Kingdom of God, but also to embody the presence of the Kingdom of God in his own person." As always, the starting point for Newbigin was the gospel of Jesus Christ. This universal message entrusted to a particular people meant that the mission of Jesus governed the mission of the church. The mission of Jesus and the church were carried out in the context of the eschatological clash between the powers of the coming age and the principalities and powers of this present era.

> I have spoken of mission in three ways. It is the proclamation of the kingdom, the presence of the kingdom, and the prevenience of the kingdom. By proclaiming the reign of God over all things the church acts out its faith that the Father of Jesus is indeed ruler of all. The church, by inviting all humankind to share in the mystery of the presence of the kingdom hidden in life through its union with the crucified and risen life of Jesus, acts out the love of Jesus that took him to the cross. By obediently following where the Spirit leads, often in ways neither planned, known, nor understood, the church acts out the hope that it is given by the presence of the Spirit who is the living foretaste of the kingdom. This threefold way of understanding the church's mission is rooted in the triune nature of God himself. If any one of these is taken in isolation as the clue to understanding of mission, distortion follows. (Newbigin 1995b, 64-65)

Newbigin hoped that his reformulation of the missionary character of the church reinforced the mantra that "there is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world" (Newbigin 1995b, 1). With the West undergoing such a vast and systemic shift, Newbigin believed in engaging the change through a Trinitarian lens of how the church engaged the culture in a holistic way. The church proclaimed the reign of God by faith even when it encountered suffering and tribulation as part of its mission. The church also invited all people to share the mission of Jesus as love in action. Finally, through the person and work of the Spirit, the church was launched by the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit into mission as hope in action. This Trinitarian framework looked at the lens of mission with three filters: "as proclaiming the kingdom of the Father, as sharing in the life of the Son, as bearing the witness of the Spirit (Newbigin 1995b, 29).

The Nature of the Biblical Story

Perhaps the term "generous orthodoxy" was best applied to Lesslie Newbigin's position on the place of Scripture in Trinitarian mission. Hans Frei coined the phrase "generous orthodoxy" in 1987 as he described this kind of orthodoxy as that "which would have in it an element of liberalism . . . and an element of evangelicalism" (Mayhue 2006, 193). In an attempt to affirm the authority of the Bible for a missionary church in the West Newbigin asserted,

> George Lindbeck in his *'The Nature of Christian Doctrine'* and Hans Frei in his *'The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative'* are both in distinct but related ways, as friends and colleagues at Yale, trying to find a new way of affirming biblical authority which breaks through the sterile battle between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. (Wainwright 2000, 362)

"Tweedledum" and "Tweedledee" were Newbigin's metaphorical assertions that

liberalism and fundamentalism were in many ways siblings under the skin. The twin

trajectories were rooted in the concept that insisted theology "must have a foundation that

is articulated in terms of basic philosophical principles" (Frei 1992, 24). For

fundamentalists the foundation was an inerrant Bible. For liberals it was a religious

experience.

Newbigin saw the argument over biblical authority as rooted in terms of

different faith commitments provided by the culture which resulted in a number of

mistaken approaches to the Bible:

> a higher criticism that issued from the faith commitments of the modern scientific
> worldview; the fundamentalist/liberal split as an expression of the familiar
> fact/value dichotomy that shaped Western culture; the Bible as a source for timeless
> principles under the influence of modernity; the Bible as a collection of local stories
> under the influence of postmodernity. (Goheen 2000, 123)

Newbigin believed that each of these approaches in handling Scripture was a direct threat

to the missionary calling of the church. Newbigin instead invoked Hans Frei and George

Lindbeck in the third chapter of *Foolishness to the Greeks* identifying "the Bible as that

body of literature which – primarily but not only in narrative form – renders accessible to

us the character and actions and purposes of God" (Newbigin 1986, 59).

Newbigin insisted that Jesus Christ was absolute truth, the standard by which

"all so-called knowledge must be tested" (Newbigin 1994d, 72). This absolute truth in

Christ was to be appropriated and propagated not "in timeless systems of thought but in

the story conveyed by the church" (Feddes 2012, 202). Newbigin relentlessly

communicated the fact that Jesus did not write a book but formed a community

(Newbigin 1954, 20; Newbigin 1982b, 228; Newbigin 1989b, 133; Newbigin 1994c; 70;

Newbigin 1995b, 52; Newbigin 1995c, 89). This alternative community constituted a

different plausibility structure based on the belief that the clue to the importance of

128

history was revealed in the biblical story culminating in Jesus Christ. Newbigin

contended that the authority and credibility of the gospel were not contingent on airtight

philosophical arguments, an inerrant Bible, or an infallible church, but on the Holy Spirit

leading the public witness of believing congregations, which was "the hermeneutic circle

operating within the believing community" (Newbigin 1986, 56).

> The business of the church is to tell and to embody a story, the story of God's
> mighty acts in creation and redemption and of God's promises concerning what will
> be in the end. The church affirms the truth of this story by celebrating it,
> interpreting it, and enacting it in the life of the contemporary world. It has no other
> way of affirming its truth. If it supposes that its truth can be authenticated by
> reference to some allegedly more reliable truth claim, such as those offered by the
> philosophy of religion, then it has implicitly denied the truth by which it lives. In
> this sense, the church shares the postmodernists' replacement of eternal truths with
> a story. But there is a profound difference between the two. For the postmodernists,
> there are many stories, but no overarching truth by which they can be assessed.
> They are simply stories. The church's affirmation is that the story it tells, embodies,
> and enacts is the true story and that the others are to be evaluated by reference to it.
> (Newbigin 1995c, 76)

Newbigin desired to remove the Bible and the church from the domain of

critical scholarship that left the sacredness of God's witnesses to the techniques of the

Enlightenment. He asserted that the concern to reassert the authority of the Bible in the

Enlightenment milieu consisted of a proper motive with an improper method.

> I am referring to a kind of fundamentalism which seeks to affirm the factual,
> objective truth of every statement in the Bible and which thinks that if any single
> actual error were to be admitted, biblical authority would collapse. (Newbigin
> 1995c, 85)

Newbigin believed fundamentalism was captive to modernity in two respects. The

political arm of fundamentalism had "surrendered uncritically to the ideology of the free

market," and the intellectual side "in a praiseworthy attempt to reassert the authority of

Scripture embraced a concept of verbal inerrancy which is a product of Enlightenment

rationalism rather than something learned from Scripture itself" (Newbigin 1995d,

address). David Feddes argued that in accepting the fact of Jesus as absolute truth while

treating the biblical testimony as fallible that Newbigin drifted into the very fact/value

dichotomy he so abhorred (Feddes 2012, 204). The gospel meaning remained on the

subjective, values side of the equation without any real public truth. Newbigin, in some

sense, was never able to leave the modernist mindset he inhabited.

Newbigin argued against translating the events of the Bible into timeless

propositions. He opted instead to view the essential nature of the Bible as testimony, or

witness. Newbigin stated that Christians compounded the problem by attempting to

encapsulate a body of truths in a series of doctrinal statements guaranteed by the

authority of the church (Newbigin 1983, 52). Still, Newbigin continued to insist that the

historicity of the Biblical narrative was vital to its authority. If narrative theology

neglected this historicity, it failed to live up to the true nature of Scripture.

> When the word narrative is used in theological discourse, it is sometimes with the
> implication that the historical truth of the narrative is not important. The narrative
> that structures our understanding of things might be nothing more than a story told
> by us to explain our experience, something with no ontological status beyond our
> imagination. It is the essence of the Christian faith that this story is the true story.
> (Newbigin 1996, 40)

George Lindbeck in his review of *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* stated the

following as a categorization of Newbigin:

> The author eschews labels, but the trend his work exemplifies has been variously
> called "postmodern," "postliberal," and, by the unsympathetic, "neotraditionalist."
> Such theology utilizes developments in philosophy (e.g., for Newbigin, A.
> Maclntyre), the understanding of science (e.g., M. Polanyi and T S. Kuhn),
> sociology of knowledge (e.g., P. Berger), and scriptural interpretation (e.g., H. Frei
> and W. Winks) in order to escape from the polarized progressivisms and
> conservatisms that continue to emerge in the wake of the Enlightenment.
> In Newbigin's case, the effort is to restate the historic Christian affirmations about
> the finality of Jesus Christ and the church's universal mission of Gospel
> proclamation in such a way as to avoid both liberal (including liberationist)
> objections and the individualistic and privatistic pietism and propositionalist
> fundamentalism to which the Enlightenment also contributed. (Lindbeck 1990, 182)

In such a fashion, Newbigin somehow endeared himself to many venues of the Christian

spectrum. Evangelicals appreciated his stance on the gospel as public truth and his

corrections to many of the abuses of the modern era. More liberal expressions of

Christianity embraced his narrative approach to Scripture and his call to dialogue and

conversation in interfaith relationships. This appreciation was not without some critical

appraisals and outright critiques from both groups.

Evangelicalism and Newbigin

Newbigin asserted that it was both strange and sad that the adjectives

"evangelical" and "ecumenical" arrived in our time to communicate two mutually

exclusive positions (Newbigin 1982a, 146). Newbigin contended that every believer

"must be both evangelical and ecumenical. I am sure there is both truth and error in both

camps" (Newbigin 1982a, 146). In his studies at Cambridge University Newbigin

wrestled with the Greek text of Romans with the help of a number of commentaries. He

described the impact of the studies:

> I began the study as a typical liberal. I ended it with a strong conviction about the
> 'finished work of Christ' and about the centrality and objectivity of the atonement
> accomplished on Calvary . . . . At the end of the exercise I was much more of an
> evangelical than a liberal. (Weston 2006, 5)

Bebbington defined evangelicalism as identified by four marks that are central qualities:

"conversionism," the belief that lives need to be changed; "activism," the expression of

the gospel in the effort; "biblicism," a particular regard for the Bible; and

"crucicentrism," a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Bebbington 1989, 1-17).

McGrath included scriptural authority, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the priority of

evangelism, and the need for personal conversion as widely accepted evangelical beliefs

(McGrath 1995, 55-56).

Often the arguments of Newbigin seemed persuasive to evangelicals because of his historic defense of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the providential and miraculous interventions of God, and the historicity of Scripture (Smith 1999, 107). Such an embrace cannot be adopted uncritically. Among the distinctives of evangelical belief two implications are primary: a high view of biblical authority and the necessity of personal conversion to Jesus Christ. The result, for evangelicals, was that scriptural authority and personal conversion were inextricably linked because "Scripture alone brings us to a true and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ" (McGrath 1995, 65). The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ "is to be seen as the unique, necessary and sufficient basis of salvation" (McGrath 1995, 66). Both of these divergences with typical evangelical thought need examination in Newbigin's schemes.

Many evangelicals struggled with Newbigin's concept of biblicism as he often viewed the Bible as "a human book, the best interpretation of God's actions and purposes written by those who were witnesses to them, rather than as God's own word to humanity" (Smith 2004, 367). Newbigin contended that literal approaches to the Bible saw it as no more than "a collection of factually true statements" (Newbigin 1994c, 35). Unfortunately, Newbigin associated evangelicalism with a militant fundamentalism that ignored the pietistic strains that emphasized devotional readings of Scripture and the cultivation of a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ (Smith 199, 134). In some ways, some objectors asserted that Newbigin never left the imprisonment of the Enlightenment paradigm that questioned the historical veracity of the text and that harbored anti-supernatural biases contra to the nature of Christian faith and of the Bible's assertion about its own purpose (Smith 1999, 135). Newbigin's dismissal of the doctrine of verbal

inerrancy was a viewpoint that many (but not all) evangelicals hold as sacrosanct in

theology. Newbigin believed that "the doctrine of verbal inerrancy is a direct denial of

the way in which God has chosen to make himself known to us as the Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ" (Newbigin 1995c, 89). This explicit rejection of inerrancy and his adopted

viewpoint of the mostly nonpropositional nature of Scripture in favor of Scripture as

mostly story is problematic for many evangelicals (Newbigin 1994c, 38). Evangelicals

regarded with skepticism Newbigin's viewpoint that saw the interpretation of the Bible as

coming "to us in varied versions filtered through varied rememberings and interpretations

of different groups of believers" (Newbigin 1995b, 52)

In defining salvation Newbigin took issue with what he called the modern,

individualistic approach that supposed it was basically an interchange that took place

privately between an individual and God. Newbigin believed in individual conversion

but emphasized corporate dimensions of salvation. According to Newbigin, in the Bible:

> There can be no private salvation, no salvation which does not involve us with
> one another . . . God's saving revelation does not come to us straight down from
> above-through the skylight . . . . In order to receive God's saving revelation we have
> to open the door to the neighbor whom he sends as his appointed messenger, and-
> moreover-to receive that messenger not as a temporary teacher or guide whom we
> can dispense with when we ourselves have learned what is needed . . . . There is no
> salvation except one in which we are saved together through the one whom God
> sends to be the bearer of salvation. (Newbigin 1989b, 82-83)

Such a corporate dimension offered a needed corrective to the exclusive

position of some evangelicals that salvation is merely personal, but it also diminished the

idea advanced in evangelical thought that individual conversion was primary and

necessary. The good news, according to Newbigin, was that God came to earth in Jesus

and conquered sin, Satan, and death. Salvation was not simply "the affirmation of a way

of personal salvation for the individual" (Newbigin 1989b, 220). Another problematic

feature of Newbigin's soteriology was his view on the relationship of Christianity to other world religions:

> The position which I have outlined is exclusivist in the sense that it affirms the unique truth of the revelation in Jesus Christ, but it is not exclusivist in the sense of denying the possibility of the salvation of the non-Christian. It is inclusivity in the sense that it refuses to limit the saving grace of God to the members of the Christian church, but it rejects the inclusivism which regards the non-Christian religions as vehicles of salvation. It is pluralist in the sense of acknowledging the gracious work of God in the lives of all human beings, but it rejects a pluralism which denies the uniqueness and decisiveness of what God has done in Jesus Christ. (Newbigin 1989b, 182)

This denial of the exclusivist viewpoint that all who do not accept Jesus as Lord and Savior are eternally lost was very concerning. Most evangelicals typically have affirmed a viewpoint of epistemic humility in the sense that individuals were unable to discern the condition of another person's heart. Evangelicals reject the converse belief affirmed by Newbigin that it was intellectual arrogance to "inform the rest of the world about who is to be vindicated and who is to be condemned at the last judgment" (Newbigin 1989b, 177). Apart from faith in Jesus Christ, according to evangelical thought, there is never any hope offered in Scripture for those who refuse to trust personally in Jesus. Newbigin's thought that downplayed faith in Jesus Christ individually diminished the very missionary impulse he wanted to inspire. This missionary agenda was the heart of Newbigin's thought that evangelicals embraced.

The Ecumenical Advocate

Newbigin determined that the missionary impulse needed to make the church effective also necessitated a dynamic for visible Christian unity.

> We believe that the unity which is both God's will and His gift to His Church is one which brings all in each place who confess Christ Jesus as Lord into a fully committed fellowship with one another through one baptism into Him, preaching the one Gospel and breaking the one bread, and having a corporate life reaching out

in witness and service to all; and which at the same time unites them with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are acknowledged by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls the Church. (Newbigin 1993d, 171)

The unity Newbigin advocated allowed a local unified presence as well as a universal fellowship. The universal nature of the reconciled church enabled it to speak to the world as one, as it accomplished its God-given mission. Newbigin saw this as central to the claims of the gospel and involved himself in the World Council of Churches. At the local level, Newbigin participated in the reunion of the Congregational, Presbyterian and Anglican churches in South India. Newbigin was disappointed that British churches he encountered lagged considerably behind the Indian lead. Newbigin contended, "we cannot be Christ's ambassadors, beseeching all men to be reconciled to God, except we ourselves be willing to be reconciled one to another in him" (Newbigin 1954, 151). He believed disunity at the local level was a great hindrance to mission and a contradiction of the gospel.

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. (Newbigin 1960b, 11)

This impetus for an ecumenical movement bookmarked Lesslie Newbigin's life as the modern ecumenical movement was "conveniently dated from an event that took place in the first year of Lesslie Newbigin's life and within a hundred miles of his parents' Northumbrian home" (Wainwright 2000, 81). This most important milestone was the 1910 World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh, Scotland that succeeded to a remarkable degree in transcending denominational differences (Bosch 1991, 459). Many believed this interest in church unity was motivated by a concern for the world and

the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21. Newbigin spent a significant amount of his time struggling for the unity of the church because he believed mission and unity were inseparable.

Unfortunately, according to Newbigin, the ecumenical and evangelical traditions of understanding and practicing mission remained polarized. Goheen argued that a "great reversal" occurred in the evangelical church with the separation of mission and social responsibility between the years of 1865 and 1930 because of at least three factors: the pessimistic view of the present order by premillenialism, the ignoring of structural sin by the emphasis on individualism, and a negative reaction to the social gospel (Goheen 1992, 2).

> Thus, as revivalism and evangelicalism slowly adopted premillenialism the emphasis shifted away from social involvement to exclusively verbal evangelism. In the course of time virtually all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role . . . . By the 1920's "the great reversal" . . . had been completed; the evangelicals' interest in social concerns had, for all practical purposes, been obliterated. (Bosch 1991, 318)

Many have lamented this breakdown and advocated, like Newbigin, for a more holistic gospel instead of an emaciated version. John Stott stated mission and social engagement are like two blades of a pair of scissors or two wings of a bird as independent partners in the church's one mission (Stott 1975, 27). Social activity could be a consequence, a bridge, and a partner with the church's mission to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world.

The steam left the ecumenical sail, according to Goheen, because of at least three infecting conditions: the stripping away of any transcendent elements in the social gospel leaving a naturalistic shell, the reliance on technique and human power instead of a mission focus, and the turn from individual to collective actions for justice, peace, and

ecological stewardship as organic structural concerns (Goheen 1992, 6). The result was

an inordinate concern with promotion of the social task to the relative neglect of

proclaiming the gospel. The consequence was a reduction of the gospel as the need for

conversion, understood as a decision made by an individual person, was eclipsed. Also

with such emphases the floodgates of universalism were thrown wide open. Newbigin

lamented this fact, and although he did not hold to an insistence to the priority of

evangelism in the church's life, he still tried to bridge the gap between those he

considered pigeonholed as evangelical and ecumenical (Newbigin 1998a, 1).

> Is this simply a matter of the relative importance of words and deeds? If so it would
> be a futile debate. No priorities can be assigned between them because each without
> the other is ultimately vain. The Word made flesh is the gospel. The deed without
> the word is dumb. The word without the deed is empty. At times words are cheap
> and deeds costly; at times deeds are cheap and words may cost lives. It is futile to
> set these two against each other, and the dichotomy which opens up here in our
> perceptions is part of the deep-going dualism we have inherited from the pagan,
> classical roots of our culture and which the biblical witness has never been able to
> eradicate. I need not remind you that the same Hebrew word is regularly translated
> in our Bible as both word and act. I do not find this dichotomy between word and
> deed in the New Testament. (Newbigin 1998a, 2)

Orthodoxy and orthopraxy remained united and central in Newbigin's emphasis on the

church.

Evaluation of Newbigin's Views

The necessity of the church as a hermeneutic of the gospel was not a

detraction from Newbigin's paramount concern that God's revelation in Jesus would be

believed, proclaimed, and lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. The particularity and

communally shaped character of Newbigin's ecclesiology and epistemology were not

attempts to exalt modern relativism. Instead these particularities and historically

identifiable events identified in an authoritative Word and lived out in an alternative

137

plausibility structure of an obedient community were the Spirit's chosen method for

revealing God's truth to human minds (Feddes 2012, 250). One author stated that

Newbigin's inordinate amount of emphasis on cultural transformation while neglecting

individual conversion was a reaction to the ethos of Western culture and its radical

individualism (Stults 2008, 276). Newbigin appreciated the value of individual

conversion that led to immediate incorporation into a community of faith. Newbigin

believed that the community that indwelled the Scriptures had a larger opportunity to

influence the cultural ethos.

> I find it ironic that in, in the latter half of the twentieth century, the ecumenicals
> have proposed a more biblically faithful ecclesiology than all the evangelicals
> enamored with Church Growth. Missional theology is not perfect, but it attempts to
> be biblical. The pragmatism of Church Growth, at its worst, sets the bible aside.
> (Leeman 2006b, www.9Marks.org)

Newbigin also asserted that a missional community needed much more than

precise, logical presentations of true propositions. Feddes asserted that "There are not

universal prescriptions for Christian witness. Sometimes the logical force of Christianity

persuades the mind before its glory captures the heart. In other cases, imagination runs

ahead of belief" (Feddes 2012, 251). Lesslie Newbigin embraced a fiduciary framework

that led to the charge of fideism. Some argued that fideism was not enough. The context

of Western culture necessitated further explanations from a rational perspective since the

truth did not always appear to be self-authenticating (Stults 2008, 277). Newbigin

refused to embrace inerrancy as he believed it detracted from Jesus Christ as the authority

for mission (Leeman 2006b, www.9Marks.org). One author asserted that unlike

Newbigin "we should hold to biblical inerrancy, though not with a wooden or simplistic

hermeneutic" (Feddes 2012, 248). Newbigin and the Revisionists thought differently.

Tony Jones: Relational Ecclesiology

Tony Jones joined the emerging church movement not as a disinterested researcher but as a founder interested in postmodern philosophy especially among students (Jones 2011, ii). Jones asserted that sociologists Richard Flory and Donald E. Miller discovered and developed a four-part taxonomy of responses to the spiritual and ecclesial practices of the GenXers in a postmodern culture: innovators that evolved, appropriators that adopted and adapted, resisters that focused on modern approaches to faith, and reclaimers that retrieved ancient practices and forms of Christianity. Flory and Miller placed the emerging church squarely in the innovator category with some evidences of reclaimers as well (Flory and Miller 2008, 39). The sociologists concluded that the innovators of the emerging church faced a precarious future because of the possibility of becoming co-opted by institutionalized Christianity or fading from influence. Many have suggested the submerging of the emerging church had already begun. Jones critiqued the consumerist impulses that have dominated the emerging church movement and also called for "developing practices that are reflective of distinctive and overt theological commitments" to prevent being absorbed either totally or in fragments by the forces of American Protestantism (Jones 2011, 163).

The influence of Lesslie Newbigin on the missiological and ecclesiological framework of Tony Jones can be traced. The premise of his doctoral dissertation was that the emerging church movement was practicing a new form of congregationalism entitled "relational ecclesiology" (Jones 2011, 1). The "recent and rapid advent of technological devices . . . and the new media . . . and the significant generational differences begat by globalization have enabled wholly new forms of intra-church and inter-church relationality" (Jones 2011, 1). This concept established the church as a network of

relationships, primarily the relationships of people who constituted the church have to

God through Christ, and the relationship that they have to one another in Christ. Jones

selected eight congregations in his dissertation as models of the emerging church

movement and discovered that four concrete practices formed the emerging church

exercises: communion, worship, preaching, and community. Although Jones formed his

thesis of relational ecclesiology primarily from Jurgen Moltmann, he also emphasized the

communal dimension of missions and the church as what Newbigin described as the

hermeneutic of the gospel. Jones rooted both community and mission in both equality

and submission in the Triune nature of our God as a community of Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit akin to Newbigin.

> When our youth ministries reflect a Trinitarian/communitarian layout, we'll not
> only tap into the postmodern longing for community in a world filled with divorce
> and division, but we'll also point with our lives toward a God who is a community
> and who created us to be in community. Further, our ministries will be
> eschatological in nature – that is, we will be a sign of the Kingdom of God which,
> partially revealed now, will fully come upon us on the Last Day. Scripture,
> particularly Revelation, is full of colorful imagery depicting our eternal existence
> with God. And all of it reveals an eternal existence that will be experienced in
> community – in fellowship with God and one another. So, as our youth groups
> exhibit Christ-centered fellowship we point to the consummation of all history
> when God will gather us in a perfect and eternal community. (Jones 2001, 107)

Tony Jones embraced the idea of living as missionaries in a post-Christian

world. "It is only by changing our mindset from that of cultural chaplain to that of

prophetic missionary that we will be able to forge a relationship with the emerging

culture" (Jones 2001, 68). This thought pattern was embedded in Newbigin's works, and

Jones borrowed from *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* to articulate that "the mission of

the church is not merely an interpretation of history; it is a history-making force" (Jones

2001, 68). The necessity of sharing the gospel in culturally appropriate ways was rooted

in Newbigin's contention that "the most widespread, powerful, and persuasive among all

contemporary cultures – namely what I have called Western culture . . . it is this culture that, more than almost any other, is proving resistant to the gospel" (Newbigin 1986, 131; Jones 2001; 74). Missional living required a diagnostic of culture in the context in which believers and leaders lived.

Tony Jones has argued that in order to communicate with our culture that the primary distinctive needed for the emergent crowd is epistemic humility. This hermeneutic of humility, according to Jones, was embedded in the concept of proper confidence stated by Lesslie Newbigin (Jones 2008, 141). The outcome for Jones was rooted in a narrative theology that promoted holistic biblical interpretation that was dependent on community and conversation instead of what Jones believed was reductionist interpretations. Jones embraced the concept, as an alternative to solely propositional statements, that the whole Bible story was interrelated and rooted in Jesus Christ (Jones 2001, 196-213; Jones 2008, 143-48). The consequence according to Jones and Newbigin would be a path carved between liberalism and fundamentalism that was not beholden to foundationalist premises (Jones 2001, 200). Newbigin entitled the gospel as secular announcement while Jones concluded the Bible was propaganda in the sense "it was not written as a neutral, objective book" (Jones 2001, 201). Instead a community influenced and indwelled by the Sprit proclaimed a viable perspective in a culture and community. This proclamation, according to Jones, developed in an envelope of friendship based on reconciliation and a desire for inclusion while maintaining distinctive identity (Jones 2008, 71). These emphases on reconciliation and relationship within a community were part and parcel of the thought borrowed from Lesslie Newbigin.

Confessionalism and Contextualization

This ability to navigate the danger between compromising accommodation

and irrelevant proclamation were both concerns that Lesslie Newbigin and Tony Jones

tried to chart in an attempt to maintain a confessional identity. Newbigin saw two

dangers to theological faithfulness classified as

> churches, which have so, evaded the duty of articulate confession that they have
> become like jelly fish, incapable of moving in any direction but that of the tide; but
> there are also examples of churches that have so identified with blind submission
> to authoritatively prescribed formulae that have become petrified fossils, having
> the form of the Church but not its life. (Goheen 2001, 16-17)

This attempt to avoid the traps of irrelevance and relativism were concerns of both

Newbigin and Jones as they attempted to escape what they considered outmoded

categories of left and right. Both categorized liberalism and fundamentalism as siblings

under the same skin rooted in modern rationalism (Jones 2008, 4-5). Jones hoped to

accomplish the idea that Newbigin asserted to push through the polarities of left and right

to find a new, third way. This third way was the premise of the emerging church.

Jones asserted that this phenomenon of emerging church was budding from

the compost of Christendom.

> The phenomenon is not simply a fad (although there are faddish elements) or
> youthful hubris (though there's some of that, too) but rather a harbinger of the
> future of church life in America . . . . But what led to the emergent church
> movement? Disaffection with the theologies, attitudes, and institutions of American
> church life surely played a part, particularly with the poles of left and right that
> have become so prominent in the last quarter-century. Often segregated into the
> "mainline left" and the "evangelical right," they've both got irresolvable problems,
> from an emergent perspective. (Jones 2008, 7)

Emergents, with a nod to the ecumenical flavor of Newbigin's thoughts, practiced "a

generous orthodoxy that appreciates the contributions of all Christian movements"

according to Tony Jones (Jones 2008, 8).

Jones argued that emergents found little importance in the discrete differences between the various flavors of Christianity and noted that the gospel had been suffocated right out of mainline denominations. On the other hand, evangelicalism in its attempt to find a path between calcified fundamentalism and mushy liberalism looked for a third way to do ministry. The cost, according to Jones, was a lack of spiritual, societal, and intellectual transformation while evangelicalism gained cultural prominence as evangelicals increased their social influence (Jones 2008, 13). This prominence hampered any efforts to tackle any issues of social justice with effectiveness. Much like Newbigin's assertion that the principalities and powers were systemic and societal forces Jones believed that the radical individualism of evangelicalism stifled social involvement.

> The evidence is in: millions of individuals "inviting Jesus Christ into their hearts as their personal Lord and Savior" at megachurches and Billy Graham crusades has done little to stem the moral dissolution of America. And ironically, it's the very individualism engendered by evangelicalism that has resulted in this predicament. The primary emphasis of evangelicalism is the conversion of the individual, but that emphasis has also handicapped evangelicals in their attempts to tackle systemic issues like racism and poverty and thus has left them open to manipulation by political forces. (Jones 2008, 13)

Jones asserted that the reason that both liberal Christians and conservatives were prone to deception was because both were suffering from the same presupposition: foundationalism. The result, from the perspective of Jones, was infinite regression and intractable fighting that led "Emergents to reject the politics and theologies of left versus right. Seeing both sides as a remnant of modernity, they look forward to a more complex reality" (Jones 2008, 20). He argued that a "generation of young, thoughtful, disillusioned, cynical Americans . . . are looking for a new, third way, both in church and in society at large" (Jones 2008, 22). Jones suggested in this attempt to steer between opposing forces that emergents inhabited a postmodern posture by attempting to maintain

143

a distinct identity while also being open to the identity of other perspectives. The

conclusion stated by Jones was that Emergent churches shared "an ethos, a vibe, and a

sensibility. And that's squishy . . . like nailing Jell-O to the wall" (Jones 2008, 39). Jones

argued this led the emerging church to question all underlying assumptions in any

previously articulated perspectives in order to live according to cognitive frameworks,

scripts, that aligned with Scripture. Again, Newbigin claimed a different reality that

navigated the paths between hardened confessionalism and soft contextualization that

Jones omitted in his discussion: the gospel as public truth. This gospel as public truth

pointed to the existence of absolute truth in the person and proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Still, Newbigin and Jones both embraced the locus of that conversation: a biblical

community indwelling the life of Jesus.

Navigating Community

The intent of this section is to detail the places the thoughts of Lesslie

Newbigin and Tony Jones dovetailed on mission and community. Jones echoed the

thought of Newbigin that "the meaning of Scripture is very much influenced by our

church communities. We didn't find the Bible in a cave somewhere – it's been with us

for almost 2000 years" (Jones 2001, 204). He asserted the necessity of a recovery of the

communal spirit of the Christian faith through worship, reliance upon the Trinity, and

building community as a preeminent priority (Jones 2001, 80). Jones stated that the

community of faith, at its best, "is actively seeking God's Spirit, listening for the

revelation of the Spirit in the current age, and forging practices that are resonant with that

revelation, with the history of the church, and with the contemporary tools at its disposal"

(Jones 2011, 235)

While some Christians speak confidently of direct revelations from God – what
God wants of them and their community – participants in emerging church
congregations are not wont to speak of God in this way. Instead the movement of
the Spirit in a community, and in the world is sensed more ambivalently, and
spoken of less confidently . . . . It is reflective of the epistemic humility
characteristic of the movement that are actually more robust than the practices of
more traditional and conventional ecclesial communities . . . .That is because
ambiguity, when situated in the context of a history of mutual engagement opens up
an opportunity for negotiation . . . .Thereby, the community of practice stays
engaged with the hermeneutical circle and the practices in which they engage
remain fresh. (Jones 2011, 235)

Both Newbigin and Jones asserted that the primary result of a missionary
encounter between the church and community would be incarnational praxis constantly
shaped by continual interaction with Scripture. Jones states, "The new criterion of
theology and faith is to be found in praxis . . . .Truth must be practicable. Unless it
contains initiative for the transformation of the world, it becomes a myth of the existing
world" (Jones 2011, 251). "How one lives makes a more compelling case for the
Christian faith than what one says" (Jones 2008, 101). This praxis concentrates on the
priority of living as followers of Jesus as believers did not "learn that Jesus was the
Messiah and then decide to follow him. Rather, they realized him as Messiah by
following him" (Jones 2001, 148).

Jones, like Newbigin, believed in the necessity of a cultural clash if the
church was to make an impact as a believing community stating "a missionary comes to
challenge the reigning paradigms, to teach a new way . . . a missionary prophet does not
accept the status quo" (Jones 2001, 69). Although Jones failed to emphasize Newbigin's
scandal of particularity, the paradigm shift recognized the necessity of a formation of
community that challenged the reigning plausibility structures in the thinking of both
Tony Jones and Lesslie Newbigin. Both suggested the necessity of a missionary

encounter with culture through a corporate entity rather than radical individualism. Tony

Jones stated that "emergents find the biblical call to community more compelling than the

democratic call to individual rights. The challenge lies in being faithful to both ideas"

(Jones 2008). This paradigm shift allowed the church to conduct an assessment of

culture as "a missionary dives into the culture headfirst and swims around, learning,

perceiving, and discerning" (Jones 2001, 69).

Navigating Scripture

Tony Jones and Lesslie Newbigin have connected and have conflicted in this

paradigm shift over the role and authority of Scripture in the community of faith. Jones

believed, as did Newbigin, that every word of the Hebrew and Christian Scripture was

written to individuals living in community. Newbigin and Tony Jones also affirmed the

narrative dimension of Scripture as a counter to the modern methods of presenting

airtight propositions to be rationally presented. Jones rejected such propositional

statements as faulty hermeneutics that violently ripped the Scriptures out of their God-

given contexts instead of recognizing the pattern and details of the sagas and stories.

Jones states about such modern hermeneutics that "if an individual intellectually assents

to John 3:16 or some other propositional statement of the gospel, then that person has

been won. Where the mind leads, the body and spirit will surely follow, the argument

goes" (Jones 2008, 128). Tony Jones believed that

> statements of faith are about drawing borders, which means you have to load your
> weapons and place soldiers at those borders. You have to check people's passports
> when they pass at those borders. It becomes an obsession – guarding the borders . . .
> Statements of faith are a modernistic endeavor that I'm not the least bit interested
> in. (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 116)

This position, according to Jones, had enormous implications for life and doctrine in

living the Christian life. Jones rejected what he viewed as the false dichotomy between justification and sanctification instead arguing that "salvation is a complex process that involves the individual and the community and results in a disciple who bears fruit" (Jones 2008, 133).

However, significant differences emerged in this position of interaction between the church and culture in the amount of authority granted to the community of faith. Newbigin grounded the interaction between church and Scriptures as a reciprocal relationship with the Bible as the determinant clue and penultimate authority second only to the center of revelation history, Jesus Christ. Both Jones and Newbigin dismissed inerrancy as trapped in modern garb. DeYoung and Kluck argued that both maintained flawed assumptions in their denial suggesting "It was not modernism that invented inerrancy. It was modernism that undermined inerrancy" (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 77). Jones deviated away from the authority of Scripture in a further fashion. Jones dismissed the primacy of Scripture in the reciprocal relationship:

> Scripture is considered the secondary revelation of God to human beings—Jesus Christ being the primary revelation—but since scripture is always reliant upon human interpretation, it does not automatically trump other sources of justification. In other words, other sources maintain the ability to stand in critique of any particular interpretation. (Jones 2011, 25-26)

Instead of the Bible's position of primacy advocated by Newbigin in the shoals between hard confessionalism and soft contextualization, Jones proposed the Bible as a member of the community with interpretation bubbling up from the life of the community (Jones 2008, 216). Jones believed his method handled Scripture appropriately as theology, in his thinking, is malleable and formed by the local church. This devaluing of Scripture both deflated its place at the table of community and inflated the value of authoritative communities.

147

Authoritative Communities

Jones asserted that interpretive authority always resided in what he called "authoritative communities" (Jones 2011, 175). This switching of authority was based on the postmodern premise that no reader was able to escape his or her own skewed perspective. Tony Jones asserted, "I do not think it possible to begin with the Bible . . . . A human being cannot escape her/his own hermeneutical horizon. You are encased in it, just as you are encased in your own skin. There's no escape" (Jones 2012, 12). The implication was that the Bible was not a fixed, immutable Word from above, but in the true fashion of neo-orthodoxy it was a piece of God's ongoing story in humanity; a story that communities of faith participated in as they created their own meaning for today. In a sense, Scripture gained its authority from Jesus Christ and the communities that interpreted it. This allowed space for the community to form theology which was "local, conversational, and temporary" and that was not encapsulated in reductionist statements (Jones 2008, 111)

> Emergents reject metaphors like "pin it down," "in a nutshell," "sum it up," and "boil it down" when speaking of God and God's Kingdom, for it simply can't be done. The Kingdom of God is expansive, explosive, and un-pin-downable (to coin a phrase). Consequently, our characterizations of God and God's kingdom are necessarily fleeting. (Jones 2008, 114)

Jones claimed to root this hermeneutic humility in Newbigin's assertion of Scripture as proper confidence that is not embedded in Enlightenment rationalism (Jones 2008, 141). There were correlations between their assertions in the idea that the community was an alternative plausibility structure that could persuade others of their perspectives. The problem was that Newbigin wholeheartedly believed that communities could state and proclaim truth. Jones states in a contrarian fashion, "Emergents believe that truth, like God, cannot be definitively articulated by finite human beings" (Jones

2008, 153). Smith argued that Jones and other emerging church advocates of the

Revisionist vein such as Brian McLaren and Doug Pagitt mistakenly mix metaphors in

their call for epistemic humility negating the ability to humbly and objectively state truth

(Smith 2005, 120).

> Emerging church leaders seem to present us with a false antithesis, namely, that
> either we know something with certainty (that is, with omniscience), or else we are
> left with uncertainty . . . . The Bible is God's Word, and what it is does not depend
> upon my confidence in its being so. (Smith 2005, 120)

Tony Jones has acknowledged that his position brings a persistent claim of

the slippery slope and a path that Newbigin attempted to avoid: relativism (Jones 2008,

115-32). Newbigin asserted that there was a point outside our perspectives from which to

proclaim truth while Jones doubted such a viewpoint was accessible. Jones recognized

the term and asserted, "We're all relativists" (Jones 2008, 117). Jones stressed:

> Consider this: you go into local Christian bookstore with the virtuous intent of
> purchasing a Bible. You get to the Bible aisle to find that there are as many versions
> and editions of the Bible as there are cereals at your supermarket. Which will you
> choose? Each version was translated by a team or an individual with a different
> theological disposition toward the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. These
> manuscripts necessitate scores of interpretative choices for any Bible translator,
> choices that were built on the various choices of previous translators. Plus, each
> edition has study notes or call-outs – even headings – designed by human beings,
> not by God which reflect the theological biases of the people who prepared them.
> (Jones 2008, 117-18)

In a dual conversation with Tony Jones about this viewpoint, Sean McDowell stated that

"The concern does not stem from the fact that we make daily imperfect choices, but

rather the truth itself is relative rather than objective" (Jones 2007, 2). Jones asserted that

reality was paradoxical in the components of the Christian story: "God is transcendent

and immanent. Truth is both reliable and contextual. Relativism is relatively absolute"

(Jones 2008, 163). Those paradoxes framed the viewpoint of Tony Jones.

Trinitarian Relationality

Jones affirmed a spirituality of paradox but also embraced *perichoresis,* a term for the Trinity that Jones believed expressed relationality. Jones hoped that in this paradoxical position that the church would embrace a deep desire to be a reflection of the Trinity (Jones 2008, 169). The Eastern Orthodox embraced this tradition in the past, but theologians such as Miroslav Volf and Jurgen Moltmann reinvigorated the thought. Jones asserted that the mutual indwelling of the Trinity represented by *perichoresis* was a model for both understanding God and inhabiting community. "God beckons us, calls us, and sets an example for us. Ultimately, God invites us into his Trinitarian life. That's what the cross is about" (Jones 2012, 18).

> In emergent Christianity, there is a strong affinity for these relational articulations of God, since emergent Christians are convinced of the priority of relationship for understanding ourselves. Like many postmoderns, emergent Christians consider the individualism of the modern era a blight that eventually led to holocausts and pogroms. The emergent impulse toward small house churches and new monastic communities exhibit this return to relationality. A church with couches in a circle is not pandering to Gen X informality but a nod to open relationships demanded by Jesus' gospel of reconciliation. (Jones 2008, 166)

These emphases differed from the missional Trinitarian orientation of the thinking of Newbigin that advocated proclaiming the kingdom of the Father in an act of faith, sharing the life of the Son as a demonstration of love, and bearing the witness of the Holy Spirit as a sign of eschatological hope. Newbigin emphasized the relational character of the Trinity but the emphasis was not overrealized and did not negate missional living. Jones downplayed the missional aspect to more prominently promote relational thinking about the Trinity that enveloped the community of faith into solidarity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as well as invoking a relational bond that united the community of faith (Jones 2001, 243). According to Moltmann, this solidarity

150

engendered by Jesus through the act of identification at the cross and the tomb allowed

the church to "infect the world with a germ . . . the hope of liberation. The church plays a

mediating role in society, reminding the world of the hope in God's eschatological

future" (Jones 2011, 132).

> Our call is to identify with Christ's suffering and death, much as he has identified
> with us. In his death, we are united with his suffering. And in identifying with his
> resurrection, we are raised to new life. In the crucifixion, God opens the Trinity to
> us. The eternal love of the Trinity is made available to us in the ultimately humbling
> act of death on a cross, and our experience of godforsakenness is overcome, for we
> are now welcomed into the relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Jones 2012,
> 32)

Jones believed that his commitment to solidarity to God in the way of Jesus, to the church

in all its forms, the world in its diversity, and to one another in inclusive friendships

would initiate an ecumenical movement and a global conversation that engaged every

aspect of human cultures. Doug Pagitt echoed those hopes and desires as both a close

friend and participant in the emerging church community. Pagitt desired to reimagine

and reformulate the church for a postmodern culture. The similarities of their views

fashioned them as contrarian voices in the contemporary scene.

The Church Reimagined – Doug Pagitt

Doug Pagitt played an important role as an innovator during the nascent

stages of the emerging church. In his transition from a role as a megachurch youth pastor

to his leadership role with the Young Leadership Network he built a team of leaders that

became instrumental in the formation of the emerging church paradigm: McLaren,

Driscoll, Seay, Kimball, Jones, and Andrew Jones. In the year 2000, Pagitt shifted his

focus to planting a new church called Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota that

he called a "holistic, missional community" (Pagitt 2008, 241). In *Church Reimagined:*

The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith Pagitt provided a look at

church as a "new approach for a new age" (Pagitt 2005, 17). This fresh tactic included a

repositioning and restructuring of the church away from modernistic practices that

introduced success traits as tangible outputs of the American Dream. Rather the church

needed to be reimagined as a communal people seeking to live in harmony with God

from the vantage point of the gospel of the kingdom (Bohannon 2011, 36).

> At Solomon's Porch we are seeking a spiritual formation that, in essence, is not
> about individual effort but communal action involving a spirituality of physicality,
> centered on the way we lead our lives, allowing us to be Christian in and with our
> bodies and not in our minds and hearts only; a spirituality of dialogue within
> communities where the goal is not acquiring knowledge, but spurring one another
> on to new ways of imagining and learning; a spirituality of hospitality that is not
> limited to food before or after meetings, but is intended to create an environment of
> love and connectedness where people are formed and shaped as they serve and are
> served by one another; a spirituality of the knowledge of God where the Bible is not
> reduced to a book from which we exact truth, but the Bible is a full, living, and
> active member of our community that is listened to on all topics of which it speaks;
> a spirituality of creativity where creative gifts are not used as content support but
> rather as an invitation for those so inclined to participate in the generative processes
> of God; a spirituality of service, which is the natural response of all seeking to live
> in the way of Jesus and is not reserved for the elite of the faith (Pagitt, 2005, 35).

Pagitt and Tony Jones are interrelated and connected on numerous levels.

They have continued to co-own two companies that consulted and created paths for

churches in social media (Social Phonics) and event planning (JoPa Group)

(dougpagitt.com). The two also have worked together on a significant basis as Tony

Jones serves as theologian-in-residence at Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis (Jones 2011,

213) and he saluted the congregation in his doctoral dissertation:

> Finally, I want to make mention of my great affection for one church in particular. I
> have spent the past five years living in the Minneapolis area, an A.B.D. Ph.D.
> student, among other things. When I returned to Minnesota from Princeton, I knew
> that I could not return to the church of my youth and of my former employment.
> There was really only one church that I could imagine attending, and that was
> Solomon's Porch . . . . As time has passed, my friendship with Doug Pagitt has
> blossomed, and we have even begun a business together. I have become one of a

group of people who occasionally lead discussion time. And I happily call Solomon's Porch home. (Jones 2011, v)

This paean to Solomon's Porch included recognition that Solomon's Porch could not be replicated, was on the vanguard of the emerging church movement, and was a creation of divine providence (Jones 2011, vi). These elements combined to illustrate that their collaborative efforts at Emergent Village, harmonized messages about the kingdom of God, and their joint editing of a book on the emerging church paradigm united them as two cut from the same cloth of the Revisionist emerging church stream (Pagitt and Jones 2007, 11-12).

These pertinent facts colored the research that this dissertation reported in this chapter. Since the theology, ecclesiology, and missiology of Jones and Pagitt intersected both with one another and Lesslie Newbigin, only significant points of divergence are reported. As with most comparisons there are exceptions so the particular standpoints that Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt shared are quickly articulated with more emphasis given to where writings and positions differed. Particular attention is given to the agreements and differences between the thoughts of Doug Pagitt and Lesslie Newbigin. Both Newbigin and Pagitt articulated an idea that the church had morphed as American society had matriculated through various ages and epochs. Pagitt described this landscape as moving "from the Agrarian Age through the Industrial Age into the Information Age and now on to the Inventive Age" (Pagitt 2010, 13). The Inventive Age was described as one in which the future is uncertain and as an age of community "in which inclusion, participation, collaboration, and beauty are essential values" (Pagitt 2010, 30).

Community in the Inventive Age

Doug Pagitt was on the frontlines of the conversation that suggested that

"America was becoming as thoroughly secular and foreign to the gospel as 'foreign'

cultures and therefore needed its own theological agenda" (Driscoll 2006a). Doug Pagitt

said like Newbigin, "It may be quite necessary for some of us to move forward with the

way of Jesus in ways that are not encumbered by the history of Christendom" (Pagitt

2007, 132-33). This seminal shift began as the cohort of the Young Leadership Network

combed through the works of David Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin, and Roland Allen. These

seminal works encouraged Pagitt to identify the church much like Newbigin: "We ought

to understand churches as being more like prophetic communities than Christian teaching

sites. The churches described in the New Testament had this sense. They were alternative

and contemporary" (Pagitt 2011a, 159). Pagitt also affirmed the scandal of particularity

that Newbigin espoused stating that "Over the years, we started using a phrase that has

served as a kind of charge for our community: to be a benefit and a blessing to all the

world" (Pagitt 2011a, 22). Pagitt concurred that the church should be a missional force.

Pagitt emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in a community even above

that of Tony Jones. He stated, "Christians have never been intended to be a people only

of a book, but a people who are led by the ever-present God, active in our lives,

communities, and world" (Pagitt 2007, 126). Pagitt concluded that Scripture was a

component of discipleship rather than the center of discipleship allowing the community

to be the authority instead. Pagitt communicated that the Bible was another community

member, a voice to be heard, listened to, and discussed but not blindly followed (Pagitt

2011b, 195). Pagitt's conception of community was comprised of four elements: local,

global, historical, and "futurical" (Pagitt 2005, 27). He identified these elements of living

life in harmony with God as part of a community that interacted with "those around us,

154

those far from us, those who came before us, and those who will come after us" (Pagitt

2005, 31). His language intersected with Lesslie Newbigin in a significant way, "The

goal of Christian community is to be a living place of the hopes and aspirations of God.

In this way, Christian community serves as a hermeneutic of the gospel" (Pagitt 2007,

127).

Scripture in the Inventive Age

One of the chief characteristics of Pagitt that affirmed the work of Tony Jones

but diverged in discrete ways was his assessment that theology in community was

progressive, evolving, and ever changing (Pagitt 2007, 136-37). He compared theology

to the adapter card used in a laptop to connect to the Internet.

> In my view, theology is like the adapter. Theology is not the story of God, and it is
> not our story; rather, it is the understandings that allow us to connect the two. When
> my theology no longer serves that purpose, because either my story has changed or
> my understanding of God's story changes, then the right and faithful thing is for
> theology to change as well. (Pagitt 2007, 123)

Pagitt termed this concept as embodied theology that was always contextual, Spirit-led,

and participatory. In this context, Pagitt said that what Christians believed was not

timeless but a changing perspective. Pagitt admitted pulling many of these ideas from

Henry Churchill King's book *Reconstruction in Theology* claiming it "encapsulated my

sentiment about theology" (Pagitt 2007, 122). According to Mark Driscoll, King's

writings as a liberal theologian embraced the social gospel and rejected the doctrine of

penal substitutionary atonement whereby Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty of our

sins (Driscoll 2008a, 6). Perhaps even more curious was that King's writings are "littered

with many of the same phrases commonly used by Emergent Liberals, such as emergent

evolution, theology as conversation, progressive revelation, and personal relation"

(Driscoll 2008a, 6). Pagitt affirmed that the message required adjustments, change, and

adaptations in order for people to live faithfully into the story of God in each generation (Pagitt 2005, 17). This viewpoint carried over significantly into Pagitt's view of the Bible, and it led to severe repudiation by strong traditional Biblicists like Mark Driscoll and a range of others.

For the most part, Pagitt and Tony Jones walked lockstep in their view of Scriptures. This deviated from Lesslie Newbigin's assertion that the Scripture could be seen as public truth in all arenas of life. First, Pagitt argued, akin to Jones, that the Bible could not be classified and used as a reference book or encyclopedia that plucked Scripture from its context and "disembowels the Bible of the very authority many understand it to have" (Pagitt 2008, 58). In addition, inerrancy, which both Jones and Newbigin denied, was another philosophical position on Scripture that was opposed by Pagitt. Instead, "The Bible gains its authority from God and the communities who grant it authority" (Pagitt 2008, 64). The consequence of this hermeneutic was that the Bible was not an authoritative and infallible Word from above but rather a piece of God's ongoing story in humanity (Bohannon 2010, 88). Third, this tied into Pagitt's dynamic that the Bible was not a removed truth text to be memorized as a list of quotes. Pagitt considered this method a reductionist error detaching the verses from the whole biblical narrative. Finally, Pagitt negated the idea that the Bible should be a "sword of spite" used as a weapon to bludgeon unbelievers into ideological submission (Pagitt 2008, 56). Pagitt considered these methods of study as having the potential to "take what was meant to be a life-giving force for believers and threaten to turn it into a dead, meaningless muddle of words" (Pagitt 2008, 63).

Instead Pagitt embraced a philosophy of biblical hermeneutics that in many

156

ways were connected to Tony Jones and Lesslie Newbigin stating "The Bible isn't a reference book with stand alone entries. It's not a collection of short stories that are unrelated to one another. The Bible is a full narrative in which each section is part of a greater story" (Jones 2008, 57). Pagitt affirmed Newbigin's emphasis on the Bible as narrative, but Pagitt also refused to include the nuances that Newbigin stated that Scriptures were not total narrative. Pagitt echoed Jones in negating Newbigin's concept of a reciprocal relationship between the community and Scripture by dismissing the primacy of Scripture in the song and dance between community and the Bible. Pagitt argued that "this understanding of the Bible restores its authority by allowing it to be alive and free of the constraints we throw on it" (Pagitt 2008, 65).

The consequence of this fluid understanding of authority was a "reimagining" of hermeneutics that allowed for the space needed to continually reconstruct the message to address the multiplicity of issues in contemporary society (Pagitt 2005, 138). Pagitt listed areas of concern including not only the need to "draw new conclusions about sexuality," but also the consideration of "new ways of being sexual" (Pagitt 2005, 140). This reimagined church and preaching relegated the Bible to the interpretation of the reader and the community (Pagitt 2006, 195-97). Gary Gilley's critique of the innovators of the emerging church aptly applied to Jones and Pagitt when he wrote that leaders of this movement were "fond of expressing their excitement and fidelity to the Word of God, even as they undermine it" (Gilley 2006, 162-63). In fact, two critics wrote that, "In many ways, when it comes to their understanding of Scripture, emergent leaders are the new neo-orthodoxy" (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 74).

> I am convinced that a major problem with the emerging church is that they refuse to have their cake and eat it to. The whole movement seems to be built on

157

reductionistic, even modernistic, either-or categories. They pit information versus transformation, believing versus belonging, and propositions about Christ versus the person of Christ . . . . It is possible for Christians to esteem the Bible wrongly and equate the Bible with God. But it is not possible for Christians to esteem the Bible too highly. Every word in every sentence in every proposition or command in question in the Bible is inspired by God, is authoritative, trustworthy, true, useful, and aids our joy in God. (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 75)

Heaven on Earth

This pivot by Pagitt on the authority of Scripture was a point of contention, but his deconstruction and reformulation of an orthodox understanding of the gospel was his most radical departure. Kevin Bohannon's excellent articulation has suggested that Pagitt diverged from Lesslie Newbigin and Tony Jones not in focus but in the extremity of his teachings on the gospel and the kingdom (Bohannon 2010, 90-97). Jones and Pagitt both concocted an overrealized eschatology that neglected the eschatological fervency of Newbigin's mature thought. Pagitt's deviation from traditional and orthodox teachings on the gospel and the kingdom overstated the more muted meanderings of Tony Jones. Pagitt spoke of being enlightened by Mark 1:15 where Jesus stated, "The Kingdom of God is near."

There is little question in my mind that many of us in the Protestant church have erred in our overemphasis on teaching about Jesus to the exclusion of the call to the Kingdom life . . . . I had always understood the "Good News" as summed up in the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and promised return of Jesus. After reading this almost innocuously short passage, however, I started wondering. What was the Good News Jesus was referring to all those years before his death, burial, and resurrection? Could it be that the Good News Jesus talked about was less a call to believe in the things that happened to him or would happen to and through him than an invitation into Kingdom life? (Pagitt 2005, 33-34)

Pagitt believed that the emphasis of Jesus was not "centered on individual people leaving this world and living in a little room of glory in heaven. It was about the kingdom of God thriving on earth, just as it was in heaven" (Pagitt 2008, 220). Hence

Pagitt believed the church today had probably been preaching "too much Jesus at the expense of the kingdom of God" (Pagitt 2008, 218). Pagitt posited that "The Greek gospel is about the distant God coming into contact with lowly humanity through the atoning life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the perfect, sinless Son of God" (Pagitt 2008, 186).

> Jesus was not sent as the selected one to appease the anger of the Greek blood god. Jesus was sent to fulfill the promise of the Hebrew love God by ending human hostility. This world God created is one of peace and harmony and integration. Through Jesus, all humanity is brought into that world. And that is the point of the resurrection. (Bohannon 2010, 96; Pagitt 2008, 194)

The kingdom of God and heaven were not to be considered as another place or later happening. The kingdom of God was the gospel message. Heaven was a state of being where all God's hopes for all the earth come to fruition (Bohannon 2010, 97; Pagitt 2008, 218-22).

Pagitt rejected the fall, original sin, total depravity, judgment, and a wrathful God as an "out of date" theology that were not core components of the gospel message. Pagitt rejected what he called a transcendent, distant and vengeful "up-and-out God" for a "down-and-in God" that welcomed a vibrant, participatory, kingdom that "isn't somewhere else, waiting for us to die before we can be part of it. It is in us, through us, and for us right here, right now" (Pagitt 2008, 223). Pagitt asserted that this understanding of the kingdom of God as not being "a removed, someday place to a belief that the kingdom come is the gospel message has had a dramatic impact on the way I see myself and the world around me" (Pagitt 2008, 232). Salvation, rescue, and healing all come when the community of faith participated with God in a living, dynamic, relationship with God and one another, here, now, and forevermore. The chief end of all humanity, of all creation, was to live like God (Pagitt 2008, 143). "And God also invites

us to be re-created and to join the work of God as co-(re)creators. We are not bystanders, nor are we to be inactive" (Pagitt 2005, 185). This kingdom of the "already" articulated by Pagitt rejected and neglected the kingdom of the "not yet". Unlike Newbigin, Pagitt refused to see a central role for the church of Jesus Christ and obliterated the necessity of the cross. DeYoung succinctly summarized the biggest difference between Emergent Christianity and historical Christianity as "less about faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only access to God the Father and the only atonement for sins before a wrathful God, and more about living the life that Jesus lived and walking in His way" (DeYoung and Kluck 2008, 120). This critique demonstrated the fading influence of the emerging church paradigm among evangelicals as they embraced the term missional instead.

Evaluation of Pagitt and Jones

Jones and Pagitt occupied the Revisionist stream of the emerging church. The gospel they claimed to proclaim turned the good news into social advice according to some (Horton 2008, 101). This embrace of a neglected component of the Christian life was an affirmation of Newbigin's reflective analysis on the separation of mission and social engagement. In this emphasis, Jones and Pagitt overemphasized the reductionism of confessional Christianity and overplayed the authenticity of the new emerging church paradigm. Both Pagitt and Jones also overstated the entrapment of the gospel in modern culture and their attempt to strip away the Greco-Roman theologies that "in many ways was a version of faith customized for the fifth-century Greco-Romans" (Pagitt 2008, 45). In fact, their constant interaction with Greek dualism and philosophy negated Newbigin's concept of the church as a radical community with an exclusive message.

This exclusive message for Newbigin was an attempt to navigate a third way between what Newbigin considered two twin threats to the missionary calling of the church: liberalism and fundamentalism. Newbigin, however, identified as an evangelical with a strong conviction about the finished work of the cross and the objectivity of the atonement. He classified his shift as away from classical liberalism toward evangelical thought. Pagitt and Jones reversed this trend throughout the conversation and movement known as the emerging church by negating such doctrines as substitionary atonement and original sin. Pagitt admitted his shift away from evangelicalism. He wrote,

> I have no regrets over my experience with the evangelical faith community. I will be ever grateful to the institutions and people who invested so much in me; yet my life experiences have led me to desire ways of Christianity beyond the practices and beliefs of my beginning. I began wondering if my experience as an evangelical was a great place for me to start but not a sufficient place for me to finish. Solomon's Porch was fueled by a desire to find a new way of life with Jesus, in community with others, that honored my past and moved boldly into the future" (Pagitt 2005, 43).

Pagitt and Jones concluded that "Emergents were looking for intersections and connections between the overarching biblical narrative and the many ways that human beings cultivated their experiences in all aspects of culture" (Jones 2008, 75). The result of this intersection with postmodern culture toward a reformulated gospel led to a move by many to denounce Pagitt's gospel as not resembling an "orthodox, biblical, theological, and historical understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Bohannon 2010, 188). Pagitt's latest work, *A Christianity Worth Believing,* replaced the traditional gospel with a reformatted one that equated the good news with the kingdom of God. The consequence was a rejection of God as judge over man's sin and the reality of eternal punishment; a reformulation of man's sin as disintegration; a refutation of the substitutionary atonement as the means for providing salvation; and the reformatting of

Jesus as a revolutionary guide or example who ushered us into the kingdom of God (Bohannon 2010, 187). John MacArthur has stated that he did not believe Doug Pagitt was a true Christian or pastor nor did MacArthur believe Solomon's Porch was a true church (Bohannon 2010, 188). John Piper counseled that Tony Jones and by extension Doug Pagitt should never preach because of what Piper classified as an abandonment of the gospel; heavy criticism that piqued interest but also necessitates a close examination of their theology and methodology (Jones 2008, 77).

The new way articulated by Jones and Pagitt was a "kingdom-of-God-gospel of Jesus that calls us to be full partners with God, to be full participants in the life God is creating, to follow in the way of Jesus as we seek to live as people who are fully integrated with our Creator" (Jones 2008, 226). What was lost was the uniqueness of "Christ's once-and-for-all work for us, apart from us, outside of us, in the past, and the work that only he can do when he returns in glory" (Horton 2008, 113). The gospel of Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt shifted the frame of reference from sin and salvation to "enlist Jesus as a mascot for our own programs of national and global redemption" (Horton 2008, 114). Pagitt and Jones proclaimed a gospel that emphasized man's deeds over and above creeds, but left out the most important components: a unique Savior and the essential elements of the cross. This missing metanarrative was a departure from the work of Lesslie Newbigin and an abandonment of the mission narrative Newbigin so desperately wanted to advance.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH AS SIGN, INSTRUMENT,
AND FORETASTE

Lesslie Newbigin's terminology introducing the church as sign, instrument,

and foretaste created a unique perspective in his desire to connect with Western culture

(Newbigin 1995b, 110). This distinctive description defined the church as the

eschatological new humanity in the present moving to the consummation of history. The

church served as a preview of eschatological community and the nucleus of a new

redeemed humanity (Newbigin 1993d, 153). In a sense, the church pointed to the

kingdom of God while serving as a missionary presence to usher in God's reign. God's

missionary people, in Newbigin's estimation, are chosen to bless the world. This elective

purpose brought an awareness of the requirement to view the West as a mission field.

Newbigin issued a call to "the same intense and sustained attention to the problem of

finding the dynamic equivalent for the Gospel in Western society as missiologists are

giving to that problem as it occurs in the meeting with the peoples of the Third World"

(Wainwright 2000, 196). The result was Newbigin turning his missiological energy and

acumen to the task of contextualization of the gospel in relation to "the powerful

paganism of our Western world" (Newbigin 1988d, 52). Newbigin's purpose in

developing a theology of contextualization was to recapture and reconvert the West by

imbuing Christians with a proper confidence in the gospel.

Contextual theology has been defined as a means of doing theology in which behavior leads to belief. Deeds lead to creeds (Oakland 2007, 49). Another writer has suggested that contextual theology aims at the humanization of theology (Oakland 2007, 43). One author proposed that contextual theology has tackled two intersecting themes: the teaching recorded in Scripture and our present experience so that theology becomes "appropriated" (Bevans 2006, 4-7). Many factors define context including the experiences, culture, social location, and social change of a community. Contextual theology is a recent term used to describe the ongoing process of contextualization. The challenge is contextualization without syncretism.

Newbigin's contention was that contextualization was a word coined to replace what he saw as misleading terms such as adaptation and indigenization (Newbigin 1980, 154). His proposition assumed the intensity of the debate about contextualization was because of "the recognition that the cultural dominance of the Old Christendom can no longer be assumed." Newbigin was intentionally determined to wrestle with the question of contextualization in the contemporary culture of the West (Newbigin 1980, 155). He borrowed the term "challenging relevance" from A. G. Hogg to suggest the gospel must be heard to be relevant. Newbigin believed the most pressing missiological issue of the decade was the attempt by the church in the Western culture to untangle their identification with the culture and stand as bearers of God's judgment upon the culture. Newbigin saw few signs of serious wrestling with "the problem of contextualization in relation to the most resistant of all contemporary cultures, namely the tough, confident, resilient paganism of our 'modern' Western world" (Newbigin 1983, 11).

Inherent in Newbigin's view of contextualization was the existence of a

community that served as a locus for contextual theology.   His view of the gospel in a

pluralist society saw the gospel as "the message embodied in an actual story of what God

has in fact done, is doing, and will do" (Newbigin 1989b, 152). Newbigin emphasized

the human context of the gospel.

> The Gospel is addressed to human beings, to their minds and hearts and
> consciences, and calls for response. Human beings only exist as members of
> communities which share a common language, customs, ways of ordering economic
> and social life, ways of understanding and coping with their world. If the gospel is
> to be understood, if it is to be received as something which communicates truth
> about the real human situation, if it is as we say, to "make sense" it has to be
> communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be
> clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them. (Newbigin 1989b, 141)

Newbigin offered a path faithful to contextualization of the gospel as the church served as

a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the Kingdom. This faithful contextualization allowed

the gospel to challenge the culture and the church to subversively influence the social

settings for the purpose of summing all things up in Jesus Christ.

Focus Statement Synopsis

This research presents Newbigin's concept of the church as a sign, foretaste,

and instrument of the kingdom and his use of the challenging relevance of the gospel in

the relationship between the church and culture to examine his influence, if any, on

selected early adopters and innovators in the emerging church paradigm.

Triangular Movement of the Gospel

Newbigin believed there was a glaring gap in missiology in Western culture.

There was an implicit, functional mindset that refused to examine the implications of the

Enlightenment mindset of modernity and consumerism in addition to the individualistic

pragmatism that constricted the gospel. Newbigin argued practical missiology needed to pay attention to the gospel, the culture, and to one another. First, Newbigin desired to create an encounter between the gospel and culture that was both relevant and challenging to and in that culture (Hunsberger 1998, 238). Newbigin believed that this encounter initiated a paradigm shift that created a discontinuity with the prevailing culture that he entitled conversion. Newbigin also realized that this uneasiness with a culture was never total because of a continued interaction with and within culture. Second, Newbigin believed that the fruit of this conversion was a community for whom "the Bible is the determinative clue to the character and activity of the one whose purpose is the final meaning of history" (Newbigin 1986, 62). This relationship between the Bible and the church itself, embodied in active discipleship, allowed the church to become the hermeneutic of the gospel among the cultures of the age. Finally, in this encounter, the church's lifestyle developed a missionary dialogue with the prevailing culture.

Newbigin believed that a missionary encounter between the gospel and a given culture was not a static process. Newbigin's contribution was particularly valuable because of his missionary experience in communicating the gospel in a radically different environment both in India and the secularized West. Newbigin described the interaction between the gospel and culture as an evolving relationship within a triangular field, of which the three points are the "local culture, the ecumenical fellowship representing the witness of Christians from other cultures, and the Scriptures as embodying the given revelation, with its center and focus in the person of Jesus Christ" (Newbigin 1995b, 153). This triangle of forces situated in juxtaposition three axes of special interest: on the

first side, the gospel-culture (or Christ-culture, Bible-culture) encounter itself; on the other side, the reciprocal relationship between the Bible and the community whose life is defined by the Scriptures; and along the base, the missionary dialogue between that community and the cultures as they were both simultaneously addressed by the Bible (Hunsberger 1998, 237).

Newbigin's major contribution was the addition of a reciprocal relationship between the church and the Bible. This shared dynamic between the duo was a contingent relationship by which the church represented the Bible in the encounter with culture and the Bible critiqued and transformed the church while it was doing so. Several questions emerged from the framework created by this triangular model. Where was the church in the gospel and culture encounter? Why was the missiological discussion bilingual omitting the church? What was the nature of the gospel and culture encounter? What was the relationship between Scripture and the church? All these questions entailed what Hunsberger called a "theology of cultural plurality" (Hunsberger 1998, 239).

The ongoing relationship between the gospel and culture was not an entirely new enterprise. One such work was the landmark study of H. Richard Niebuhr who proposed five motifs of the relation of Christ to culture: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture (Niebuhr 1951). Two recent updates of this model include the work by D. A. Carson entitled *Christ and Culture Revisited* and Craig A. Carter's seminal tome, *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective* (Carter 2006; Carson 2008). One interesting perspective that has examined the interaction between the gospel message and culture is *Models of Contextual Theology* by Stephen B. Bevans (Bevans

2002). The revision and expansion of this work was undertaken after a presentation by

Bevans at a Gospel and Our Culture conference, where he stated, "I was grateful for the

criticism given, especially by Mike Goheen, who called me to task for a too-negative

reading of Lesslie Newbigin" (Bevans 2002, xvi). The adjustment added a sixth model as

Bevans had already suspected that there was another model of contextualization that took

culture seriously, thoroughly engaged it, but also was thoroughly suspicious of it. This

model was eventually fleshed out as countercultural and was attributed to the thought of

Lesslie Newbigin.

Contextual Theology

Lesslie Newbigin, out of his almost forty years of life as a missionary in India,

articulated a means of contextualization for the "culture that is the most widespread,

powerful, and persuasive among all contemporary culture-namely . . . modern Western

culture" (Newbigin 1986, 2-3). Newbigin hoped to navigate the rapids in the

communication of the gospel and the culture between two opposite dangers, the Scylla

and Charybdis: syncretism and irrelevance (Weston 2006, 208). "In the attempt to be

relevant one may fall into syncretism, and in the effort to avoid syncretism one may

become irrelevant" (Newbigin 1986, 7). The cross-cultural communication of the gospel

would call into question the underlying worldview implicit in any culture or language. In

addition, Newbigin wanted to avoid two other issues pertinent to Western culture. How

does one avoid encapsulating the gospel in a modern mindset without overcorrecting and

embracing relativism?

> In other words, instead of confronting our culture with the gospel, we are
> perpetually trying to fit the gospel into our culture. In our effort to communicate, we
> interpret the gospel by the categories of our culture. But how can we avoid this?
> How can we, who are part of this culture, find a standpoint from which we can

address a word, the word of the gospel, to our culture? Archimedes said: Give me a point outside the earth and with a lever I will move the earth. Where is the Archimedean point from which we can challenge the culture of which we ourselves are a part? (Weston 2006, 208)

Contextual theology was an attempt to create a dialogue in faith "between the experience of the past that is recorded in and preserved in Scripture and the church's tradition and the experience of the present that is found in one's context" (Bevans 2009, 169). The models were created as a description of how this process worked and the way the dialogue occurred according to the basic attitude one maintained both toward the past and present. The most "conservative" of the six models, the countercultural model inspired by the missiology and theology of Lesslie Newbigin, recognized the importance of context but radically distrusted its ability to conform humanity to its persuasive powers. The most "radical" of the motifs, the model centered on the context, emphasized cultural identity and its relevance for theology. The practitioners of the themes in the center (praxis and synthesis) zeroed in on either the importance or need of social change (praxis) or the difficult task of keeping all the elements (past, present, and need for transforming action) in perfect balance (Bevans 2009, 170). The model labeled "Context," since it was the model that departed most from traditional theological content is placed on the far left. The countercultural model, used by such theologians as Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon in *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, is depicted on the extreme right with a concern to challenge the context (Hauerwas and Willimon, 1989). Bevans suggested that each of these models was a valid way of doing contextualization, but he also addressed the question of whether they were adequate in particular contexts.

Newbigin devoted his spiritual and intellectual energies to a contextualization that confronted the Western world. His viewpoint that Christendom was continuing to disintegrate led to a model of contextual theology that attempted to retell the biblical story that challenged every other account of reality (Wainwright 2000, 196). This missionary encounter with modernity, according to Newbigin, required a recovery of lost nerve as the church courageously moved away from a subordinate position in society. This countercultural move would necessitate a recovery of lost nerve to tell God's story.

Table 1. Models of contextual theology by Bevans

Type	Context	Native	Praxis	Synthesis	Dynamic Equivalence	Counter Cultural
Alternate Titles	*Anthropos* Indigenous	Modern Ideal	Situational "Signs of the Times"	Analogy	Translation Adaptation	Prophet Contrast
Biblical Basis	Matthew 15:21-28	Mark 2:21-22	James 1:22	Canon creation	Acts 17:2-31	Romans 12:2
How God Reveals Himself	Construed as personal presence	In direct contact	Seen as God at work in the world. Partners	Uses elements of all models	Construed as propositional Content-oriented	Story that reveals the fact of Jesus
Analogy	Take off your shoes; Pull the gospel out	Group Garden; Process not product	Tend the garden; Follow Jesus	Cross pollinate; Dialogue	Bring seeds; Planting the gospel into	Weed the garden; Defy

Leans Toward the Present (Context)
    Human Experience
    Culture
    Social location
						Leans toward the Past (Content)
						    Scripture
						    Tradition

The starting point for Newbigin's conception of faithful contextualization was the primacy of the gospel, the story of Scripture as an ultimate commitment. Newbigin referred to this as true contextualization that lived out faithfulness to the gospel as well as relevance to the culture. Such a dynamic required three dimensions: faithfulness to Scripture, a dialogue with the local culture that avoided syncretism and irrelevance, and a conversation with other believers that evaded bigotry and relativism. "True contextualization happens when there is a community which lives faithfully by the gospel and in that same costly identification with people in their real situation as we see in the earthly ministry of Jesus" (Newbigin 1989b, 154).

True Contextualization

Contextualization was necessary for the gospel, according to Newbigin, because of several contributing factors. First, and foremost, the gospel itself was embedded in culture. "We must start with the basic fact that there is no such thing as a pure gospel if by that is meant something which is not embodied in a culture" (Newbigin 1989b, 144). Otherwise the gospel emerged as an imperial story asserting the conviction that one human culture was the way for all and adaption was unnecessary. Newbigin used as an example the universal claim of Islam as God's will. The mandate articulated in such a system was that every society must conform to the will of Allah that was communicated in the untranslatable Arabic of the Koran (Newbigin 1989b, 145). Newbigin postulated that many of the mistakes of past cross-cultural missions in the West were created by a supposedly universal gospel culturally conditioned to the Enlightenment refrain. The Enlightenment, Newbigin argued, imprisoned and absorbed

171

the gospel for its own purposes instead of the purpose of God. Second, situations existed

and still exist in which varying cultural expressions of the gospel are faithful to Scripture.

> It happens over and over again that the gospel "comes alive" in a way that the
> evangelist had never dreamed of, and has effects which he never anticipated . . . .
> The gospel has a sovereignty of its own and is never an instrument in the hands of
> the evangelist. Or, to put it more truly, the Holy Spirit, by whose secret working
> alone the gospel "comes alive" is not under the evangelist's control. The wind blows
> freely. (Newbigin 1989b, 153)

Finally, Newbigin argued that contextualization was an ongoing process. "Since culture

is constantly changing and since the gospel must be translated faithfully into every idiom,

if the church is to live out the gospel, the process . . . will never be a *fait acccompli*"

(Goheen 2000, 334).

Newbigin articulated two fundamental questions in his quest to define true

contextualization: How can the church be faithful to the gospel and relevant to the culture

without falling into syncretism? How can the church be faithful to one gospel without

falling into a belief in the inherit superiority of one's culture and at the same time

embrace different expressions of the gospel without falling into irrelevancy or relativism?

The answer for Newbigin was when "true contextualization accords to the gospel its

rightful primacy" (Newbigin 1989b, 152).

The gospel in this situation would speak both judgment and grace to each

person in unique and mysterious ways. The gospel centered in the life of Christ would

not be universally applied in an unchanging pattern of personal or social behaviors or be

set in a series of abstract moral and political principles. The gospel would not be

communicated when the local church had internalized the culture of the missionary, "Its

theological doctrines, its administrative machinery, its music, until there was a complete

replica of the home church . . . . The young church was to be a carbon copy of the old

172

church in England, Scotland, or Germany" (Newbigin 1989b, 147). Instead for Newbigin

contextualization took place with the meeting of the gospel and culture within the life of

the church.

> I am sure the central clue to answering our question about true and false
> contextualization . . . . Where there is a believing community whose life is centered
> in the biblical story through its worshipping, teaching, and sacramental and
> apostolic life . . . it is part of my faith in the authenticity of the story that this
> community will not be finally betrayed. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
> But where something else is put at the center, a moral code, a set of principles, or
> the alleged need to meet some criterion imposed from outside the story, one is adrift
> in the ever changing tides of history, and the community which commits itself to
> these things becomes one more piece of driftwood on the current. (Newbigin 1989b,
> 148)

Newbigin argued that authentic Christian thought did not begin by attending to

the desires of people nor by answering the questions they were asking in their terms.

Instead it offered the inclusiveness of the gospel inhabited by Jesus Christ in the fullness

of his ministry, death, and resurrection. The gospel was this and nothing else. Newbigin

saw the friction between the clash of two competing worldviews shaped by two different

stories – the story of the gospel and the ruling story of the culture – within the life of a

believing community (Goheen 2000, 369). Newbigin refused to resolve this conflict

either by isolation or imitation of the culture. The church neither lived in isolation from

the world nor simply accommodated itself to the world's idolatrous patterns. Instead it

inhabited the challenging relevance of the gospel by an internal dialogue that constantly

tested the culture and through a communal commitment that was faithful to the story of

the gospel.

Challenging Relevance of the Gospel

Perhaps Newbigin's most fundamental premise concerning the gospel was that

the gospel was never free of culture. The gospel was always imbedded and embodied in

culturally conditioned forms (Newbigin 1986, 4). The task for the missionary was to be both faithful to the gospel and relevant to the culture. "The first danger is faithfulness without relevance . . . fossil theology . . . The second danger is relevance without faithfulness . . . chameleon theology" (Goheen 2000, 337). Newbigin attempted to solve this tension with the notion of "challenging relevance" or less often the idea of "subversive fulfillment" (Hunsberger 1998, 240). Both of these terms pointed to the same concept. The idea employed the communication of the gospel in the language of the receptor culture.

In India, Hindu terms and categories were used, but they were "burst open by the power of the gospel" (Goheen 2000, 337). Since Hindu categories in the receptor language were used, the proclamation of the gospel was relevant, but the gospel also challenged the Hindu understanding of the world and confronted the hearer with a call for repentance and conversion. The proclamation of the gospel fulfilled the spiritual desires of the Hindu heart when expressed in their own terminology. However, the gospel also subverted the Hindu understanding at its roots (Goheen 2000, 337). Relevance was necessary because there never was a straight line from the gospel to the culture. Challenge was created as a result of the new understanding that called for repentance. The radical conversion that was initiated could never "be the achievement of any human persuasion, however eloquent. It can only be the work of God" (Newbigin 1986, 6).

> This pattern is brilliantly exemplified in the Johannine writings. "John" freely uses the language and the thought-forms of the religious world for which he writes. Much of it is suggestive of the sort of worldview that is often very imprecisely called "Gnosticism" and has obvious affinities with Indian thought . . . . Yet John uses this language and these thought-forms in such a way as to confront them with a fundamental question and indeed a contradiction. The logos is no longer an idea in the mind of the philosopher or the mystic. The logos is the man Jesus who went the way from Bethlehem to Calvary. (Newbigin 1986, 6)

174

Newbigin employed the idea of challenging relevance and subversive fulfillment to avoid both syncretism and irrelevance. He saw it as a way to navigate the "big ugly ditch" between the trappings of modern culture and the eternal truth of the gospel (Newbigin 1994c, 37). Newbigin viewed the notion of subversive fulfillment and challenging relevance as applicable to far more than language and verbal missionary communication. In addition, it was a process by which the Christian community interacted with the myriad of institutions and customs of its culture. Newbigin believed that the gospel communicated both an affirmation and negation to each cultural form by affirming the necessity of culture but condemning any idolatrous distortion (Goheen 2000, 339).

The more intensely the believing community sensed opposition between the gospel and the cultural assumptions shaped by a different idea, the more intolerable the tension of living between two different worldviews was felt (Goheen 2000, 352). Bishop Lesslie Newbigin moved to Britain after almost forty years in India and engaged modern culture in the West and he experienced deep ambivalence. This tension was multiplied by concomitant and contradictory factors. First, the church was part of a society that embodied a cultural story while also facing the paradoxical thought that it too was part of a community that lived in this same "*sitz im leben.*" Second, the church incarnated its story in a different identity, rooted in faith, and lived out in friction with the prevailing culture. Third, the deep conflict emerged because the church inhabited two worlds: the world shaped by the culture and the world shaped by the biblical story. The strain occurred because the gospel and the cultural story are deeply at odds and yet encountered one another in the life of the church (Goheen 2000, 352). The church lived at the

crossroads of the seeming incompatibility of the two stories in palpable tension.

Newbigin posited that authentic contextualization resolved this tension in the life of the

church (Newbigin 1989b, 154).

The desire for Newbigin was to create local bodies of believers that embodied

the grace of Jesus in word and deed and existed not for itself but for the world at large in

what he called the hermeneutic circle within the church. At the center of that plan was

the church indwelling the challenging relevance of the gospel through true

contextualization defined in terms of its call to bear the gospel to the world. The source

of this mission was God who culminated his long path of redemption in the sending of

Jesus and created the church to also be sent in the power of the Spirit as the locus and

place of God's redemptive work. This sending defined not a task of the church but its

central call and nature. The impediment of that mission in Western culture was wrapped

up in the parochial nature of the church existing for itself with no antithesis to the culture.

The church, in Newbigin's thought, was "not to be defined by what it is, but by that End

to which it moves" (Newbigin 1951b, 19). In Newbigin's writings, the missionary nature

of the church was wrapped up in its eschatological context. The end-time reign of Jesus

was the context for Newbigin's concept of the church (Goheen 2000, 165).

Sign, Instrument, and Foretaste

This correlation between the church and the kingdom is rooted in the fact that

Jesus announced the good news that the kingdom of God was at hand. The church is

composed of those who live in the "already-not yet" gap between the time Jesus

inaugurated the new creation through his advent and time of the *Parousia* when Jesus

returns to finish what he had begun. The kingdom of God is already here by the work of

the Spirit, but it has not yet been completed. Missionary obedience for Newbigin was

what this time between times was all about. The church was formed to bear witness

obediently to the coming of God's kingdom to the ends of the earth as well as the end of

the age.

> The meaning of this "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 end of all things, which has been revealed in Christ, is–so to say–held back until the witness has been borne to the whole world concerning the judgment and salvation revealed in Christ. 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. (Newbigin 1954, 135)

Newbigin believed that when the eschatological and missionary impulse were

lost from the thinking of the church that "its task comes to be conceived in terms of the

rescue of individuals one by one out of this present evil age and their preservation

unharmed for the world to come" (Newbigin 1954, 146). This understanding of mission

between the times diminished and even disfigured salvation to an individualistic concern

that only wanted to escape from this present age. Newbigin believed that with the

inauguration of the kingdom of God by Jesus Christ until its consummation was summed

up in Jesus, the church initiated and anticipated God's ultimate reign by erecting signs of

God's already but not yet coming kingdom. Newbigin asserted that this focus delivered

the church from its tendency to turn in upon itself and instead turned it outwards to the

world.

Newbigin's most frequent terminology related to the end-time context defining

the relationship of the church to the kingdom was a triad: sign, instrument, and foretaste

(Newbigin 1954, 145; Newbigin 1986, 136; Newbigin 2003, 72). First, the church was

defined by Newbigin as the foretaste of the kingdom, the place where God's reign was

177

visible in the present and created hope for the full realization of that promise. The church

was not the realized kingdom but the appetizer for that which was yet to come.

> Think of one of those posh dinner parties where you are kept standing for ages and
> ages and wonder whether there's ever going to be anything to eat. Then a trolley is
> brought on and there is a tinkle of glasses, and you are not only extremely glad to
> get a drink because you're getting thirsty, but, what is much more important, that
> trolley is a sign that something is cooking in the kitchen . . . . The Holy Spirit is not
> just an IOU, a promissory note . . . . But the whole point of it is that it is a foretaste,
> that it assures you of a greater reality still to come. And in that sense the Church is
> the foretaste of the Kingdom. (Weston 2006, 138-39)

Newbigin believed that if the church was a place where the culture could get a taste of the

future in the present then it could also be a sign.

The point of a sign to the kingdom "is that it points to something that is not yet

visible" (Weston 2006, 140). Newbigin stated that as the church incarnated the rule of

God in their words, lives, and deeds that the church together pointed to the future coming

of the kingdom in all its fullness. This other-worldliness was something, Newbigin

noted, that had to be held on to. The church was not an organization competing with

other agencies in the world that offered solutions to the world in the here and now as

utopian illusions. Instead, Newbigin wrote, the community erected credible signs that

pointed to a reality beyond what we can see. Newbigin frequently employed an attractive

illustration to demonstrate this concept:

> I think that a very good and valid symbol of our mission is to be found in an
> experience with which those of us who have lived in India are familiar. When we
> have to go to a distant village in our pastoral duty we try to start very early in the
> morning, so that we do not have to walk in the heat of the day. And it sometimes
> happens that we have to set off in total darkness; perhaps we are going towards the
> west so that there is no light in the sky and everything is dark. But as we go, a party
> of people traveling the opposite way comes to meet us. There will be at least a faint
> light on their faces. If we stop and ask them: "Where does the light come from?"
> They will simply ask us to turn round (do the U-turn) and look towards the east. A
> new day is dawning, and the light we saw was just its faint reflection in the faces of
> those going that way. They did not possess the light; it was a light given to them.
> The church is that company which, going the opposite way to the majority, facing

not from life towards death, but from death towards life, is given already the first glow of the light of a new day. It is that light that is the witness. (Newbigin 1987b, 21)

Finally, the church was an instrument or agent of the kingdom. In the mission of Jesus, Newbigin detailed that the coming of the kingdom involved a battle of spiritual forces that opposed God's reign. As the church took up the mission of Jesus, according to Newbigin, the church was the instrument of God to make the kingdom of God known by preaching the good news and challenging those who opposed God's rule (Goheen 2000, 173). As an instrument, Newbigin surmised, the church was used to bring about the eschatological goal. The church was not the only instrument, but all of God's creation and history was on its way to being fulfilled and summed up in Jesus Christ. Newbigin argued the impact of this action was to thrust the church out into the secular world with the gospel (Weston 2006, 139). In that vein, the church could only be an instrument as it pointed to a new reality and acted as a foretaste of the coming reign of God. The church was foretaste, instrument, and sign as it inhabited two further denouements: the participation of the church as a hermeneutical circle in the missionary encounter between the gospel and the culture and as the designation of the gospel as the challenging relevance in the culture. This encounter between gospel and culture never occurred in a vacuum but in a community of faith defined by its role in God's story narrated in Scripture.

The Reciprocal Relationship

Newbigin counted as an inevitable fact that in the missionary encounters between the gospel and the culture that the result was the creation of believing communities whose mission was to "bear in its own life the witness of the Spirit as those

179

chosen for that purpose" (Hunsberger 1998, 255). The clue to the inherent makeup of

this community of faith lived in the fact that it inhabited a world on the other side of the

boundary marked by conversion. The paradigm shift called conversion led to former

ultimate commitments being exchanged for the Scriptures. "The Bible comes into our

hands as the book of a community, and neither the book nor the community are properly

understood except in their reciprocal relationship with each other" (Newbigin 1986, 54).

Newbigin stated that the community of faith was continuously shaped by the attention it

gave to the Bible. Likewise, the cultural lenses through which the believing community

understood and heard the Bible equally shaped the community's understanding of

Scripture. The community was "constantly modified as each new generation of believers

endeavors to be faithful in understanding and living out Scripture" (Newbigin 1986, 56).

Newbigin entitled this "the hermeneutic circle" that operated within the believing

community, a hermeneutic of the gospel.

> I have spoken of the hermeneutical circle that operates within the community of
> faith. Scripture and tradition, tradition and Scripture are in a constantly developing
> reciprocal relationship, and the development is not a merely cerebral process but is
> part of a total life of worship, of obedience, of side-taking discipleship in the ever
> changing circumstances of new generations and new cultures. (Newbigin 1986, 58)

This reciprocal relationship placed the church in a vital location for the

encounter between the culture and the gospel. Newbigin posited that any effort to

establish the authority of the Bible in either the fact (inerrancy) or value (subjective

personal experience) poles of the Enlightenment mentality were doomed to failure

because such commitments operated "within the cultural presuppositions of the modern

scientific world-view" (Newbigin 1986, 50). "Although it may be very shocking to a

certain kind of post-Enlightenment Protestant conscience, it is not the Bible by itself but

the church confessing the mystery of the faith that is spoken of as the pillar and bulwark

of the truth (I Tim. 3:15-16)" (Newbigin 1986, 58). Still, Newbigin affirmed that the Scripture always had primacy because it rendered accessible to us the character and actions and purposes of God.

In Newbigin's mind, the church in Western culture was caught between Constantinian Christendom and the Enlightenment's relegation of the church to the private realm because the society no longer looked to the church for legitimization or moral underpinning (Newbigin 1986, 102). The acceptance by the Christian community of either status was untenable because it was to deny the fact "that Christ is, simply and finally, the truth by which all other claims to truth are to be tested. It is to abandon its calling" (Newbigin 1986, 102). Newbigin's solution was not a return to the era of a churched culture but to adopt the identity of resident aliens both chosen by God and scattered abroad. Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon proposed such an imagery of exile as they described a "confessing church model as a radical alternative to the activist (Constantinian) or conversionist (privatized) models that are current . . . an alternative *polis*, a countercultural social structure called the church" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989, 44-49). Even though this duo was more Anabaptist in orientation, they share some ecclesiological connections to Newbigin. All the countercultural advocates believed the church's overriding task would be as a community of the cross that asserted that God was sovereign over the nations of the world, that the boundaries of God's kingdom transcended those of Caesar, and whose central concern was the formation of a people of God who clearly incarnated the life of Jesus. Newbigin argued that such a stance could not "be regarded as the esoteric belief of a community that is living in the world of make-believe rather than the world of facts" (Newbigin 1986, 63). Instead a biblical vision of

181

the believer as a humble witness that inhabited a life of faithful endeavor and costly

obedience would be the argument that turned the tide, according to Newbigin.

The demonstration of such a community that lived out the real fact that faith in

the gospel could be a genuine organizing hub that could make sense of the fragmentation

of modern society and would allow that community to be perceived as a feasible

alternative. Such an agenda, according to Newbigin, would require this community to

pay greater attention in three directions. Newbigin believed the church must pay sharp

attention to the culture so that it could navigate between the "Scylla of culture bashing on

one side and the Charybdis of absorption into culture on the other, attempting to avoid

both dashing ourselves on the rock and getting swallowed into the sea" (Hunsberger and

Van Gelder 1996, 7). In addition, the church needed to pay close attention to the gospel

that was incarnated in Christian communities that learned the habit of "indwelling the

gospel story, only as we are so deeply involved in the life of the community which is

shaped by this story that it becomes our real plausibility structure" (Newbigin 1989b,

232). Finally, we must pay attention to one another, Newbigin argued, as the global

dimensions of the growing pervasiveness of Western culture that carried its pattern of

resistance to the gospel necessitated a common mission to represent the reign of God in a

modern, secular, and pluralist world (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 1996, 25). This

attentiveness needed a credible expression of the gospel identified as missional living.

Missional Living

The ultimate responsibility, in Newbigin's thought for mission in modern

society was the Christian congregation. In this sense, Newbigin suggested that other

activities of the congregation such as evangelistic campaigns, books, and conferences

182

were important as the church challenged secular society with the gospel (Newbigin 1989b, 227). However, these artifacts and practices were secondary and only have power to accomplish that challenge in the context of life rooted in and leading back to a believing community.

> Jesus, as I said earlier, did not write a book but formed a community. This community has at its heart the remembering and rehearsing of his words and deed, and the sacraments given by him through which it is enabled both to engraft new members into its life and to renew this life again and again through sharing in his risen life through the body broken and the lifeblood poured out. It exists in him and for him. He is the center of its life. Its character is given to it, when it is true to its nature, not by the character of its members but by his character. Insofar as it is true to its calling, it becomes the place where men and women and children find that the gospel gives them the framework of understanding, the 'lenses' through which they are able to understand and cope with the world. (Newbigin 1989b, 227)

In this sense, Newbigin preceded the missional movement in the contemporary church. Darrell Guder thought that it was justified to characterize the whole missional church discussion as having been, "at its core, a response to Lesslie Newbigin's greatest concern: the establishment of the church in the West as a missionary church, given the fact that its context has become a mission field" (Guder 2005, 424). Newbigin argued that the church that ceased to be on mission relinquished the title of "church" in the biblical sense of the word. Mission was not a task given the church but the church in her essence was missionary because God was a sending God. Frost and Hirsch have posited three principles, thoughts originally formulated by Newbigin, which gave energy and direction to the missional church. First, the missional church was incarnational not attractional in its ecclesiology (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 129-59). The church needed to scatter and invade the cracks and crevices of society in order to be Jesus to those that did not know Jesus yet. Second, the missional church according to this duo was messianic, not dualistic, in its spirituality. The world was not divided between the sacred and

183

secular split. Instead the church viewed the world holistically. Third, the church was to

be apostolic in its leadership embracing a pioneering and innovative mode of leadership

that used the five leadership functions of Ephesians 4:11. Others formulated varying

characteristics of what missional communities entailed (Guder 1998; Frost and Hirsch

2003; Minatrea 2004; Hirsch 2006)

Newbigin identified six characteristics of a church that lived in such a holistic

fashion and saw its biblical call as preparing all of God's people to be sent as

missionaries to their own communities.

> The fact that Newbigin's list of characteristics predated any list from other
> missional church proponents verified his influence in the missional church
> movement; other missional church proponents built on and made more explicit
> Newbigin's characteristics. (Lemons 2008, 17)

The characteristics listed by Newbigin included the church that was a community of

praise as distinct from skeptical modern thought, stood on the Scriptures as public truth in

a new plausibility structure, engaged the secular community by deep involvement in the

neighborhood, empowered the people of God to be dispersed into the surrounding culture

as a priesthood of believers, modeled a community of mutual responsibility as a new

social order, and was ground zero as a community of eschatological hope (Newbigin

1989b, 227-33).

These characteristics were formative in the development of characteristics of

the missional church movement as well as definitions descriptive of the missional church.

A seminal definition described the missional church as one that "defines and organizes

life around its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world and attempts to

reproduce communities of authentic disciples who in turn are sent out by God to live and

proclaim His Kingdom in this world" (Minatrea 2004, 8). Another proponent of the

movement is deeply indebted to Newbigin for his working definition of the missional

church:

> The missional church is the people of God living with the conviction that we are a
> sent people (by our Triune God)-called to be a faithful sign, foretaste and herald
> of the kingdom of God. We are a people who engage in the task of bilingual
> theological reflection (recognizing the grammar of the dominant culture as well as
> the grammar of God) so that we can embody the good news in the context in which
> we find ourselves and join God in the renewal of all things. (Woodward 2008,
> jrwoodward.net)

Newbigin's influence spanned a wide gulf of advocates as distinct as

evangelicals and as novel as missional. Newbigin argued that the initial posture of the

church engaging culture was not accommodation or syncretism (Goheen 2000, 345).

Instead the method of the church was to examine and analyze the forms of culture as it

renegotiated the forms away from idolatrous distortion. The ultimate end in Newbigin's

thought was a true contextualization that used the challenging relevance of the gospel in

the context of the hermeneutic of a believing community.

> If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society, if Christians are to occupy
> the high ground which they vacated in the noontime of modernity, it will not be by
> forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns. Once
> again it has to be said that there can be no going back to the Constantinian era. It
> will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the
> reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced, and from which men
> and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask
> the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to
> the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local
> congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that
> they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and
> foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society. (Newbigin 1989b,
> 232-33)

Newbigin asserted we could have utmost confidence in the gospel as public truth in the

public square. God would be faithful as the believing congregation embraced the eternal

gospel with unending commitment.

Evaluation of Contextualization

Some critics have remarked that Lesslie Newbigin's view of the intersection between the believing congregation and culture "might more adequately be described as the 'Gospel Against Our Culture' movement" (Graham and Walton 1991, 2). Newbigin's grouping with Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon under the countercultural model of contextualization was an acknowledgement of the deeply secularized position in the West. Stephen Bevans noted that this model promoted a biblical worldview that provided an assessment that Western culture was deeply at odds with the gospel (Bevans 1993, 6). Later Bevans noted a more nuanced view of Newbigin that acknowledged Newbigin's highlighting the constructive side of the relationship of the church to its culture. Newbigin's idea of a missionary encounter included both a positive relation to and a critical appraisal of culture. Newbigin was not accustomed to disengaging from culture but transforming culture with the challenging relevance of the gospel.

At the center of that transformation was the motif and reality of the cross of Jesus Christ. In this sense, the cross was an act of total identification with the world, but in another sense it was an act of radical separation (Newbigin 1994d, 54). He affirmed the responsibility of the church not to privatize the gospel but to take responsibility for the public life of the nation, but Newbigin stressed the antithetical side of cultural involvement to avoid syncretism. Much of this counter cultural emphasis was a prophetic response to a situation in the West that was an advanced case of syncretism so much so that "when a fat man is sitting on one side of a seesaw it is necessary to jump hard on the other end" (Goheen 2002, 139). The gospel was meant to be an affirmation to the positive elements of cultural formation and a judgment to the evil twisting of culture.

> It is not enough for the church to go on repeating in different cultural situations the same words and phrases. New ways have to be found of stating the essential Trinitarian faith, and for this the church in each new cultural situation has to go back to the original biblical source of this faith in order to lay hold on it afresh and to state it afresh in contemporary terms. (Newbigin 1995b, 27)

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Newbigin was his assertion that contextualization must pay attention to the culture, to the gospel, and to one another.

In the triangular movement of Newbigin's model attention was paid to all three aspects of the dynamic interaction: the church was to be in the world, not of it, but not out of it either. Newbigin's seminal insight was that the normal posture for a faithful church was that of missionary encounter. These missionary encounters required that the gospel be fully embodied by a community of faith that challenged the reigning idolatrous assumptions of culture. The consequence would be a necessary clash with contemporary culture. One of the criticisms of Newbigin's triad was the lack of clarity in stating whether mission was a matter of methodology or theology. Profound questions in a postmodern culture made theological reflection a priority not a tertiary issue. Additionally, analysis emerged that stated in the interaction between gospel, church, and culture that it was impossible to live with theological ambiguity. Historical assertions were essential, but doctrinal affirmations were equally necessary (Smith 1999, 108). Another issue that also emerged was the relationship between the social implications of the gospel and that of the personal responsibility of gospel proclamation. Some felt the result of a lack of understanding of those two dimensions would be the distortion of the biblical doctrine of mission. The need, according to Newbigin, was a gospel that faithfully communicated God's truth in the context of contemporary society without compromising God's intent.

Mark Driscoll and Reformission

Mark Driscoll, an emerging church innovator in the Relevant stream, has formatted the triad of Newbigin missiology and ecclesiology to proclaim a robust gospel and gather the "best aspects of . . . these types of Christianity: living in the tension of being Christians and churches who are culturally liberal yet theologically conservative and who are driven by the gospel of grace to love their Lord, brothers, and neighbors" (Driscoll 2004, 22). Driscoll has called this approach reformission that was a radical call to reform the church's traditionally flawed view of "missions as something carried out only in foreign lands and to focus instead on the urgent need in our own neighborhoods, which are filled with diverse cultures of Americans who desperately need the gospel and life in his church" (Driscoll 2004, 18). This idea was rooted in Newbigin's missiological view that a glaring gap existed in the West. Driscoll borrowed the triangular concept to create a discussion of the gospel, church, and culture and summarized ideas derived from Lesslie Newbigin (Driscoll 2004, 201). In fact, at the heart of Driscoll's concept of reformission were clear distinctions between the gospel, the culture, and the church.

Driscoll often has articulated his indebtedness to the work and thoughts of Lesslie Newbigin. Driscoll stated that a small team from Leadership Network "believed that America was becoming as thoroughly secular and foreign to the gospel as 'foreign' culture and therefore needed its own theological agenda . . . we began combing through the works of such noted missiologists as David Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin, and Roland Allen" (Driscoll 2006a, 88). Andrew Jones said, "I still remember Mark Driscoll in the early years yapping on and on over meals about Lesslie Newbigin (which he pronounced with an American "N" like in "New York")" (Jones, Andrew 2010, www.tallskinnykiwi.

188

typepad.com). Driscoll often recommended Newbigin's works to his church planting network called Acts 29.

> One of the heroes in the missional church world is a man named Lesslie Newbigin who is now in heaven with Jesus . . . . Using missiological insights gained from many years on the mission field, he ascertained that the "Christian" West had become a culture in need of missions-it was now as lost as the unreached cultures of the world. As a young church planter, I read everything I could find by Newbigin, along with the work of an organization called The Gospel and Culture Network (GOCN), which came into existence to work out in detail many of the issues raised by Newbigin. (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 218)

Mark Driscoll characterized reformission by stating "it is imperative that Christians be like Jesus, by living freely within the culture as missionaries who are faithful to the Father and his gospel as Jesus was in his own time and place" (Driscoll 2004, 40). Reformission was adopted so that God's people understood their mission with clarity. Reformission was also designed so that the church purposefully crossed the lines that unnecessarily separated the people God discovered from those God was still seeking. Akin to Newbigin, Driscoll attempted to emulate the model missionary life lived for God by Jesus "without falling into the pitfall of liberal syncretism or fundamental sectarianism" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 227). Contextualization was characterized as making the church as culturally accessible as possible using timely methods without compromising timeless truth. "In other words, contextualization is not making the gospel relevant, but showing the relevance of the gospel" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 228). Driscoll argued that the church was transitioning to new forms because the methods steeped in modernism were no longer viable (Driscoll 2006a, 88). Driscoll quoted D. A. Carson, "No truth which human beings may articulate can ever be articulated in a culture-transcending way – but that does not mean that the truth thus articulated does not transcend culture" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008a, 11). "Jesus has called us to the gospel

189

(loving our Lord), the culture (loving our neighbor), and the church (loving our brother) .

. . our failure to fulfill our mission . . . was that the various Christian traditions are

faithful on only one or two of these counts" (Driscoll 2004, 20).

Reformission Without Ruin

Driscoll's modification of The Gospel and Our Culture's adaptation of Lesslie

Newbigin's triangular movement of the gospel included a concept that demonstrated

three missional miscues that could bury the mission of the church.
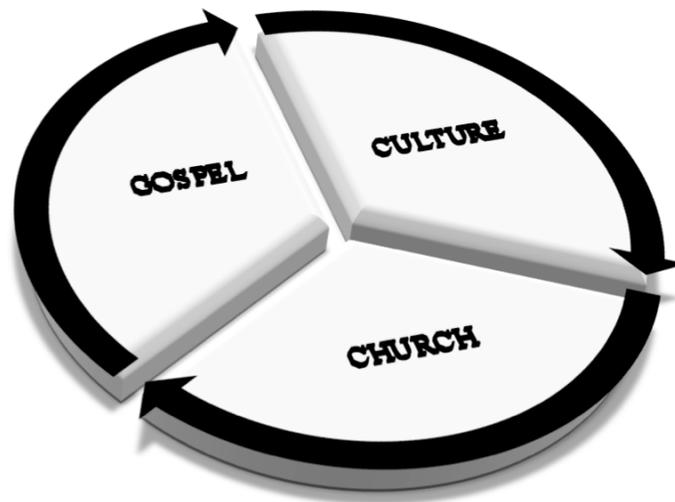
Figure 3. Driscoll's missional miscues

gospel + culture – church = parachurch
culture + church – gospel = liberalism
church + gospel - culture = fundamentalism

Driscoll described the context that Lesslie Newbigin formulated in a contemporary

format. Driscoll characterized the three holes that might bury the gospel as the

parachurch, liberalism, or fundamentalism (Driscoll 2004, 20-23).

The first incomplete expression of the gospel was commonly referred to as the parachurch that included ministries like Focus on the Family and Campus Crusade for Christ (Driscoll 2004, 20). Driscoll believed the frustration of many Christians with the church led them to attempt to bring the gospel into the culture apart from the church. The involvement of parachurch ministries within the culture was admirable, but the failure of such ministries to connect unchurched people to a local body of believers was a theological failing. Driscoll also stated that parachurch ministries segregated rather than integrated generations in the transitions of life. "The parachurch tends to love the Lord and love its neighbors, but not to love its brothers" (Driscoll 2004, 21). This philosophy connected to Lesslie Newbigin.

> There are fellowship groups in factories and offices . . . but these missionary experiments have, until recently, left untouched the position of the local congregation as the definitive form of the church, the place where the word is preached, the sacraments dispensed, and godly discipline administered. These other activities have been seen rather as non-ecclesiastical or at best para-ecclesiastical activities which were the outworks of the church rather than its main structure, the scouting parties rather than the main column (Newbigin 1966, 111-12).

The second missional miscue occurred when churches were so concerned with cultural relevance that they neglected the gospel and fell into syncretism. This constituted, in Driscoll's taxonomy, a neglect of the gospel as "they convert people to the church and good works, but not to Jesus" (Driscoll 2004, 21). Newbigin contended the church in the West was poorly contextualized and excessively syncretistic (Newbigin 1986). Newbigin also asserted that the church must offer the gospel as a credible alternative to the ethos of the culture. The denial of Jesus as Lord and Savior allowed liberal churches to be integrated into the social and political fabric of the culture without a corresponding gospel proclamation that challenged the idolatrous assumptions of

individuals and culture. Classic liberal Christianity, Driscoll believed, spoke of

institutional sin with a reticence to confront personal sin. "Liberal Christians run the risk

of loving their neighbors and their brothers at the expense of loving their Lord" (Driscoll

2004, 22).

> To let go of the gospel is liberal syncretism, which also leads to irrelevance . . . .
> Syncretism simply baptizes unscriptural beliefs in the name of limp-wrested
> relevance, social progress, being nice, and making a good non-judgmental
> impression. Syncretism inevitably dissolves into a universalism in which God loves
> everyone, and will forgive everyone's sins and take everyone to heaven because he
> simply lacks the courage to judge anyone . . . .Visiting syncretistic churches is like
> entering a mutual admiration society in which people pat each other on the back for
> having a social conscience and nod in agreement through sermons that sound like
> sappy greeting cards strung together to make us feel like we got a divine back rub
> while doing aromatherapy, drinking herbal tea, and listening to taped sounds of
> running water. (Driscoll 2004, 144)

The final missional miscue happened when the church embraced the gospel

theologically but rarely penetrated the surrounding culture. Driscoll classified this

expression of church as fundamentalist Christianity (Driscoll 2004, 22). The

consequence was the establishment of traditions, buildings, and politics in private

enclaves without a corresponding confrontation of the surrounding culture with the

gospel of Jesus Christ. Newbigin stated that a church that embodied the gospel must

necessarily interact and challenge contemporary culture with the challenging relevance of

the gospel. The church letting go of culture was fundamental sectarianism that led to

irrelevance as the church gathered in dated holy huddles without a concern for a sick and

dying world (Driscoll 2005, 143). "Fundamentalist Christians are commonly found to

love their Lord and their brothers, but not their neighbors" (Driscoll 2004, 22). Driscoll

wanted to clear a hurdle that contextualized the gospel in a way that was faithful to the

content of Scripture and the context of ministry.

192

Gospel

Driscoll's formulation dealt with a duo of Newbigin's concerns, syncretism

and irrelevancy, as the church attempted to be faithful to the gospel and relevant to the

culture. Driscoll, like Newbigin desired a true gospel encounter with the culture and

described the gospel as the heart and soul of Scripture "as represented by the apostle

Paul's pocket-size account written to the church of Corinth (1 Cor. 15:3-4)" (Bohannon

2010, 241). Driscoll affirmed the finished work of Jesus Christ and never hesitated to

assert the fact that Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Driscoll's

theological affirmation of penal substitutionary atonement separated him from the

Revisionist camp of the emerging church paradigm (Driscoll and Breshears 2008a, 22).

In *Vintage Church,* Driscoll described the gospel pattern of Acts 2, as well as other

Scriptures, in three aspects: revelation, or what God did; response, or what we do; and

results, or what God gives (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 23-24). Driscoll related that

this full and robust understanding of the gospel prevented truncations of the gospel.

> Some overemphasize the missional aspect of the church and in doing so abandon
> the theological truth that Jesus is God who came in the flesh to die and propitiate
> the just wrath of God toward sin. Others overemphasize the experiential aspect of
> the church and focus almost exclusively on renewal and worship while neglecting
> God's missional calling for the church to be incarnational like Jesus and actively
> involved in their community and its culture. Perhaps the most common
> overemphasis is the confessional reduction of the gospel to Jesus' death,
> forgiveness, and imputed righteousness to eternal life in heaven. While this is true,
> it neglects Jesus' exemplary life, resurrection, imparted life of regeneration, and the
> rich life of missional community of the church on earth until we see him face-to-
> face. (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 24-25)

This emphasis echoed Newbigin's clarion call for the church as a holistic hermeneutic of

the gospel while proclaiming the gospel's challenging relevance.

Since every presentation of the gospel was culturally articulated, the form of its

presentation must continually change as the culture altered, while the content of the

gospel remained unaffected and truthful (Driscoll 2004, 51). Reformission missiology

states the propensity to neglect the context while remaining faithful to the content created

an expression of the gospel ensconced in traditional nostalgia that had all the correct

answers to all the wrong questions. Another danger to reformission was the tendency to

embrace unrestrained and undiscerning innovation (Driscoll 2004, 52). This capitulation

to culture ignores church history and the distinctive nature of the gospel.

Driscoll contends that traditional churches preached a gospel of forgiveness,

contemporary churches trumpeted a gospel of fulfillment, and emerging churches

proclaimed a gospel of freedom (Driscoll 2006b, 23-25). Driscoll states,

> The traditional church generally proclaims a gospel of forgiveness. According to
> the gospel of forgiveness we have sinned against God and are under his wrath until
> we ask for forgiveness and live changed lives of repentance. This gospel worked for
> people in Christendom because they had a general knowledge of authority, sin,
> judgment, hell, and Jesus. Though this gospel made sense to most people at one
> time, this sort of gospel seems judgmental, mean-spirited, naïve, and narrow-
> minded to the ever growing number of people who do not understand the basic
> tenets of Christianity. (Driscoll 2006b, 23)

The gospel of fulfillment heralded by contemporary church comes under harsh critique as

Driscoll characterizes it as a therapeutic and false gospel that hinders missional

effectiveness. Driscoll articulates a belief that "the emerging church proclaims a gospel

of freedom. According to the gospel of freedom, we were made to live in community

with God and with each other without the pains of sin and death" (Driscoll 2006b, 24).

This gospel of freedom says that are we enabled to reconcile with God and each other as

Jesus came to live "without sin as our example, die for our sin as a substitute, and rise

from death as our Lord who liberates us from Satan, sin, and death" (Driscoll 2006b, 25).

The emerging church of Driscoll emphasizes a side-by-side reconciliation of estranged

relationships and broken community.

194

One critique surmises Driscoll's preoccupation with a singular image of the gospel was an overemphasis on a sole model of a gospel that promised freedom from enslavement and connection in community. This critical assessment suggests that Driscoll neglected the variety of metaphors that Christ's atoning work accomplished including propitiation, justification, reconciliation, redemption, freedom, adoption, and conquest (Leeman 2006a, www.9marks.org). Driscoll countered with *Death by Love* and argued for multiple perspectives of the cross that are grounded in biblical roots from substitutionary atonement to ransom (Driscoll and Breshears 2008a, 10). Still, Driscoll mirrored Newbigin and articulated signposts for the gospel that connected to this present life, infused daily activities with meaning, named sin and pointed the way to forgiveness, transformed life, created a spiritual family that participated with God, and presented Jesus as both the ends and means of salvation (Driscoll 2004, 60).

Culture

Driscoll used missionary pioneer Lesslie Newbigin's definition of the culture as "the sum total ways of living developed by a group of human beings and handed on from generation to generation" (Driscoll 2004, 93). He used a lengthy passage from *Foolishness to the Greeks* and suggested,

> Central to culture is language. The language of a people provides the means by which they express their way of perceiving things and of coping with them. Around that center we would have to group their visual and musical arts, their technologies, their law, and their social and political organization. And one must also include in culture, and as fundamental to any culture, 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. I am speaking, obviously about religion. Religion – including the Christian religion – is part of culture. (Driscoll 2004, 93)

Culture, according to both Newbigin and Driscoll, was encountered everyday as an

enormous framework within which people lived their daily lives. Culture originated in Genesis 1-2 with a cultural mandate and humanity formed in the image of God. "People create culture because God made them to fill, work, and keep the earth' (Driscoll 2004, 93). Genesis 3 recounted the curse of sin on humanity that twisted that innate desire to create cultures in inordinate ways. Driscoll stated that cultures are difficult to untangle because they reflected dignity and depravity, the beauty of creation and the ugliness of the Fall (Driscoll 2004, 94). Driscoll described a set of lenses through which to clarify the various cultures we encounter and prescribed some evaluative frameworks to untangle culture. Mark Driscoll talked of three postures toward culture: receiving aspects of culture that were not in opposition to culture, rejecting perspectives of culture that are antithetical to the gospel, and redeeming those portions of the culture that might be innocuous but were perverted by sin and circumstances.

The first lenses through which both Newbigin and Driscoll viewed cultural concepts was the biblical viewfinder. Newbigin, in *The Open Secret*, used Jonah as a prototype of the mandate of the church to speak God's word to a pagan world as a bearer of blessing (Wainwright 2000, 304). Driscoll concurred, "We are Jonah because we too have been sent to proclaim repentance to great but wicked cities filled with people like the Ninevites-people whom God loves but we don't like" (Driscoll 2004, 107). Another lens through which the culture can be seen was the political lens. Both Newbigin and Driscoll refused to adopt either the "constrained (Republican) vision that viewed human nature as selfishly sinful and places its hope in restraining our sin through the law" or "the unconstrained (Democratic) vision that optimistically perceived human nature as basically good and capable of perfection in life through social planning" (Driscoll 2004,

196

107). Instead hope rested on the gospel not human institutions, governments, or

institutions. A third focus to view culture through included various aspects of the church:

the church as bomb shelter (huddled up and hid); the church as mirror (reflected the

culture); the church as parasite (benefited from culture but refused to bless culture); and

the preferred concept of the church as city on a hill (a counter-cultural alternative to the

city of man) (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 299-301). The final viewpoint was a

missiological lens that demonstrated the life of Jesus as a missionary that left the culture

of heaven to incarnate life on earth as a friend to sinners.

> Reformission is not about abstention; it is about redemption. We must throw
> ourselves into the culture so that all God made good is taken back and used in a way
> that glorifies him. Our goal is not to avoid drinking, singing, working, playing,
> eating, lovemaking, and the like. Instead, our goal must be to redeem those things
> through the power of the gospel so that they are used rightly according to Scripture,
> bringing God glory and his people a satisfied joy. (Driscoll 2004, 152)

Driscoll emulated the view of culture proposed by Newbigin that articulated

the idea that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus so he could be a missionary, and the

Spirit descended on the church at Pentecost to penetrate the culture with the Gospel. The

earnest of the Spirit demonstrated a missionary obligation. Both embraced the missional

concept that Newbigin articulated-a pastor as missiologist. "A missiologist is someone

who can bring the gospel to people in an effective cultural way . . . . A missiologist

intentionally investigates the local culture surrounding his or her church in an effort to

find the opportunities and obstacles for the gospel" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 224).

Driscoll formulated a response that would carry Scripture into the urban context of

Seattle. In common parlance, the missionary church was expected to serve on the

frontlines of cultural mission as the primary vehicle God had chosen to be on mission

with him in making disciples of all nation-a missional church.

197

Missional Church

Mark Driscoll and Lesslie Newbigin articulated a vision of church as resident exiles as the church's former privileged position in Western societies was now gone. This disappearance of Christendom necessitated approaches that neither bashed cultures nor absorbed into the chasm of culture. Newbigin's clarion call was for the church to claim its missionary birthright so he wrote *The Other Side of 1984* and raised questions for the churches and concluded *Foolishness to the Greeks* with a call to the churches (Newbigin 1983, 1986). Newbigin and Driscoll illuminated the need for a recovery of a missionary ecclesiology and bemoaned the abandonment of cities stating that "in much of the world today, cities are increasingly less Christian, whereas the suburban and rural areas are more Christian" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 298; Newbigin 1989b, 235-36). The consequence for Newbigin and Driscoll was the need to establish believing countercultural communities of faith as a people of the book (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 235; Newbigin 1986, 62). Newbigin supported a missionary encounter of the gospel that invited the church to inhabit an alternative plausibility structure rooted in Scripture so that the gospel was proclaimed as public truth. Driscoll framed the countercultural community that invaded cities with the gospel from the context of Jeremiah 29:4-9, a concept he borrowed from Tim Keller (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 235).

> Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the

dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord. (Jer. 29:4-9 ESV)

Several factors emerged from these verses. First, "Countercultural living included loving the people and the place where God has providentially put us, no matter how hard that might be" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 235). The church that called itself missional lived as sent people to the culture. Second, the command to build homes and plant gardens was a call to become a stakeholder in the culture. Missional churches affirmed within the community that Christians "do not intend to use culture or pass through it while moving elsewhere but rather to settle in for a lifetime of service" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 236). Other components included honoring marriage and celebrating children while demonstrating deeds of kindness, mercy, generosity, and grace for the welfare of the city. Finally, the community of faith refused to fear the greater culture as it proclaimed the true gospel among false ideologies. "Perhaps the most fitting metaphor for the missional church as a countercultural kingdom community is the one we are most fond of at Mars Hill Church-we are a city within a city. We take the analogy from Jesus who said, 'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden' " (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 236).

Driscoll's exegesis of Jeremiah is remarkably akin to Newbigin's original description of the emerging missional church repeated here to highlight the correspondence. The characteristics listed by Newbigin included the church that was a community of praise as distinct from skeptical modern thought, stood on the Scriptures as public truth in a new plausibility structure, engaged the secular community by deep involvement in the neighborhood, empowered the people of God to be dispersed into the surrounding culture as a priesthood of believers, modeled a community of mutual

199

responsibility as a new social order, and was ground zero as a community of

eschatological hope (Newbigin 1989b, 227-33).

        The result of a missional church was a replication of early church dilemmas.

> The early church struggled with marginalization in its society, surrounded as it was
> by spirituality, paganism, and sexual deviancy of every sort and kind. The early
> church also wrestled through the questions that were raised when the gospel jumped
> from Jewish to Gentile culture, which included topics such as circumcision, Sabbath
> day and festivals, meat sacrificed to idols, and sexual propriety. Arguably all the
> New Testament Epistles are missional letters intended to help local churches either
> get on or stay on mission with God. (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 238)

Both Newbigin and Driscoll advocated a missionary encounter between the church and

culture as the church looked to advance the welfare of a broken world without condoning

sin within the community of faith. This process resulted in a messy interaction that

challenged the idolatrous assumptions of the culture such as self-sufficiency and

autonomous freedom while using contemporary contacts to awaken the culture to Jesus.

This required discernment to live incarnationally as a sent community in a movement to

reach the lost.

<div align="center">

Contextualization in Reformission

</div>

        Lesslie Newbigin and Mark Driscoll believed that as indigenous faith

communities reflected on the task to live biblically and incarnationally that they realized

how Christ fit and did not fit their culture. The consequence has been to shape their faith

using both the embodied gospel and their own cultural milieu to truly encounter and

engage the context through a reciprocal relationship. Driscoll has asserted that "one day

the local church as we know it will be replaced by the kingdom of God. The picture of

worship in that eternal future is incredibly and gloriously diverse, according to

Revelation 7:9-10" (Driscoll 2013b, 14). Driscoll believes to facilitate the goal of

incarnational and missional impulse seen in the life of Jesus that Christians must live a

life for God in culture that avoids the Newbigin duo of syncretism or irrelevant

sectarianism (Driscoll 2007b, 140). Driscoll has argued that Jesus indwelled a particular

culture at a particular point in history, and believers replicated that action as he quoted a

favorite passage of Newbigin, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you" (John

20:21).

Driscoll has advocated a contextualization of the gospel that incorporated the

boundaries of Scripture by both contending for and contextualizing the gospel among the

tribes, thoughts, values, and experiences of our culture (Driscoll 2004, 94-96). Newbigin

argued a similar concept in his missional experience both in India and England.

According to Driscoll, Christians must adopt a two-handed approach to Christian

ministry. In the closed hand of non-negotiation the believer contends for the timeless

truth of God's Word, and in the open hand Christians grasp flexible and timely methods

(Driscoll 2007b, 143). As an example of such contextualization Driscoll pointed to the

four gospels that contained the same essential message but pointed to different audiences.

> Each gospel is written to both contend for the truth of the person and work of Jesus
> and to contextualize that truth to varying cultural groups so that the gospel is most
> easily understood by people in that culture. This explains why Matthew was written
> primarily to Jews by a Jew . . . and John was written to Greeks. They each tell the
> same truth, but with different emphases, language, and style, thus doing all they can
> to 'win more of them . . . for the sake of the gospel' as Paul commands. (Driscoll
> 2007b, 144)

The reformission church in order to morph from what Driscoll entitled either

the traditional and institutional church (Church 1.0) or the contemporary and evangelical

church (Church 2.0) to the emerging and missional church (Church 3.0) needed to decide

which world they inhabited (Driscoll 2006b. 88). The emerging and missional church

was marked by a cultural context that was postmodern and pluralistic (Driscoll 2006a,

19). Driscoll distinguished between Emergent as a new liberalism that accommodated postmodernity and the emerging church movement that attempted to faithfully contextualize the gospel in faithful fashions in order to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to emerging and postmodern cultures.

> I am particularly concerned with some growing trends among people: the rejection of Jesus' death on the cross as a penal substitute for our sins; resistance to openly denouncing homosexual act as sinful; the questioning of literal eternal torment in hell, which is a denial that holds up only until, in an ironic bummer, you die and find yourself in hell; the rejection of God's sovereignty over and knowledge of the future; as if God were a junior-college professor who knows only bits and pieces of trivia; the rejection of biblically defined gender roles, thereby contributing to the 'mantropy' epidemic among young guys fretting over the best kind of loofah for their skin type and the number of women in the military dying to save their Bed, Bath and Beyond from terrorists attacks; and the rejection of biblical names for God, such as Father which is essentially apologizing before the unbelieving world for the prayer life of the flamboyant heterosexual Jesus, who uttered the horrendously politically incorrect 'Our Father' without ever having the decency to apologize for being a misogynist patriarchal meanie. This is ultimately all the result of a diminished respect for the perfection, authority, and clarity of Scripture, all of which was written by patriarchal men. (Driscoll 2006a, 22)

Such provocative language and Driscoll's continued use of the common *lingua franca* of postmodern culture has created charges that Driscoll violates biblical principles in contextual theology when he constantly uses scatological language and offensive humor (Bohannon 2010, 260). In speaking to sexual issues and using crass language some have maintained that Driscoll "had crossed a line of acceptable conduct for an evangelical pastor" (Bohannon 2010, 261). The critique was of the use of rude language, crude concepts, and lewd humor to advance a true gospel detracted from his message. John MacArthur argued that Driscoll's "soteriology is exactly right, but that only makes his infatuation with the vulgar aspects of contemporary society more disturbing" (MacArthur 2007, n.p.). Some have argued that contextualization was never justifiable that crossed the bounds of New Testament propriety, and the true power of the gospel

was not found in clever speech but in the faithful proclamation of the gospel. "Easygoing familiarity with all this world's filthy fads – practically guarantees that they will make little progress toward authentic sanctification" (MacArthur 2007, n.p.). The tightrope of Driscoll's contextualization has needed another hand from faithful friends to maintain a needed balance in choosing language and methods that engaged the culture for Christ while honoring the message and person of Christ (Bohannon 2010, 263). Driscoll has maintained that his seeker-sensible approach is needed to take the gospel far enough in order to engage and challenge the hearts and minds of people in the culture.

Driscoll has framed the argument of contextualization in the context of prophet, priest, and king. He suggested Christians have a propensity to underemphasize one aspect of Jesus' ministry in contextualization to tragic consequences. Those that embraced the prophetic and kingly roles while neglecting the priestly role tended to drift toward fundamentalism. This posture tended to emphasize a robust view of Jesus as a bold truth teller and sovereign ruler but depreciated the priestly role of Jesus (Driscoll and Breshears 2007, 82). Driscoll believed that Christians that supported a vigorous view of Jesus as prophet and priest while downplaying his kingly role moved toward a truncated evangelicalism. This stance advocated Jesus as one that spoke truth as prophet and loved as a priest, but neglected the kingly role in favor of a more therapeutic Savior (Driscoll and Breshears 2007, 83). Driscoll's taxonomy advanced the idea that liberal Christianity was prone to understand Jesus as our loving priest as well as a ruling king, but diminished his prophetic voice. The consequence was an accommodating stance toward sinful beliefs and behaviors that Jesus confronted with a prophetic voice. True contextualization required that "Jesus came to earth to reveal himself as our prophet who

speaks to us, priest who walks with us, and king who rules over us" (Driscoll and

Breshears 2007, 84).

> Jesus loved Jerusalem. He had wept over it. But Jerusalem had rejected him. He could have turned his back on it and led his disciples away into the desert and there – like the Essenes of his time – devoted their corporate life to praying and waiting for God to bring in his kingdom. Or he could have put himself at the head of the Zealots, taken up the sword, and made himself the master of the city. What he did was neither of these things . . . the throne would be a cross. But it was, and is, the throne. (Newbigin 1989b, 238)

Mark Driscoll has embraced a vision of postmodern Christianity that involves both robust biblical theology and an engagement with all aspects of culture. His intersection with Lesslie Newbigin has been broad and formative. Driscoll emerged as a forerunner in the Relevant stream of the emerging church paradigm, and he also surfaced as a vocal critic of the Revisionist stream. His separation from their theological controversies created a backlash for the emerging church paradigm as many backed out of using the emergent terminology. Driscoll's desire to remain biblically faithful and culturally relevant inspired many to follow his example while also leading to criticism of his methodology as going too far. Another pastor in the Relevant stream would encounter similar criticisms.

Dan Kimball's Vintage Christianity

Dan Kimball, in Ed Stetzer's taxonomy of the Emerging Church Movement, joined Mark Driscoll as a Relevant that attempted to contextualize the culture while maintaining biblical distinctiveness (Stetzer 2009, 82-83). Early in the movement, Kimball's more humble approach to theology allowed speculation that "Dan Kimball seems involved in a heroic attempt to keep one foot planted with both (doctrinally wary/averse and doctrinally friendly) streams" (Devine 2009, 8). His nuanced writing

style and affiliation with Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, and other Revisionist

practitioners led some evangelicals to be skeptical toward Kimball's theology (Ring

2011, 75-77). Recently, Kimball affirmed the Revisionist assessment of culture and

Christianity in a postmodern context while calling into question their errant theologies.

Kimball, akin to Newbigin and Driscoll, desired to engage culture in a theologically

reflective manner.

> Always remember that methodology flows from theology . . . not vice versa. I
> hope we will constantly be thinking through the reasons we do what we do and
> what theological roots support our church practice. I can no longer teach anything
> or use a form of media or launch a new program without thinking through the
> theological meaning behind it and what it communicates theologically. As a pastor,
> I want to be creating a culture of theological thinking within the people of the
> church. I try my best to constantly be explaining the theological 'whys' behind
> whatever we are doing in the church. (Kimball 2008, 222)

Kimball argued that the Bible was shaped by its cultural context, having been written in

Koine Greek within a particular historical setting. Kimball stated that such biblical

contextualization needed to be applied today as Christians communicated the gospel

(Kimball 2003, 176).

Dan Kimball acknowledged Lesslie Newbigin's influence in his book *The*

Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations (Kimball 2003). He

asserted that Newbigin's contention that England was a mission field applied to the

United States as well. "Perhaps you will recall that I mentioned . . . The unchurched

population in the United States is so extensive that, if it were a nation, it would be the

fifth most populated nation on the planet after China, the former Soviet Union, India and

Brazil" (Kimball 2003. 69). Kimball has embraced the concept of *missio Dei* and

believed the United States was layered with preconceived notions about Christianity that

had developed into contempt for the faith. Kimball has signed on as a signatory to the

Missional Manifesto that demonstrated resonance with Newbigin's ideas and stated the following in its preamble:

> God is a sending God, a missionary God, who has called His people, the church, to be missionary agents of His love and glory. The concept missional epitomizes this idea. This manifesto seeks to serve the church by clarifying its calling and helping it theologically understand and practically live out God's mission in the world today. Although it is frequently stated "God's church has a mission," according to missional theology, a more accurate expression is "God's mission has a church" (Ephesians 3:7-13). (Missional Manifesto 2011)

Kimball believed that properly understanding the meaning of missional started with recognizing God's missionary nature. The Trinitarian nature of mission, in the likeness of Newbigin's thought, believed the Father was the source of mission, the Son was the incarnation of that mission, and mission was accomplished in the power of the Spirit (Kimball 2006). By nature, God was the "sending one" who initiated the redemption of His whole creation. Jesus consistently spoke of Himself as being "sent" in John's gospel and subsequently commissioned His disciples for this same purpose. As the "sent" people of God, the church was the instrument of His mission (John 20:21) (Goheen 2000).

Both Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll have been classified as Relevants under the Stetzer taxonomy. "Kimball and Driscoll's homiletical likeness, similar to the Revisionists, could also be described using the twin metaphor – two missional preachers cut from the same emerging cloth" (Bohannon 2010, 231). Their theological commitments to the core essentials united them in a fraternal relationship. These similarities highlighted the tact this research used in this chapter concerning Dan Kimball. Since the central core theological stances, ecclesiology, and missiology of Kimball and Driscoll intersected, the particular emphases of Dan Kimball's coalescence with Lesslie Newbigin's work are here examined.

First, I greatly appreciate and agree with much of Dan's chapter. Theologically, I appreciate his emphasis on the exclusivity of Jesus for salvation, human sin, literal hell, and respect for the final authority of Scripture. Practically, I appreciated his personal humility, respect for church history, and desire to see theology as a pursuit of transformation rather than mere information. Second, Dan provides a very helpful middle way between the theological certainty on all things among fundamentalists and the seeming theological uncertainty on all things among liberals. As a pastor he has rightly learned that there are primary issues that we must hold in a closed hand, and secondary issues that we must hold in an open hand. While Dan's point is wise and good, my fear is that many emerging type Christians do not have a sufficient love for Scripture, or knowledge of church history, to widely discern which issues belong in each hand. (Driscoll 2007a, 106)

Kimball's Missional Motif

Driscoll and Kimball's connection did not end with a theological link; they also shared a common concern formulated in Newbigin's thoughts around missional living. The three principles incarnated in Newbigin's work and narrated by Frost and Hirsch created a synopsis of the life and ministry of Dan Kimball's ministry: the missional church was incarnational and not attractional in its ecclesiology, the missional church was messianic not dualistic in its spirituality, and the missional church was apostolic not hierarchical in its leadership function (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 129-59). Kimball embraced a holistic expression of the gospel that viewed Jesus multi-dimensionally so that the good news is "not only about heaven and hell, but about serving the world and the Kingdom of God" (Kimball 2011, 224). Kimball argued that the emerging church should focus on a gospel that included a horizontal responsibility to "live in tune with Jesus, placing yourself under God's reign and being a participant in the kingdom now" (Kimball 2003, 201). This call by Kimball engaged the emerging church in societal transformation.

Kimball . . . calls for a holistic expression of the gospel that emphasizes the importance of loving both God and man. Driving this "both-and" emphasis is Kimball's hermeneutical approach that reads the Bible both diachronically (i.e.

207

vertical emphasis stressing personal redemption) and synchronically (i.e., horizontal emphasis stressing creation redemption). He recognizes the tension in maintaining a "both-and" emphasis has proven historically difficult for churches navigating this course. Traditional churches, marked by conservative theology, veer toward a personal redemption emphasis to the neglect of creation redemption. Mainline and Revisionist churches, marked by liberal theology, veer toward a creation redemption emphasis to the neglect of personal redemption. He also understands that 'it is easier to focus on justice than it is to focus on evangelism,' when ministering in emerging culture because it is 'culturally acceptable and applauded to be involved in justice these days. (Ring 2011, 181)

Newbigin argued over the course of his ministry that word and deeds should be interactive and validate one another, and Kimball's philosophy of ministry endorsed that approach.

Table 2. Kimball's emerging church

The Church Is Not	The Church is	The Modern Church	The Emerging Church
A service you go to on Sunday	A community that gathers on Sunday	Focuses on what happens after death	Focuses on what happens in this life
Successful with just decisions for Jesus	Successful with disciples of Jesus	Counts decisions	Counts disciples
A shopping mall for consumers	A caring community of service	Begins the story of salvation at Gen. 3	Begins the story of salvation at Gen. 1
Religious professionals and willing spectators	A community of faith equipped for mission	Mission is for paid staff /overseas	Mission is for all Christians
A community whose mission is to alert people to wrongs in the world	A community whose mission is to alert people to God's reign in Jesus	Tries to escape culture or create alternate culture	Immerses in culture to influence and engage it
Going to Church	Being the Church	Christian is an adjective	Christian is a noun and verb

Dan Kimball, like many emergents proclaimed a deeds over creeds praxis, that led some to give careful caution, "When the focus of mission and ministry is on our kingdom

living rather than on the one who brought and brings his own kingdom, ushering us and our hearers into it through his gospel, Christ-as example can just as effectively replace Christ-as-Savior at least in practice" (Horton 2008, 115). However, Kimball wanted to create a model that emphasized the missional church as incarnational living that led to attractional ministry. In this way the church emerged as a diverse reflection of the love of God. In diverse ways, Kimball formulated a distinction between emerging churches and modern churches that presented sharp divergence between the dual modes of how the church operated.

Newbigin, in his book *The Open Secret,* criticized Donald MacGavran's view of homogeneous church growth as lacking a sufficient view of the church that hindered it from effectively engaging the culture (Newbigin 1995c, 135-80). In particular, Newbigin akin to Kimball was concerned about the capitulation of the gospel to the existing mosaic of Western culture. Both Kimball and Newbigin wanted the church to live as a called and sent community and to live out the biblical indicatives of the *missio Dei* by incarnating Jesus in secular spaces.

This invasion into secular spaces created, in the minds of Dan Kimball and Lesslie Newbigin, a more holistic view of the gospel. God was at work in the world through the redemptive reign of God in Christ that presented an intact gospel bearing on every dimension of life. This model was apparent in Kimball's approach to evangelism as dependent on Christians adopting an incarnational lifestyle of the "church simply being what the church should be" (Kimball 2003, 205). Emerging generations, according to Kimball, were connected with the idea that living like Jesus was a necessary component of the gospel instead of a sole emphasis on life after death. Dallas Willard

suggested that the modern church taught that people get a bar code that guaranteed our salvation and that life lived now had no necessary connection to the bar code's function (Willard 1997, 36). This dualistic split also invaded the concept of the gospel as an Enlightenment understanding of self that defined the message as solely about individual decisions rather than also including communal and eschatological dimensions.

Another realm where the dualistic split was confronted to create a more holistic approach to the gospel was in the attempt to create communal worship experiences that acknowledged, "all spaces can be sacred. Declaring a space or place as sacred simply means we're dedicating it to God" (Kimball and Lewin 2008, i). Kimball stated that "we aren't promoting a dichotomy of what is sacred or secular or saying that the way something looks makes it 'sacred' or not" (Kimball and Lewin 2008, 1). Sacred was defined as "associated with or dedicated to God . . . or regarded with reverence because of this" (Kimball 2003, 133). Much of Dan Kimball's innovation and influence in the worship realm has been predicated on his desire to create experiential and multisensory worship gatherings that removed the condition of spectator worship (Kimball 2003, 155). Part of the shift was to flesh out the contention that Newbigin posited that the church must embody the gospel as public truth in all realms of society foregoing the sacred/secular split of the Enlightenment. Newbigin refused to accept that the church must accept life on the margins or in private enclaves of society, rather the church served as a pointer to the coming reign of God (Newbigin 1980, 22).

> The question which has to be put to every local congregation is the question whether it is a credible sign of God's reign in justice and mercy over the whole of life, whether it is an open fellowship whose concerns are as wide as the concerns of humanity, whether it cares for its neighbors in a way which reflect and springs out of God's care for them, whether its common life is recognizable as a foretaste of the blessing which God intends for the whole human family. (Newbigin 1980, 22)

Both Kimball and Newbigin also believed for the church to be effective it must live constantly as a sign of the kingdom "through the daily work of the members in their secular vocations and not through the official pronouncements of ecclesiastical bodies" (Newbigin 1989b, 235). The purpose of Christian leadership in Western culture, according to Newbigin and Kimball, was to lead the whole congregation as God's missionaries to the whole community (Newbigin 1989b, 237).

> Leadership in the emerging church is no longer about focusing on strategies, core values, mission statement or church growth statements. It is about leaders first becoming disciples of Jesus with prayerful, missional hearts that are broken for the emerging culture. All the rest will flow from this, not the other way around. (Kimball 1983, 240)

Newbigin, along with Dan Kimball, argued that the "task of ministry is to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the personal lives of all its people, for God's rule" (Newbigin 1989b, 238). This move away from hierarchical leadership was an attempt to incarnate the gospel into all of life. Newbigin and Kimball used words such as "enabling," "sustaining," discovering," "nourishing," and "encouraging" as they navigated away from modern metaphors such as CEO or even teacher (Kimball 1983, 232-36; Newbigin 1989b, 240). "In this picture, the words of Jesus have a quite different force. They all find their meaning in the central keyword, 'Follow me' " (Newbigin 1989b, 240).

This common call to discipleship as active followers of Jesus Christ was a central theme of Dan Kimball and Lesslie Newbigin. Both refused to muffle the call to take the gospel to the whole of life including the personal life of each believer. This invasion into the secular realm called for a constant gospel critique of the privatized and domesticated nature of the church in Western culture. Every inch of creation needed to be claimed for the kingdom of God. This incarnational ecclesiology and holistic

spirituality called for realistic repentance that led the church to a missional lifestyle.

A Holistic Gospel

Another contribution of Kimball's approach to a missional lifestyle has been a holistic expression of the gospel (Ring 2011, 179). Newbigin asserted that the gospel was embedded in culture, and Kimball desired to remove the gospel from what he considered entrapment in Western culture. This required assessing Jesus from a full eschatological vision that did not restrict Jesus to the future and allowed an expression of the gospel that was "speaking of the joys of following Jesus and participating in Kingdom activity that invites others to join us" (Kimball 2007a, 243). Dan Kimball called the church to the horizontal responsibility to love one's neighbor by engaging in societal transformation and echoed Newbigin's concern that churches neglected this aspect of the gospel (Ring 201, 180). Part of the tension in Kimball's dynamic was his desire to repair the reputation of Christianity in an emerging culture that had six common perceptions of the church: an organized religion with a political agenda, judgmental and negative, dominated by males and oppressive toward females, homophobic, arrogantly claimed all other religions were wrong, and full of fundamentalists with a dictation view of the Scriptures (Kimball 2007a, 69). Kimball believed that in Western culture churches that ministered in "highly secularized, post-Christian settings, significant energy is devoted to tearing down people's misconceptions of Christianity" (Ring 2011, 182).

This holistic expression of the gospel necessitated a positive view of biblical contextualization. Akin to Newbigin, Kimball voiced a concern to "understand the culture's values and spiritual beliefs" (Kimball 2007a, 256). This required believers to embody the gospel in their everyday lives as well as tailor the way they communicated

212

the gospel for maximum impact.

> For the last fifteen to seventeen hundred years the church has been at the center of society. Today that has changed. The church is becoming more marginalized and even seen in a negative light by many in our emerging culture. This means the church must get outside the walls again to be the salt and light of Jesus to the people in our communities, not just to each other. This means every Christian is a missionary, and thus our church is a missional community or a missional church. This is not new, innovative thinking – this is exactly the aim of the early vintage church. (Ring 2011, 189)

Ring's dissertation work implicitly ties this missional philosophy and holistic gospel to the writings of Lesslie Newbigin. Kimball has argued that Christians were caught in a social bubble of a Christian subculture that hesitated to dialogue with people from emerging generations (Kimball 2007a, 39-41). The danger involved in Kimball's encounter remained the fine line between dispelling misconceptions about the church and neglecting the harder parts of Jesus and the gospel including God's wrath and judgment on personal sin. Kimball has hoped to use his works to address the various cultural stumbling blocks that hinder churches in reaching out to and retaining younger emerging generations.

Some of Kimball's most insightful views have emerged in his discussion of worshipping in an emerging generation. Newbigin agreed with this viewpoint as he maintained "the first priority, therefore, is the cherishing, nourishing of such a congregation in a life of worship, of teaching, and of mutual pastoral care so that the new life in Christ becomes more and more for them the great and controlling reality" (Newbigin 1987b, 5). Of the six characteristics Newbigin framed for a congregation that was a true hermeneutic of the gospel (missional), the first was that "it will be a community of praise. That is, perhaps, its most distinctive character" (Newbigin 1989b, 227).

Kimball urged in his discussion of worship that:

> We need to recognize that going to a worship service is not about us, the worshippers. It is not about God's service to us. It is purely our offering of service and worship to God—offering our lives, offering our prayers, offering our praise, offering our confessions, offering our finances, offering our service to others in the church body. (Kimball 2004, 3)

Kimball reacted against a consumer-driven model of worship, where believers arrived at church to "get something out of it." He viewed this as entrapment in the consumerist and individualistic nature of the modern mindset. Kimball hoped to create "spiritual self-feeders" instead of "spiritual consumers" (Kimball 2003, 222). Kimball inculcated the idea that Sundays alone were not enough to form Christ-likeness. Worship, according to Kimball's approach, emerged from transformed lives responding to both biblical and historical dimensions of worship in a postmodern context (Kimball 2004, 299). Kimball advocated a biblical, historical, and contextualized expression of worship utilizing a multiplicity of forms including leveraging the arts. Emerging worship employed scripturally grounded guidelines and "then culturally contextualizes them for an emerging culture" (Kimball 2004, 298). Newbigin affirmed the need for contextualization in worship using various forms as well as denying self-centered consumerist approaches to worship gathering. Kimball argued such an approach in postmodern culture allowed churches to decipher the differences between worship practices rooted in Scripture and those that were merely a matter of preference.

Kimball has hoped for a multisensory worship experience that he believed emerging generations craved (Kimball 2003, 132-42). This vintage approach incorporated creative and participatory elements such as video, art, drama, dialogue, creative props, prayer stations, and ancient dress with an aim that people experienced a more profound engagement with God and His word (Bohannon 2010, 255). Some have

argued such a proposal allowed the medium to overpower the context and cancel out the message (Bohannon 2010, 257). Others articulated that emerging generations treasured "experience over against truth" (Carson 2005, 29). Kimball proposed, in light of this potential crisis, "Let's make sure Jesus is in the center and that we help people maintain a high holy view of God. May we never create experiential worship service that end up drawing more attention to the experience that Jesus. Jesus must be the center of all our worship gatherings "(Kimball 2003, 170). Others suggested that the emphasis on postmodern culture was overstated. Cultural commentators disagreed on the pervasiveness of postmodernity's impact. Nancy Pearcey, in a cogent analysis, argued that postmodernism and other forms of secular thought continued to influence emerging generations as long as songwriters, artists, television and movie producers, and advertising executives embraced the postmodern ethos (Pearcey 2010, 49).

The postmodern values expressed by emerging generations provided a ministry challenge to churches. The tension involved included a desire to communicate with the emerging generations while remaining tied to biblical fidelity. Kimball suggested all churches, regardless of setting, needed such insights to make the type of adjustments that effectively impacted emerging cultures with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Kimball embraced a missional lifestyle, apostolic leadership, a holistic gospel, and experiential worship in an attempt to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite weaknesses and vulnerabilities in some of his approaches, the validity of his critique of Western culture and a creative approach to ministry gained traction among many church practitioners. Dan Kimball joined Mark Driscoll in an attempt to faithfully offer a gospel that both expressed biblical fidelity and embraced cultural plurality. These Relevants

215

used contextualization in a biblically faithful manner to reach the culture for Jesus Christ.

Evaluating Driscoll and Kimball

Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball converge on the other side of the spectrum from Revisionists such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, and Doug Pagitt. Both streams welcome insights from Lesslie Newbigin, but the thoughts are often used in divergent fashions (Henard 2009, 20). Revisionists have argued that the actual dimensions of Scriptures and the gospel itself needed to change in a postmodern context. The Relevants have desired to minister to postmoderns with an intense hope to explore culture and cultural shifts and their implications for Christians and churches in biblically faithful ways that change the methods but not the message (Doornebal 2012, 93). Both Driscoll and Kimball desired to live missionally and reach people that "need a gospel and a church that are faithful to the biblical text and to the cultural contexts of America" (Driscoll 2004, 18-19). This philosophy resonated with the views of Newbigin.

In addition, although not a subject of this chapter, Driscoll and Kimball believed postmodernism was primarily a critique, "a deconstruction of a project that laid its foundation with Constantine and became a high rise with Descartes" (Driscoll 2004, 164). These thought patterns aligned with Newbigin and found the church "being dragged from the center of power and influenced like a spoiled kid throwing a fit on the floor because he doesn't want to leave the party" (Driscoll 2004, 164). Driscoll and Kimball also emphasized the so-called Christian bubble or to use Newbigin terminology, religious enclaves. Driscoll identified seven troubling demons that had entered the American church to replace the demon of modernity and its lonely individualism, arrogant rationalism, and judgmental skepticism. These critiques of postmodern thinking

216

varied from viewing the Bible as a series of suggestions to recasting Jesus as a pop culture Sky fairy (Driscoll 2004, 166). Both Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll desired, like Lesslie Newbigin, to engage Western culture with the gospel in a biblically faithful way. "Postmodern culture is not something we should ignore, oppose, or embrace; rather it is simply another culture that we should seek to redeem and transform by the power of the gospel" (Driscoll 2004, 161). In the end, the innovative Dan Kimball and Reformed Mark Driscoll disassociated themselves from the Revisionist stream as liberal theology accommodating postmodernity.

Driscoll and Kimball segregated themselves from the theological constructs of the Revisionists but adopted Newbigin's concern that the gospel must be heard to be relevant (Driscoll 2006b, 80; Kimball 2003, 28). Contextualization argued that churches must be willing to change "in an effort to effectively communicate the gospel to as many people as possible in the cultures around them" (Driscoll 2006b, 80). Contextualization was an important posture for accomplishing the *missio Dei* in a culture. Newbigin stated unequivocally that Christianity was a part of a culture (Newbigin 1983, 5). Looking at the American church from a missiological perspective, Lesslie Newbigin in the same fashion as Kimball and Driscoll, showed that it was poorly contextualized and excessively syncretistic (Newbigin 1986, 20). The tension evoked emerged from being both a participant in the culture and a congregant in the church and being anchored in "two different and incompatible stories" (Newbigin 1989b, 15-16). Newbigin, Driscoll, and Kimball abandoned the avoidance of this tension of living in two cultures by refusing to adopt strategies such as withdrawal, accommodation, or unfaithful distinctions between facts and values. All called for faithful cultural engagement and the need to

avoid triumphalism on the one hand and compromise on the other. The triangular

movement of the gospel necessitated paying attention to the gospel, the culture, and the

church in its context. The consequence in this intersection reflected both the challenging

relevance of the gospel that fulfilled religious longings and the subversive fulfillment of

the gospel that subverted and challenged idolatrous assumptions of the culture.

The divergence of Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll from Lesslie Newbigin

occurs in the terminology used to express the church as a sign, foretaste, and instrument

of the gospel. Driscoll has dismissed overrealized eschatology that postulates the

kingdom and the church as virtually identical as naively optimistic (Driscoll and

Breshears 2008b, 60). Driscoll also rejects underrealized eschatology which disconnects

kingdom and the church as "gloomy, pessimistic . . . that thinks we can't make a

difference in the world" (Driscoll and Breshears 2008b, 61). Instead Driscoll has

advocated inaugurated eschatology, the idea that the kingdom was both here now in some

senses and still to come in its fullness. Kimball also has focused on both the kingdom

now as well as the kingdom after we die (Kimball 2007a, 237).

Driscoll, Kimball, and Newbigin all lean toward an inaugurated eschatology

that expresses the already and not yet nature of the kingdom. The differences emerge in

the preeminence given to the eschatological dimensions. Newbigin desired to unite the

church in its eschatological and missiological dimensions. For Newbigin the church was

related to Jesus Christ in an eschatological sense as salvation,

> by common consent . . . must begin with its eschatological sense, from the end to
> which it all looks. Salvation in this sense is the completion of God's whole work in
> creation and redemption, the summing up all things with Christ as head (Eph. 1:10),
> the reconciling of all things in heaven and earth through the blood of the cross (Col
> 1:20), the subjecting of all hostile powers under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-28).
> The other uses of the verb (we have been saved, we are being saved) must be

understood in the light of the end to which they look. (Newbigin 1989b, 178-79) Newbigin's trademark descriptions of the church as sign, foretaste, and instrument were ripe with eschatological dimensions. Newbigin stated that the church could only be understood in an eschatological perspective that led to missionary obedience, and any eschatology that refused to embrace that obligation was a false eschatology (Newbigin 1953, 153). This connection was downplayed in the works of Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball.

There are other arenas, not detailed in this chapter, where Driscoll and Kimball diverged from Lesslie Newbigin. Driscoll affirmed inerrancy as the viewpoint that "Scriptures are perfect, without any error" (Driscoll and Breshears 2010, 58). Kimball, even with his humble hermeneutic, affirmed his agreement with the Lausanne Covenant that affirmed "the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and Scripture" (Kimball 2010, apprising.org). Both Kimball and Driscoll created distinctions between holding a high view of Scripture with an honest assessment of their own interpretative fallibility (Bohannon 2010, 235; Driscoll and Breshears 2010, 59). Driscoll and Kimball presented a viewpoint that grasped the timeless truths of Christianity in a firmly closed hand while graciously holding in the other open hand timely ministry methods and styles. Kimball was critiqued for his humble approach to theology and his delayed reproach of the unbiblical theology of many in the Revisionist camp. Kimball also encountered charges that he overemphasized the life and way of Jesus at the expense of personal conversion. These critiques were quick reminders of the diversity of personalities engaged in the emerging church paradigm. Even though homiletical differences existed concerning some

theological issues, Driscoll and Kimball were united in their theological commitment to the core essentials of orthodox Christian faith.

Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball joined Lesslie Newbigin with an intense desire to reach Western culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Driscoll, in particular, adopted and adapted Newbigin's triangular formulation of the gospel as a timely taxonomy to define the interaction among the gospel, the church, and the culture at large. Both lauded Newbigin's approach to the Constantinian captivity of the church and the Enlightenment's reductionist mentality that forced the church and the gospel to private enclaves of irrelevant or syncretistic expressions. Driscoll and Kimball, although not using the direct terminology, affirmed the challenging relevance of the gospel in the culture when presented in the proper context. Using the principles of biblical contextualization provided by Lesslie Newbigin, Kimball and Driscoll desired to create a faithful and relevant expression of the biblical gospel for a culture that desperately needed Jesus.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that the missiological writings of Lesslie Newbigin influenced selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm in the United States. In concluding this study, this chapter provides a summary and analysis of the connection of Newbigin to selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm in three primary focus statements: Christendom is crippling the missionary consciousness of the church in Western culture, the communal dimension of mission and the reciprocal relationship between the church and the gospel has significant impact in missiology, and identifying the church as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom with the use of the challenging relevance of the gospel is a missiological necessity. In addition, the final focal statement is fully examined as conclusions are drawn about the customs and practices of the emerging church paradigm that transpired as a result of the interaction of the innovators and early adopters with the writings of Lesslie Newbigin. Finally, a proposal for further study in certain areas is articulated along with some concluding personal reflections.

Newbigin and the Emerging Church

The accolades applauding Lesslie Newbigin's contribution to the church are widespread. His unique perspective as a practicing missionary and pastor from within the ranks of the ecumenical movement, a movement often charged with severe accommodation to culture, created a variety of dimensions to his work. Newbigin's

staunch polemic against the remnants of rationalism and the mindset of modernity endeared him to many evangelicals. His astute critique of Western culture with an aim of reclaiming a biblical worldview while living out his calling to ministry was admirable. Such a feat, done not as an academician, but as a pastor, was a reminder of the theological and intellectual contributions that practitioners can bring to the table. His idea to confront the epistemological assumptions of an illogical dualism that subverted Western culture needs a fair and full assessment by the church. The vital role community played as a hermeneutic of the gospel was another important dimension in Newbigin's catalog of works. Newbigin's reminder of the expanding impact individual conversion can have on society and culture was a needed corrective for a church often disengaged from public settings. Newbigin's most significant role perhaps was his attempt to apply missiological principles of contextualization used in missionary settings to modern Western culture. Newbigin positioned the church to speak in the public square and addressed the inherent weaknesses in Western culture. The starting point for this mission was God's revelation of Jesus Christ.

Christendom, Culture, and the Gospel

This embrace of mission centered in Jesus Christ appealed to those seeking to reach a new generation. The emerging church leaders reacted to the positive contributions of the influence of Lesslie Newbigin that converged with a dissatisfaction of the fractured status of the North American church by attempting to establish churches marked by a new dynamic. Several slices of the emerging church community promoted cultural diagnosis as a supreme force in establishing a new kind of ecclesiology.

> Much of the dissatisfaction experienced by eventual leaders of the emerging
> church is indicated by reference to these four terms: authenticity, community,

mission, and mystery. Each of these terms point to facets of discontent that would spawn the emerging church. Three additional terms, culture, narrative, and the arts, must also be included among the defining marks of the movement. (Devine 2009, 4-6)

These terms resonated wholeheartedly with the thinking of Lesslie Newbigin. The disintegration and seeming collapse of the emerging church movement cannot be contributed to Newbigin's missiological contributions to the cause. The impetus for the fragmentation of the emerging church paradigm occurred as theological constructs in the Revisionist camp promoted the emerging church as "classical extreme liberalism in a new, cooler wrapper" (Smith 2010, 59). Dan Kimball, expressing his disenchantment with the movement's direction, states,

When the whole emerging church discussion began, it was primarily about evangelism and mission to emerging generations. That's why I got into it, and it was fun and a thrill to be a part of. After a while, some within it began focusing more on theology and even some core issues of theology – which is needed as theology is very important. But the central focus of evangelism to emerging generations was lost, in my opinion. (Smith 2010, 59)

This divergence led to the Relevants seeking new labels to define their missiological leanings, a move to social justice by the Revisionists, and a hope by some that the intellectual and missiological pursuits of Lesslie Newbigin would become part of the collective unconscious ideas that inform missiologists in the future.

One of Newbigin's strengths was his ability to diagnose the composition of Western culture, especially its endearment to the Enlightenment. He had many astute observations into how Christendom deviated from the gospel and led to a retreat from the public square and a need for a radical conversion of culture and society.

Newbigin has renewed the discussion of the need for radical conversion, not only the conversion of the heart but also of the mind. At the time of this radical conversion, the allegiance of the person changes to Jesus Christ but there also must be a renewal of the mind to become like the mind of Christ. This means that discipleship and nurturing must not only include spiritual instruction but also

223

instruction on how this faith factors into our understanding of the reality, of God, and the nature of the world. In other words, there is a shift in worldview, from a false and deficient worldview to a true understanding of reality. Newbigin wants Christians to not only grasp truth but also to correctly understand and grasp reality. (Stults 2008, 233-34)

The reminder by Newbigin to approach the West as a mission field with the church front and center in any missiological model was timely. Newbigin's compelling vision to move forward with public confidence in the gospel as biblical truth intersected and confronted the cultural crisis in the West. The first focus of this dissertation has been to

examine Lesslie Newbigin's concept that Christendom was crippling the missionary consciousness of the church in Western culture while exploring the need for proper confidence in the encounter between the culture and the gospel and to discern the influence on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

Missiological Corrections in Society

The shift needed to connect with culture required epistemological and missiological corrections. Newbigin's emphasis on epistemology had implications for his attempt to rectify the missiological missteps in the West. Epistemology mattered. This simple statement expresses the viewpoint of Newbigin even while some critiqued his exaggerated emphasis of epistemology as a chief concern in mission to the West.

Newbigin oversimplified intellectual history, overstated the impact of presuppositions, and expected more missionary benefit from Polanyi's epistemology than it could deliver, but missiologists must not take such excesses as grounds for denying that epistemology matters greatly. (Feddes 2012, 247)

Newbigin's attempt to communicate truth in a cultural setting meant epistemological assumptions must be analyzed. Stults suggests that Newbigin's mistake was attempting to "confine the approach to Western culture to just 'witness' without any serious attempt at reasonable persuasion is to ignore the valid intellectual aspect of Western persons" (Stults 2008, 243). Still, Newbigin's approach to the captivity of Western culture to

224

Christendom and the Enlightenment was an engagement and confrontation with the false premises and wrong assumptions of the reigning plausibility structure. This critical posture, according to Newbigin, had the ability to convince people of the adequacy and superiority of adopting a new plausibility structure offered by Christianity.

Newbigin's hope to offer an alternative community led emerging church leaders to new insights. Lesslie Newbigin had significant impact on the eclectic emerging church movement in his analysis that Christendom was crippling the missionary consciousness of the church in Western culture. His critique of the unwarranted accommodations of the Western church to the contemporary setting was eye opening. His insightful analysis helped the innovators and early adopters formulate an approach to an epistemological framework that helped understand postmodern society. Both the Revisionist and Relevant strains of the emerging church paradigm believed that modern culture was imprisoned in the rationalistic assumptions of the Enlightenment mindset. Newbigin's prescient reports indicated the deeply imbedded presuppositions of Western culture, and the emerging church practitioners embraced a view of faith that was a call to absolute and radical obedience of the gospel. Emerging church authors critiqued the entrapment of mission in a modern cage.

The Emerging Church and Public Truth

Emerging church proponents gambled that Newbigin's unfading confidence of the ability of the church to maintain a voice in the secular system was valid. The use of Newbigin's idea of the gospel as public truth by exhibiting proper confidence varied according to the pertinent strains of the emerging church paradigm and among the multiplicity of personalities engendered by the emerging church movement. Brian

McLaren embraced Newbigin's idea of knowledge as personal commitment, but McLaren hesitated to proclaim the gospel as public truth in the realm of objective fact. McLaren, along with Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt, believed that a postmodern setting prevented dogmatic statements of public truth and negated any ability to make bold pronouncements and announcements with any type of confidence. Their chastened epistemology abandoned propositional truth statements for neoorthodox beliefs that trapped the authors within and behind the text without possibility of certitude. According to a chorus of critics, public truth moved over for pragmatic cure-alls.

A key component captured from Lesslie Newbigin but not always practiced by the seminal leaders of the emerging church paradigm was the recovery of a missionary posture of the church and the belief that every epistemological position started from a foundational presupposed axiom that was not provable. Plausibility structures determined the "way things are" and were often unexamined and idolatrous assumptions that hindered the effectiveness of the gospel. Some accused Newbigin of overemphasizing this aspect of his epistemology, but the assumptions that created the problem did not disappear. In many ways, these proponents of the Emergents abandoned Newbigin's "standpoint above every other standpoint" that necessitated a proper confidence in the gospel and the ability of the church to proclaim it. The inclusion of an overrealized eschatology muted the need to call for radical conversion. This separation of the kingdom of God from the eschaton led to a preoccupation with a social gospel that negated personal conversion. Conversation was essential; conversion was not. Missional effectiveness was hindered by evangelistic timidity. The innovators and early adopters of the emerging church movement seized on this dynamic to challenge the reigning

226

plausibility structures of Western culture with varied effectiveness. Modernity, opined some emerging church advocates, diminished hope in eternity and life in community.

A significant critique of some elements of the emerging church paradigm as they criticized Christendom and modernity was an overuse of Newbigin's analysis to bludgeon the extant church while claiming the arrival of a new, more authentic kind of church. Newbigin, whose name means "new building," would likely caution those creating such caricatures that sweeping generalizations, blanket accusations, and an extreme preoccupation with novel innovations often worked against a faithful and obedient witness of the church (Newbigin 1993d, 1). The catchphrases inaugurated by Newbigin like "Christendom" and "modernity" were useful rubrics in the missional discussion, but the foci of Newbigin's writings were not weapons to dismantle society or all encompassing labels used to concoct arguments to demolish churches. Instead of an abandonment of existing ecclesiologies, Newbigin advocated an undying faith in the sovereign work of God without minimizing the personal aspects of witness empowered by the Holy Spirit in a confrontation with culture.

Newbigin saw with unusual clarity the forces at work in Western culture. He often faced scorn for his unbending optimism about the possibility of the gospel's opportunities for success in an unyielding Western culture. Newbigin's hope was for a missional engagement with the West that embodied the life of Jesus and confronted the culture with a holistic gospel. This posture was a needed corrective to a pragmatic preoccupation with church growth and methodological advancements. In this sense, as Newbigin's autobiography stated, his work is an unfinished agenda that awaits future generations to express his convictions in fresh ways. His confidence in God's purposes

and plans never doubted the power of the gospel to convert a culture as resistant and as formidable as the West.

Community, Mission, and a Reciprocal Relationship

The North American Christian community today resides in a missionary location known by Newbigin as *missio Dei*. This is the thesis elaborated with great insight and depth by the authors of the essays in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 1996). The insights in that volume borrow from Lesslie Newbigin's vital insistence of a missionary encounter of the gospel with Western culture through Trinitarian mission. Newbigin asserted the attempt to put the broken pieces of Christendom back together again was a failed enterprise. The only option, in Newbigin's assessment, was the original charter given to the church as a witnessing community and as a hermeneutic of the gospel. This gospel charter uses metaphors such as salt, light, yeast, a city on a hill, a mustard seed, and a flock to call Christians to a position in society as the first fruits of God's good news and eternal reign. The scandal of particularity advocated by Newbigin was that a few are chosen to be bearers of blessing for the sake of humanity (Newbigin 1995b, 32). This reign of God is not a new movement calling for devoted enlistees or a cause to support. Instead the reign of God announced in the works of Jesus Christ is a call to community that is paradoxically both triumphant victory over the principalities and powers through signs and wonders and the way of suffering, rejection, and death – by the way of the cross. The open secret, entrusted to those God chooses as a witness to the world, was that "God's reign is indeed at hand. God is indeed active in history. But his

action is hidden within what seems to be its opposite – suffering and tribulation for his people" (Newbigin 1995b, 39).

Advocates of the early emerging church community seized on Newbigin's call to live in authoritative community with a holistic expression of the gospel. The call by the emerging church for all communities of believers to wrestle with the need of a biblical identity in a changing world is an essential corrective within the dimensions of ecclesiology and missiology. The corporate nature of communal discipleship needs highlighting in contemporary culture as a corrective to the rampant individualism so often cited among North American Christians. The emerging church collectively sought to dispose the image of the church as a vendor of religious goods and services and to unmask the consumerism that so often characterized North American Christianity. Inherent in this correction was an adoption of a biblical story of redemption noted by Newbigin that demonstrated a coherent and consistent narrative of God's gracious work within the story line of the kingdom. The emerging church attempted to navigate another pathway in that story between what it characterized as rigid fundamentalism and pliable liberalism. The second focus of this dissertation has been to

> explore the emphases on the communal dimensions of mission and the reciprocal relationship between the church and the gospel in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and examines the effect on selected innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm.

Mission in Community

The emerging church innovators and early adopters embraced Newbigin's accent on the communal dimensions of mission as a corrective to the radical individualism and rampant rationalism of Western culture. Many emerging leaders embraced his concepts of incarnational praxis and a return to the narrative dimensions of

Scripture as a proper direction for the contemporary church. His advancement of a

missional ecclesiology that was only understood in the context of *missio Dei* was a

primary point of prominence for the original proponents of the emerging church

movement. Newbigin's fundamental focus that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

Christ both revealed and inaugurated the kingdom of God as the goal of universal history

was significant. This framed Newbigin's contention that the story of the Bible was a

narrative about universal history culminating in Jesus Christ. The gospel included

individual dimensions of salvation, but it also announced the restoration of the reign of

God over all creation. This was a welcome additive for the emerging church as they

believed a new epoch needed a restored focus as the church continued a Trinitarian

witness to Jesus Christ that was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Newbigin believed the missionary identity of the church blurred as it retreated

into Christendom and the private enclaves of modernity. Newbigin's minimizing of

inerrancy was an attempt to release Scripture from what he considered an improper

epistemology that deterred missionary engagement. In contrast, the Revisionist vein of

the emerging church resisted inerrancy because they considered such an absolute stance

as beholden to foundationalism. This overcorrection by Newbigin away from inerrancy

for missional purposes led to a loss of biblical authority in the neoorthodoxy of the

Revisionist strain of the emerging church. The abandonment of central biblical doctrines

by many emergents was an epistemological turn that embraced a gospel more social than

theological rather than reaching back to the New Testament context. The Revisionists

surrendered missional effectiveness as they devalued the authority of Scripture and

elevated the role of the culture and community without the alternative challenge of theological reflection on the particularity and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

The Relevants, on the other hand, attempted to faithfully embody the missional ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin. Both Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball incarnated a gospel in an urban setting that Newbigin believed was a neglected focus of the Western church. They also inculcated the church as an alternative community that valued radical conversion. In contrast to Lesslie Newbigin, both Driscoll and Kimball affirmed inerrancy although Kimball did so somewhat reluctantly and in an offhand manner. Rather than hinder their work, the high view of Scripture seemingly complemented and corrected their work in a true reciprocal relationship. The wholehearted endorsement by Kimball and Driscoll of the *missio Dei* as the "God who sends" refreshed the church without resorting to a weakened ecclesiology. The church was prominently featured in the writings of Kimball and Driscoll as a sent entity into the contemporary climate.

Neglected Notes in Evangelical Life

Two neglected notes in evangelicalism affirmed by emerging church authors were addressed in the works of Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin's assent to the narrative dimension of Scripture and an emphasis on the eschatological aspects of the kingdom of God were both necessary developments in a full-orbed understanding of the missionary obligation of the church as a hermeneutic of the gospel. According to some emerging church leaders, the recovery of Scripture as an intact whole occurred because of a reemphasis on its most prominent genre-narrative literature. The Emergents, in particular, believed that the noted and needed stress on narrative informs and reforms human beings created to live in community as a shared story shaped the collective life of

231

a social group. Newbigin and many emerging church pastors believed that the church needed to recover the gospel on its own terms, as the true and comprehensive story of our world, in order to prevent a diminished reaction in contemporary society.

Reductionism did rob Scripture of both mystery and history in an attempt to be pragmatic. This lessening of impact heightened the desire of Emergents to prevent what they considered the disappearing relevance of Scripture. The corrective of the Emergents was to place inordinate emphasis on the kingdom of God and to downplay the "idea of autonomous man and the Western preoccupation with human rights" (Stults 2008, 276). This corrective appeared in Newbigin's writings, but as usual, the Emergents overplayed their hand by minimizing biblical truth to highlight unity and community. Rather than prepackaged products that some Emergents used as a label to characterize attempts at faithful biblical confessions, such statements were often a relevant and effective means of communicating the gospel as public truth. Emergents rightly recognized the reductionist tendencies of modern Christianity, but they failed to note that Christianity was more than a subjective, spiritual experience. The truly missional posture needed a comprehensive and multifaceted missiological approach to bring radical conversion and renewal to a church that seeks to transform and revive culture.

Newbigin rooted his ecclesiology, soteriology, theology, eschatology, and epistemology in a missional grounding. Many of the missiological practices that the emerging church innovators and early adopters advocated neglected the missionary encounter that Newbigin desired to develop. Tony Jones adopted a relational ecclesiology rooted in Trinitarian theology emphasizing relational connectedness, but he minimized the missionary aspects of Newbigin's diagnostic prescription for the Western

church. Doug Pagitt concentrated on the communal aspects of Newbigin's ecclesiology, but Pagitt also underdeveloped the role of the community in continuing the mission of Jesus by participating in the *missio Dei.* The whole gamut of innovators and early adopters engaged Newbigin's belief that incarnational praxis was a forgotten dynamic of the gospel as Scripture shaped God's people and the community lived out Scripture in a reciprocal relationship.

Many emerging churches and Christians have awakened to the need for social concern as a consequence, a bridge, or a partner with the mission of the church to proclaim a whole gospel to a whole world. Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball identified this social dimension of the gospel as a needed corrective. The danger in this promotion of a social dimension to ministry by many emerging church leaders was the possibility of the erasure of theological boundaries that leads to a renegotiated meaning of the gospel. Purely corporate conversion was as much a fallacy as any promotion of the gospel that denied the necessity of personal conversion. Tony Jones argued for a lopsided horizontal ecclesiology as the community of faith affirmed one another. This affirmation was essential but impossible without the missionary dimensions manifested in the vertical and horizontal elements of the cross. Newbigin believed a missionary God pursued individual believers, immediately incorporated them into a community of faith, and empowered them to missionally engage with society. Horizontal affirmations of reconciled relationships were meaningless without the vertical dimension offered by propitiation brought through Jesus Christ. Mission started at a cross.

The danger for the emerging church was well stated by Tony Jones. Jones critiqued the own consumerist impulses of the emerging church paradigm that led to a

cacophony of books, conferences, and seminars and a celebrity status of some emerging

church innovators and early adopters. The Revisionist stream evoked doctrinal positions

much like the surrounding culture that left it prone to absorption into either the secular

realm or fragmentation among the existing churches in American culture. Some like

Andrew Jones suggested the emerging church was already dormant. The abandonment of

core Christian doctrines by Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt neither advanced the cause of

Christ nor enhanced the missional effectiveness of their respective communities.

Newbigin suggested such trauma would occur to any community of faith that neglected

to join the mission of Jesus in a fashion that preserved missional effectiveness and

doctrinal soundness.

Challenging Relevance in Contextual Settings

Newbigin's formulation of the church as sign, instrument and foretaste was an

expression of his abiding belief in the centrality of the church in the kingdom of God and

the proclamation of the gospel. Stults faulted Newbigin as a countercultural theologian

and questioned his commitment to the cause of contextualization. It was beyond dispute

that Newbigin leaned hard toward the content aspect rather than the context facet of

Bevan's model of contextual theology. The critique of Stults argued that Newbigin only

mentioned "witness" without other apologetic arguments for the necessity and rationality

of the gospel message (Stults 2008, 243). Stults posited such a view demonstrated the

distrust of Newbigin for contextualization. Others such as Michael Goheen argued that

Newbigin equated faithful contextualization with a faithful Christian community shaped

by Scripture that delivered and discerned the word of grace and the word of judgment

that the Bible pronounces on culture (Goheen 2000, 356). This misunderstanding of

234

Newbigin's work emerged from either a dismissal of Newbigin's concept of the challenging relevance of the gospel or a misappropriation of Newbigin's conclusions about this subversive feature of the gospel message. Newbigin stated " . . . this story, with its centre in the cross and resurrection of the eternal Word, will always provide both a critique of every culture and also the resources of divine grace to sustain the human enterprise of culture" (Goheen 2000, 356). The interpretation of this word of judgment and grace was difficult in Newbigin's thought, but the central idea was that "God's 'yes' is pronounced on the goodness of creation as that comes to expression in cultural constructs, and his 'no' stands against a sinful distortion evident in cultural constructs" (Goheen 2000, 356). Every expression of culture both displays something of God's good creation and simultaneously demonstrates the sinful twisting that culture exhibits. Newbigin's hope in true contextualization was avoiding syncretism that suppressed the word of judgment and irrelevance that avoided a word of grace.

The consequence of the omission of the challenging relevance of the gospel in the Great Commission was a refusal to grant permission for the church to live missionally. The gospel and church in reciprocal relationship must neither uncritically affirm culture in its missionary location nor sinfully disdain society at large. Missional living required a true tension that lives faithfully in a biblical community and missionally in a pagan society. In Newbigin's mind, the task of the church was to bridge the gap between God's kingdom and the cultural context by a missionary encounter of the gospel with Western culture. Newbigin stated,

> Ours is not as we imagined a secular society, it is a pagan society and its paganism having been born out of the rejection of Christianity is far more resistant to the gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which cross cultural missions have been familiar. Here, surely, is the most challenging missionary frontier of our time

235

. . . how can we be missionaries to this modern world, we who are ourselves a part of this modern world. (Newbigin 1986, 20)

Emerging church innovators and early adopters embraced the contention of Newbigin that the gospel-culture encounter always unfolded in a Christian community in a dual dialogue. The first discourse involved believers and God within a culture, and the second dialogue was an encounter between the community that represents the gospel and the culture it attempts to reach. A missional congregation understands the cross-cultural context and attempts to enter into dialogue and bear witness to Jesus Christ within its context and culture. The challenge, according to Mark Driscoll, was to maintain a faithful witness that neither dumbs down the gospel in cultural accommodation nor refuses to redeem those innocuous portions of the culture that have been perverted by sin and circumstances with the transforming power of the gospel. The third focus of this dissertation has been to

> understand Newbigin's concept of the church as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the kingdom and his use of the challenging relevance of the gospel in the relationship between the church and culture and to examine his influence on selected early adopters and innovators in the emerging church paradigm.

Reaching a Pagan World

The emerging church and Lesslie Newbigin both addressed a central question that reverberated among the Christian community. How did the church reach the changing culture represented by a pagan, modern mindset? The particular segment targeted by the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church was Generation X. Lesslie Newbigin's most potent contribution asked what was involved in a missionary encounter with the resistant culture of Western society. This notion struck a missiological nerve that continues to resonate with generations of missiologists and

236

advocates of contextualization. All elements of the emerging church applauded in different degrees this contention of Newbigin's work. Central to Newbigin's claim was the placement of the church in the center of the contextualization question. Newbigin argued that the church was tragically omitted from the conversation in both scholarly and pastoral treatments of the kingdom of God.

Mark Driscoll adopted and adapted Newbigin's triangular formulation to develop a concise and comprehensive philosophy of missionary engagement. Dan Kimball embraced divergent voices and historical expressions of Christianity to create what Lesslie Newbigin entitled an alternative plausibility structure and Kimball called Vintage Christianity. Both Driscoll and Kimball embraced Newbigin's conception of a holistic gospel that included all aspects of salvation. Both Driscoll and Kimball desired to repair the reputation of Christianity in a culture that maintained deep and often incorrect assumptions about the gospel. These deep-seated beliefs create a pervasive and unexamined comprehensive and core ideology of a culture that shapes the plausibility structure of society. The preemptive approach of Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball hoped to demonstrate Newbigin's concept of the challenging relevance of the gospel by allowing the church to inhabit an equally comprehensive and biblically informed set of ultimate commitments. The result was a tension in the community of faith that allowed the church to challenge idolatrous assumptions of the culture while reshaping legitimate forms of culture with the power of the gospel. Driscoll referred to this aspect of Newbigin's attempt to represent solidarity with and separation from culture as receiving those cultural forms that were acceptable, rejecting idolatrous expressions of the gospel, and redeeming other aspects with the gospel. The difficulty in Driscoll's exercise of

237

contextualization was using cultural terms and forms without either succumbing to the culture's idolatrous structures or surrendering to inappropriate expressions of the gospel on the turf of unbelievers and in the terms they advocated.

Both the Relevant and Revisionist streams of the emerging church adopted the concept that suggested the gospel was always embedded in cultural forms. The difference in their approaches was the Revisionist camp attempted to deconstruct those forms with a preconceived bias of the superiority of the postmodern culture and a devalued assessment of the normative boundaries of the Bible. The result was a contextualization that tended toward relativistic approaches and syncretistic expressions of Christianity. Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, and Brian McLaren addressed this critique but still veered towards an expression of the gospel that was more conforming relativism than challenging relevance. Rather than the subversive fulfillment of the gospel they engaged a subversive expression of the gospel in many contexts. All these men argued that the imprisonment of the Bible in Greco-Roman philosophy necessitated a reformulation of the gospel for postmodern culture in opposition to improper expression in fundamental and liberal churches.

A Missionary Encounter in the West

Lesslie Newbigin's primary contribution to the conversation of gospel faithfulness was his expression of the necessity of a missionary encounter with Western culture. This engagement was not a prominent theme until Newbigin raised his voice in a consistent and constant fashion to make his assertions seem matter of fact in present discussions. His dissection of the reigning plausibility structure in which the gospel was embedded necessitated a remembrance of the neglected missionary posture of

238

contemporary expressions of the church. Newbigin proposed a missional movement that created alternative communities that challenged the prevailing philosophies and powers of the present age. His call was to be the church and not just go to church in a hope to prevent a further demise of gospel effectiveness. This positive refrain led the emerging church innovators and early adopters to seize on Newbigin's call for authentic living, promote an emphasis on a holistic gospel and the kingdom of God, to call for a missionary movement, and to exhibit a missional posture toward culture. The scope of Newbigin's influence was demonstrated by the multiplicity of scholars, pastors, and church planters that engaged his writings and attempted to faithfully incarnate his theories in concrete practices. The fading influence of the emerging church seemed to negate this impact. However, Newbigin's connection to the prevailing missional movement demonstrates the width and breadth of his missional ecclesiology in the contemporary domain. Lesslie Newbigin's optimistic outlook and prescient stance to Western culture led to varied expressions in the contemporary context of the emerging church paradigm and the missional movement. His prayer remained an expression of the hope of the Savior he loved.

Practices and Prospects of the Emerging Church

The emerging church paradigm developed in a time of flux and fluidity in Western culture. The calendar promised a new century and the beginning of a new millennium. Pastors and church planters in North America hoped to reach the identifiable and multiple subcultures especially in the urban landscape (Devine 2009, 12). The innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm considered culture of supreme importance as they hoped to plant authentic communities. This preoccupation

with culture also created a backlash against existing churches that were seen as "stifling, inauthentic, and completely out of touch with many segments of society" (Hammett 2009, 225). Mark Driscoll's book, *The Radical Reformission,* includes interviews with individuals in segments of society usually seen as outcasts in society that the church neglects. Driscoll uses Jonah to illustrate the fact that we often love the things God has given us more that the spiritually blind people within our cities.

> We get an honest glimpse of how sinful Jonah was, how gracious God is, and what kind of self-righteous, racist prig Jonah would be without God. To this day, the Jews gather in the synagogue each year on the Day of Atonement to read Jonah. After the reading they reply, 'We are Jonah.' This truth is essential for rightly relating to Jonah. We are Jonah when, because we do not like them, we run from God's call on our lives to bring the gospel to lost people, whom he loves. We are Jonah because we have been sent to proclaim repentance to great but wicked cities filled with people like the Ninevites – people whom God loves but we don't like (Driscoll 2004, 106-07).

This dynamic combined to lead the emerging church innovators and early adopters to comb the works of the late Lesslie Newbigin to define ways to release the gospel from its entrapment in the existing plausibility structures in the West (Stetzer 2009, 47). Scott McKnight, in his careful analysis of the emerging church movement, opined that no figure pointed the way forward in a postmodern culture more carefully than Lesslie Newbigin (McKnight 2007, 57). This application brings the work of this dissertation to a final focused and concluding statement:

> This research explores the practices of the emerging church paradigm that emerged from Newbigin's influence in the current culture in the United States. The concluding sections examine both the practices and the prospects of the emerging church paradigm.

Practices of the Emerging Church

Gibbs and Bolger developed a definition of the emerging church in their five-year evaluation of the embryonic movement. The three core practices in the definition

are stated as identifying with the life of Jesus, transforming secular space, and living as community (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 45). These hallmarks coalesce with the impact of Lesslie Newbigin. First, the hope of an incarnational life in the manner of Jesus motivated the emerging church as a whole to emphatically embrace the kingdom of God as a defining motif. Gibbs and Bolger commented that emerging churches as they identified with the life of Jesus were "frustratingly fuzzy because they are working out the very latest understandings of gospel and culture from the likes of N. T. Wright, Lesslie Newbigin, Dallas Willard and others" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 63). The second custom of the transforming of secular space was a reaction to the epistemology that leads to what Gibbs and Bolger consider arbitrary divisions in society between the public world of facts and the private world of values. This epistemological fallacy was a central part of Newbigin's critique of the Enlightenment's impact on Western culture. Emerging churches rejected the concept of modernity that creates a secular space and relegates spiritual issues to the church. Rather than the reductionist impulse of breaking everything down into little parts for classification, organization, and systemization the emerging church attempted to resist capitulation to the dualisms of many modern churches and incorporated a holistic approach to the patterns of life (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 66). Finally, emerging churches lived highly communal lives. This practice engaged culture in an attempt to persuade people to a change of allegiance away from individualism and consumerism to a primary identity as a community of Christ followers (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 91). This reframing of the church as a movement on a mission was central to the work of Lesslie Newbigin.

The thesis that frames the extensive work of Gibbs and Bolger was that the church in the West was a modern institution in a postmodern world. The implication of this analysis suggests this duo was beholden to the cogent evaluation of Lesslie Newbigin on the decline of the church in the West. The decision to engage in five years of scholarly study that designated the need to address the relationship between the gospel, the church, and culture was explicitly dependent on the work of Newbigin. The premise of Gibbs and Bolger, which characterized contextualization as necessary for a missionary posture in the church, borrowed from the insightful thoughts of Lesslie Newbigin.

Gibbs and Bolger conducted a thorough and exhaustive review and admitted they came into the process of research as missiologists and attempted to describe patterns that were missiologically significant by engaging the postmodern context with the gospel (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 9). The phenomenological research indicated six customs that described emerging churches that practiced the way of Jesus in a postmodern culture. The duo identify practices that emerged from the three core activities as welcoming the stranger, serving with generosity, participating as producers, creating as innovators, leading as a body, and taking part in spiritual activities (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 45). Newbigin similarly posted a list of activities that communities of faith practiced in a missional posture. These included practicing corporate praise, establishing relationships within a local neighborhood, serving with a generous spirit, expecting mutual responsibility rather than individualistic pursuits, and nurturing hope with a reimagined future (Newbigin 1989b, 227-33). These missional activities produced a large number of correlations with the list of Gibbs and Bolger, and the emerging church used them as part of a new start.

Identifying with the Life of Jesus

Gibbs and Bolger have described the first core practice of the emerging church paradigm as identifying with the life of Jesus (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 43). They explicitly state that "the emerging church relies heavily on the New Testament scholarship of N. T. Wright and to a lesser extent the work of Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder and missiologists David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin, among others, for it's understanding of Jesus, the gospel, the kingdom and the *missio Dei*" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 49). This concept impacted all streams of the emerging church movement, but it had significantly greater impact among the Revisionist and Reconstructionist camps. Implicit in the view of the progressive elements of the emerging church was a heightened interest in the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (Hammett 2009, 233). Gibbs and Bolger say, "The gospel of emerging churches is not confined to personal salvation. It is social transformation arising from the presence and permeation of the reign of Christ" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 63). The kingdom of God is in the present tense, in that, wherever Jesus is present the kingdom is present.

> There is a strong and indissoluble link between the teaching of Jesus and the good news he embodied and proclaimed. His message both announced and inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth. The long-promised kingdom, spoken of by the Hebrew prophets, was established in provisional form with the coming of Jesus and the outpouring of his Spirit. It is this kingdom hope that inspires emerging church leaders as they seek to realize that promise within their communities, striving for them to become servants and signs of that kingdom as they live God's future, which is both already here and remains to come. (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 47-48)

This practice of identifying with the life of Jesus impacted many of the Emergents in several forms. The first was a renewed interest in an incarnational presence in the surrounding community "seeping into the host culture like salt and light" (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 18-21). The idea was to live, eat, and work closely within the

243

community context in order to establish strong links with neighbors. Socialization was intentional, mission oriented, grace-filled, and generous (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 57). The implication was a focus on the surrounding turf rather than an attractional approach with multiple church events. The objective, according to Frost and Hirsch, was to demonstrate that Jesus was with the host community (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 74). Many in the Emergent codified this practice by suggesting orthopraxy trumped orthodoxy. A second form of identifying with the life of Jesus was moving the Eucharist from an occasional observance to a central act of worship (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 119). This act was an attempt to merge ancient and contemporary forms of spirituality as a means of demonstrating the reality of a universal priesthood with full participation in God's kingdom. The final form of identifying with the life of Jesus was to view acts of mercy as sacramental. Emergents viewed acts of mercy as mission that attempted to make and renew culture and its institutions so they honor God's original intent for creation–shalom (Belcher 2009, 121).

John Hammett notes that others saw problems with such an open-ended view of the kingdom of God in two aspects: the neglect of the eschatological future and the omission of concepts like justification, substitution, atonement, and propitiation for a socially oriented gospel (Hammett 2009, 236). Ed Stetzer quotes Leonard Sweet as stating the emerging church had become another form of the social gospel (Stetzer 2009, 59). The Relevant camp of the emerging church appreciated the incarnational and missional aspects of living like Jesus, but Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball affirmed the idea that any church should be biblically faithful and culturally appropriate (Hammett 2009, 233).

Lesslie Newbigin's manifesto on the theology of mission, *The Open Secret*,

sought a similar agenda of biblical faithfulness and cultural engagement in an attempt to

create counter-culture communities. The work was developed as Newbigin taught

theology in Birmingham, England while also serving as a pastor. His Trinitarian

affirmation that formed the crux of his work examined Christian mission in three

fashions, "as proclaiming the kingdom of the Father, as sharing in the life of the Son, and

as bearing the witness of the Spirit" (Newbigin 1995b, 29). This triad demonstrated

mission as faith in action, love in action, and hope in action. Newbigin stated, "Jesus

proclaimed the reign of God and sent out His disciples to do the same. But that is not all.

His mission was not only a matter of words, and neither is ours . . . in the New Testament

we are dealing not just with the proclamation of the kingdom but also with the presence

of the kingdom" (Newbigin 1995b, 40). This belief that the reign of God was present, in

Newbigin's thought, was best demonstrated at the Lord's Table.

> At the heart of the life of the church is the Eucharistic celebration, in whom those who gather around the Lord's table are taken up again and again into his sacrificial action, made partakers of his dying and of his risen life, consecrated afresh to the Father in and through him, and sent out into the world to bear the power of the cross and resurrection through the life of the world. This is how the Eucharist is interpreted in the great consecration prayer (John 17). The church represents the presence of the reign of God in the life of the world. (Newbigin 1995b, 54)

The Lord's Supper, in Newbigin's musings, was an advance notice of the coming

kingdom.

This eschatological focus assured that Newbigin's career as a pastor never

turned inward. Instead Newbigin believed the character of the church involved

participation in the mission of Jesus in the world (Newbigin 1954, 146). Newbigin

described mission in "terms of the proclamation, the presence, and the prevenience of the

reign of God" (Newbigin 1995b, 91).   He often termed mission as action for God's

justice. "Acts of compassion, therefore, acts by which the church tries to share in and bear the pain of those who suffer, are not an escape from the real business of fighting for liberation, or an alternative to it: they are an authentic part of the victory of the Lamb" (Newbigin 1995b, 108). Newbigin's believed doctrine and praxis were integrated, and such praxis could only occur in the context of the life of the church through actual discipleship (Newbigin 1992b, 6). Newbigin's hope was to unmask the illusions that distorted the gospel in order to help churches be more articulate and credible witnesses to the gospel. The life of Jesus in the world was about the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us. This act of devotion required a reciprocal response of a wholehearted life lived authentically for Jesus Christ.

Transforming Secular Space

The second core practice identified by Gibbs and Bolger as a key component of the emerging church paradigm was transforming secular space. Newbigin believed a paradigm shift was needed for the church to invade secular space. The division created by the Cartesian program was a split between the sacred and secular and a dichotomy between personal opinion and public fact (Newbigin 1994d, 160). Newbigin argued against such a dichotomy and validated the need for risk and courage in order to break out of the box of the prevailing plausibility structure in the West "through living out what had been given them in the incarnation of the Son of God so they were able to offer a new model for understanding the whole human situation-The Trinitarian model-that provided the starting point for a whole new flowering of human culture (Newbigin 1994d, 173). Newbigin's advocated the fact that Jesus is Lord in every tapestry of the human life. In his work *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society,* Newbigin designated the

246

notion of a "secular society" as a myth (Newbigin 1989b, 211). Newbigin's contention

was that many Christians uncritically accepted a comfortable coexistence with the false

assumptions of secular society. Newbigin argued,

> To call men into discipleship of Jesus Christ is and always must be central in the
> life of the church. But we must be clear about what discipleship will mean. It cannot
> mean that one accepts the lordship of Christ as governing personal and domestic
> life, and the life of the Church, while another sovereignty is acknowledged for the
> public life of society. It cannot mean that the Church is seen as a voluntary society
> of individuals which does not challenge the assumptions which govern the worlds
> of politics, economics, education. The model for all Christian discipleship is given
> once and for all in the ministry of Jesus. His ministry entailed the calling of
> individual men and women to personal and costly discipleship, but at the same time
> it challenged the principalities and powers, the ruler of this world, and the cross was
> the price paid for that challenge. (Newbigin 1989b, 220)

Newbigin balked at the idea of the church as a permitted option within the

secular realm. Such a stance in the Christian community was settling for involvement

only in domestic and private affairs. Newbigin charged the church to "challenge in the

name of the one Lord all the powers, ideologies, myths, assumptions, and worldviews

which do not acknowledge him as Lord" (Newbigin 1989b, 221). The alternative was to

allow secularism to define society by excluding the belief that all human society was

under the sovereign rule of God. Such a scenario played out in the West, according to

Newbigin, and the consequence was a loss of purpose and hope. The task at hand,

Newbigin believed, was "the equipping of Christians to bring their secular employment

under the obedience of Christ" (Newbigin 1994d, 174). This allowed the various sectors

of public life in which Christians were involved to explore ways a Christian perspective

could challenge and redirect contemporary practice.

The emerging church used these insights from Bishop Newbigin to call for an

end to the secular and sacred divide. Emerging churches believed all of life must be

sacred. They used Newbigin's concepts to argue that the sacred and secular were divided

in modernity to carve out a "realm without God" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 66). The result

was to minimize and delegitimatize religious practices as voluntary spiritual practices.

Emerging churches marked a shift to "whole life" spirituality that refused to designate

any arena as nonspiritual domains of reality (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 66). According to

the emerging church leaders, instead of acting as a spiritual chaplain to society that led to

increasing isolation, the church needed to adapt and adopt in order to incarnate and

express the gospel beyond the spiritual domain. The ethic of this practice was a love of

neighbor that undergirded a commitment to "be in the world, take responsibility for the

world, and love the world in the name of Jesus Christ" (Anderson 2006, 194-95). Hirsch

and Frost characterized such a posture as "messianic spirituality" rooted in the life and

teaching of Jesus himself (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 116). Such spirituality is grounded in

concrete personal expressions, real human history, and in the messy endeavors of life.

Transforming secular space occurred in emerging churches in everyday places and

spaces.

Mark Driscoll has termed this the art of living everyday life for Jesus as being

in exile as Christians attempted to be biblically faithful and culturally relevant (Driscoll

2004, 129). The invading of secular space is a cultural mandate, as God desires to bless

all nations and cultures of the earth through believing Christians. Driscoll's premise is

that God historically has sent his people into exile so that they could at least in part be

about the task of invading secular space. Emerging churches embraced the redemption of

the everyday (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 124). Such a mandate involved not a faith noted for

the denial of pleasure, but an affirmation that life, the world, and humanity were made for

God. The celebration of pleasure in everyday events was a vital bridge into the lives of

ordinary people. In addition, transforming secular space included the attempt to treat

everything – one's work, one's domestic life, one's health, one's worship, and one's

vocation – with the same significance usually reserved for spiritual activities. God was

concerned with every dimension of a believer's life. All of life was sacred when

conducted in relation to the living God, and life was lived under the Lordship of one God

instead of the tyranny of many. The consequence was the sanctifying of the everyday as

"all things, all events, all activities, can be occasion of hallowing" (Frost and Hirsch

2003, 132). This holistic approach included equipping believers to an engagement with

their vocation and wider culture. Many emerging church leaders used art, media, and

various venues to communicate the call of God on all of life. Extreme examples included

theology in pubs and bars and the use of club bands to do worship gatherings. These

extremes often formed the negative critiques of some of the Emergent churches.

However, the necessary note of engagement with society in a biblically faithful manner

by transforming secular space resonated with many in Western society.

Living as Community

A cursory reading of Lesslie Newbigin's work suggests a fair amount of

repetition. One recurring theme threaded in significant ways throughout his entire body

of work was the centrality of living in an alternative community fashioned by Jesus

Christ. One theologian, Geoffrey Wainwright, said that when the history of the church is

written for the last century, Lesslie Newbigin would be among the top theological

thinkers (Goheen 2000, 48). One of the main messages communicated by Lesslie

Newbigin was the congregation as the hermeneutic of the gospel (Newbigin 1989b, viii).

Newbigin said, "The community formed by Jesus becomes the place where men and

women find that the gospel gives them the framework of understanding, the 'lenses' through which they are able to understand and cope with the world" (Newbigin 1989b, 227). One of the central contentions of this research is the fact that a believing community indwelling and embodying the story of Scripture is a prime starting point in every missiological endeavor for Bishop Newbigin. This community called for loyal allegiance as other commitments took a back seat to the ultimate devotion to Jesus Christ. This communal aspect of Newbigin's work is a given, and in turn community forms a hallmark distinctive of the practices of the emerging church.

Emerging churches contended the model of Jesus was leaving people in place "who lived like him and loved like him" (Stetzer 2006, 78). Dan Kimball noted that discipleship occurred in the emerging church primarily through experience and participation (Kimball 2003, 215). Kimball uses a phrase familiar to emerging church leaders as he says, "We need to understand that in most cases in our emerging church, belonging precedes believing. In today's culture, people don't come to have trust and understanding until they feel like they belong. Then the Spirit moves in, bringing them to a point of belief" (Kimball 2007a, 160-61). This basic concept now permeates the everyday consciousness of many evangelicals. Doug Pagitt picked up on that prospect and argued that community is where spiritual formation happens and discipleship occurs (Pagitt 2003, 27). Discipleship in the emerging church paradigm often involved participation in community, missions, and service prior to conversion. This was a paradigm shift that involved a mindset that "the real issue is not where a church meets, the style of the service, or even the structure but that the kingdom of God is embodied in the life of the community" (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 96).

Another attribute of living in community hailed by the emerging church was the surrender of old loyalties in order to create space for the kingdom of God. Ideologies and assumptions such as nationalism, individualism, and consumerism needed to be reappropriated or completely abandoned in light of the coming reign of God (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 91). Mark Driscoll railed against the dynamic of consumerism as he lists multiple statistics including the fact that more people visit a mall each week than a house of worship and that parents spend six hours shopping each week, and forty minutes playing with their children (Driscoll 2004, 171). Driscoll concluded that a gluttonous and spoiled culture must be confronted and corrected by a community of faith that recalls its greatest need is to die to self and live for God. All other loyalties had to acquiesce to loyalty to the kingdom as former allegiances shifted to new sets centered most clearly in the community Jesus gathered to himself (Gibbs and Bolger 2004, 92). Unbridled consumerism and uncensored anonymity give way to tight communities living the way of Jesus in all realms of culture. The emerging church also inhabited a way of life that included welcoming hospitality and serving generosity.

> It would be hard to overstate the emphasis on the nature of church as community and the importance of experiencing community for those in the emerging church. This is one area where the different wings of the emerging church seem to agree. One of the three core practices Gibb and Bolger indentify as present in all emerging churches is 'living in community.' (Hammett 2009, 225)

Another facet of living in community promoted by the emerging church was as a setting for authenticity and conversation. Authentic conversation, according to Brian McLaren, not conversion or belief in "any doctrine or theory" was the way people were drawn into the kingdom (McLaren 2006a, 111). The inclusive atmosphere and the engagement in participation and practice brought a release from feeling claustrophobic in a closed environment to an ethic of love and grace that invited people to stay (McLaren

2007a, 3). One of the attributes many of the emerging church communities praised was the multiplicity of ecclesiological models and diverse and fresh expressions of faith that were shaped by the local culture and context. Dan Kimball expressed the belief that evangelical Christians are often seen as overly dogmatic and close-minded, and the need is to build trust with the emerging culture by welcoming authentic conversation about the deeper questions of life, Scripture, and the church (Kimball 2003, 193). The reigning ethos in many emerging churches was authenticity and dialogue. The flip side of such an emphasis, according to Mark Driscoll, was "simply encouraging people to be who they are in the name of authenticity is dangerous because it can easily be taken as a license to sin without repentance" (Driscoll 2004, 167). Scripture concurs in the opening chapter of Romans where Paul says that people are prone to be real rather than repentant because they believe a lie instead of the truth. Authenticity in community requires biblical authority.

The Prospects of the Emerging Church

Rivaling community for importance in the emerging church, according to John Hammett, was its missional orientation to the emerging culture (Hammett 2009, 229). Ed Stetzer notes the term "missional" became popular in the "latter part of the twentieth century through the work of missiologists Lesslie Newbigin, David Bosch, and the Gospel and Our Culture network, who emphasized the need for church to impact their culture and be contextually relevant" (Hammett 2009, 230). Missional, in the camp of the Relevant emerging church leaders, was an alternate term affiliated with the work of Lesslie Newbigin that retained a strong concern for sound doctrine alongside the need for cultural relevance (Frost and Hirsch 2003, xi). The missional church envisioned by Frost

252

and Hirsch "seeks to thoroughly contextualize the church, making it indigenous to its culture, but it retains a strong commitment to a traditional understanding of the gospel" (Hammett 2009, 231). The missional church wants to engage the culture without compromising the gospel (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 16). Mark Driscoll and Dan Kimball, two early innovators in the Relevant camp of the emerging church paradigm, have argued vehemently that America is a mission field filled with people who "need a gospel and a church that are faithful both to the biblical text and to the cultural contexts of America" (Driscoll 2004, 18-19). This arena demonstrates the strongest promise for a biblically faithful and culturally connected approach in the vein of Lesslie Newbigin for early advocates of the emerging church paradigm. The missional movement appears to be the sphere of influence in which the philosophies and thoughts of Lesslie Newbigin will be tested and probed as either proper correctives to dysfunctions in the church or needless speculations without much merit.

Newbigin's proposal of a church that maintained a missional posture was a central feature of many of the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. His insightful discussions on the necessity of contextualization in the proclamation of the gospel by the church in resistant Western culture engaged a multiplicity of adherents who saw the wisdom of such an approach. Mark Driscoll, in particular, popularized Newbigin's principles of a gospel trialogue and used Newbigin's cogent conclusions to create a missiological philosophy that guided his personal practices, informed the scores of church planters in the Acts 29 network, and engaged a multitude of Christians through his public platforms in sermons, writings, and his presence on the worldwide web. Although Driscoll disassociated himself from later

theologically liberal manifestations of the emerging church paradigm, his early

associations with the movement are foundational.

The advocates of the missional movement also proclaim their indebtedness to

Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin stressed the need to exegete culture and restructure church

methodology to a missional mode. This necessitated what Newbigin distinguished as a

third way between calcified fundamentalism and soft liberalism to a missional mindset.

Many eulogize the demise of the emerging church with some validity, but the

foundational practices emerging churches promoted and practiced are imprinting a

diverse group of churches and Christians. Doug Pagitt promoted a practice of a

reimagined proclamation of God's Word. Dan Kimball innovated in the arena of

multisensory worship. Tony Jones reformatted youth ministry. Brian McLaren promoted

a new way of Christian living. Mark Driscoll promoted reformission as a model for

missiology. The consequences of such innovations met with pushback and critiques in a

variety of ways with the most valid criticisms developing in theological reflection against

wayward divergences. The premise that Newbigin impacted the formation of these new

practices remains indisputable.

The practices adopted by the emerging churches were in many ways protests

against the established churches and the sensed need for recalibration. The Revisionists

envisioned a dismantling, deconstructing, and debugging of the extant church and their

divergence from orthodox Christian convictions created a huge backlash against the

whole emerging church paradigm. The missional corrections and ecclesiological turns

articulated by the proponents of the emerging church movement remain relevant critiques

of established churches even while the epistemological and theological solutions are often caustic corrections.

Much of the criticism concerned the breadth of the definition of the movement, as the Relevants became targets of theological critique as the emerging church paradigm was narrowed down to Brian McLaren and his infatuation with nebulous and fuzzy descriptions of truth. Dan Kimball included churches in the emerging camp if they saw the call of the church as being sent in a missional way to engage the surrounding culture. Even while the Revisionists drew tons of media attention as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, and Doug Pagitt questioned the nature of substitutionary atonement, the reality of hell, the role of sexuality, and the nature of the gospel, others in the initial launch of the emerging church paradigm examined a multitude of issues that directly impacted the health of the church. Their critiques of captivity to Enlightenment rationalism, a narrow view of salvation that neglects living as a Christian disciple, a weak ecclesiology that concentrates on institutional survival rather than missional engagement, and an inward focus that negates a countercultural calling of the church are a legitimate engagement of issues of substance. The call by stalwarts such as Newbigin and John Stott to the unity of the gospel was not a denial of doctrinal differences, but a reaction to the failing of the final apologetic of Jesus, our love for one another.

Further Research

What will be the final impact of the emerging church? Varied answers have been offered to that question, but some of the solutions await further research. As the term and advocacy of the emerging church paradigm faded from the scene, the missional movement began to pick up steam. Research into the connection between Lesslie

Newbigin's thought and the missional church movement remains scarce. Michael

Goheen included a short segment on the influence of Lesslie Newbigin on the missional

movement in his massive dissertation, but more research and study is needed into the

implications of Newbigin's thoughts on the missional movement. Research into the

effectiveness of contextualization in urban settings and the creation of countercultural

communities also need examination.

Will Lesslie Newbigin continue to influence missiological practices in this

century? The answer most often used is an affirmative and emphatic yes to such an

inquiry. Research remains to be done on the effectiveness of the focus statements in this

work in producing faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. The church needs empirical research

on the missional model's effectiveness in reaching the current generation. In addition,

the need for study in settings outside the North American and Western context is without

question. Jesus promised the church would prevail against the gates of hell. His promise

remains, as Jesus is faithful to the past, present, and future of the church he bought with

his blood.

Some Personal Reflections

Newbigin argued that research was not just a matter of dry facts, but research

also entailed moments of personal belief and insight. This moment of tacit knowledge

about the topic of the emerging church occurred for this researcher in a tense

conversation about the ministry of some of the early practitioners in a doctoral seminar.

Personal conflict and conversation led to a quick trip to the bookstore to preview and

purchase books by some of the founding leaders including those documented in this

research: Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll.

This initial interaction soon became a growing obsession as the researcher spent not only the next few months but the next few years immersed in the exploding market of seminars and books in the emerging church arena. The emerging church movement diagnosed some of the anxieties this pastor felt in an attempt to diagnose the relationship of the gospel, the church, and the culture. How could the church faithfully proclaim the gospel? What risks in the enterprise of the proclamation of the gospel were valid and which were out of bounds? Was the culture shifting and changing or was this researcher just out of touch? The diagnostics of much of the maladies plaguing the existing church by the emerging church team touched a nerve. The prescriptions and solutions proposed did something else to the nerves of this pastor. Some of the offerings for resolutions to the dilemmas dogging the church brought profound insight to both the personal life and ministry of this researcher. Others left the researcher shaking his head in disbelief.

The tension that was felt was a combination of a profound love and respect for Jesus Christ, his infallible word, and the enduring church with an uneasiness about the unhealthy way the existing church used Jesus and the Scriptures to advance its own agenda. The emerging church innovators and early adopters often pointed to a name that the researcher was also unfamiliar with at the time: Lesslie Newbigin. The connections between the two were hard to ignore as Newbigin's name appeared over and over again in books, blogs, and seminars of the emerging church movement. Newbigin's extraordinary life as a pastor appealed to the researcher, but Newbigin's primary interest was a hope to frame a missionary encounter with Western culture. Through his own writings and the writings of others such as Michael Goheen, George Hunsberger, Donald Stults, and David Bosch the researcher rapidly began to appreciate Newbigin's sterling

intellect and discerning spirit. In time, the researcher's admiration for Newbigin

increased in direct proportion to his decreasing fascination in the meanderings of

Emergents such as Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt. Many others began to

lose interest in the emerging church movement as well. Dan Kimball and Mark Driscoll,

both flawed and fallible, were more in line with this pastor's personal faith journey.

There are aspects of Newbigin's theology, ecclesiology, missiology, and

soteriology that this researcher believes are misinformed. Some of those have been

discussed in this dissertation. However, the note that continues to resonate was

Newbigin's desire to discover what would be involved in a genuinely missionary

encounter between the gospel and Western culture. His missionary enthusiasm and

personal experience in cross-cultural missions colored his conclusions in an invigorating

way. Newbigin pierced holes in the existing plausibility structures in Western society

that Christians largely accepted en masse without any analysis. Newbigin uncovered the

foundational flaws and assumptions of Western culture that eclipsed biblical authority.

The other note with extended impact for this pastor was Newbigin's eternal optimism

about the possibility of revival and recovery for the church in the West. Newbigin

believed in a church that stood in a missionary posture to impact the world. This is the

message of Jesus and the desire of this pastor's heart. Only God knows the future of the

church in Western culture. The great hope for the church remains in the same phrase

Newbigin articulated in the words of Jesus. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

REFERENCE LIST

Akkerman, Jay Richard. 2004. The graphic gospel: Preaching in a postliterate age. D.Min. thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary.

Anderson, Justice. 1989. Old Baptist principles reset. *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 31(Spring): 5-12.

Anderson, Ray S. 2006. *An emergent theology for emerging churches.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Barna, George. 2005. *Revolution.* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.

Barrett, David B., and Todd M. Johnson. Retrieved 8 January 2007 from http://www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/2001/dawn07.html.

Barrett, Peter J. The gospel and Western culture: On the ideas of Lesslie Newbigin. *Missionalia* 27 (1): 62-72.

Bartholomew, Craig G., and Michael W. Goheen. 2004. *The drama of scripture: Finding our place in the biblical story.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Batterson, Mark. 2006. *In a pit with a lion on a snowy day: How to survive and thrive when opportunity roars.* Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beckard, R., and R. T. Harris. 1987. *Managing complex change*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Belcher, Jim. 2009. *Deep church: A third way between emerging and traditional.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Bell, Rob. 2005. *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007. *Sex God: Exploring the endless connections between sexuality and spirituality.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Berger, Peter. 1979. *The heretical imperative: Contemporary possibilities of religious affirmation.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Double Day.

Bevans, Stephen B. 1993. Doing theology in North America: A counter-cultural model? Seminar, paper presented at Gospel and Our Culture Network Conference, Chicago, IL.

_____. 2002. *Models of contextual theology:* Rev. and exp. edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

_____. 2009. *An introduction to theology in global perspective.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Bielo, James. 2009. The emerging church in America: Notes on the interaction of Christianities and Religion. Retrieved 30 July 2009 from http://plantepreterist.com/Media/Bielo.pdf.

Blamires, Harry. 2001. *The post-Christian mind.* Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing.

Bohannon, John S. 2010. Preaching and the emerging church: An examination of four founding leaders: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt. Ph.D diss., Southwestern Theological Seminary.

Bolger, Ryan. 2003. Jesus for and against modernity: Practice-redemption as missiological response to the rules of the modern powers. Ph.D diss., School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Bornstein, Steven M., and Anthony F. Smith, eds. 1996. *The puzzles of leadership: The leader of the future.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bosch, David J. 1991. *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

_____. 2006. *Witness to the world: The Christian mission in theological perspective.* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Brafman, Ori, and Rod Beckstrom. 2006. *The starfish and the spider: The unstoppable power of leaderless organizations.* New York, NY: Portfolio.

Bruggeman, Antonio. 1965. *The ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin.* Excerpta ex Dissertaione ad Lauream in Facultate Theologica Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae. Ranchi, India: Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana.

Buchanan, Mark. 2002. *Nexus: Small worlds and the groundbreaking science of networks.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Burke, Spenser. 2003. 9 aftershocks of postmodernism. Retrieved 15 August 2006 from http://www.freewaybr.com/pomoessay.htm.

Carson, D. A. 1996. *The gagging of God: Christianity confronts pluralism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing.

_____. 2005. *Becoming conversant with the emergent church: Understanding a movement and its implications*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2008. *Christ and culture revisited.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Carter, Craig A. 2006. *Rethinking Christ and culture: A post Christendom perspective.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Chapman, Thomas Gregory. 1992. A phenomenological method of post-dialogue within a world of religious pluralism. Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Cleveland, Harlan. 2002. *Nobody in charge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cloke, Kenneth, and Joan Goldsmith. 2001. *The art of waking people up*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cole, Neil. 2005. *Organic church: Growing faith where life happens*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Collins, Kenneth J. 2005. *The evangelical moment: The promise of an American religion.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Colwill, Deborah A. 2005. Dialogical learning and a renewal epistemology: Analysis of cultural and educational shifts from modernity toward postmodernity. Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Conder, Tim. 2006. *The church in transition: The journey of the existing church into the emerging culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Conway, Martin. 1994. God-open, world-wide, and Jesus-true; Lesslie Newbigin's Faith Pilgrimage. *Mission Studies* 11 (2): 191-202.

Cordeiro, Wayne. 2001. *Doing church as a team*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Craigen, Trevor P. 2006. Emergent soteriology. *The Master's Seminary Journal*: 177-90.

Crang, Mike. 2005. Qualitative methods: there is nothing outside the text? *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (2): 225-33.

Deeway, Bob. 2005. Emergent delusion: A critique of *A Generous Orthodoxy* by Brian McLaren. *Critical Issues Commentary* 87: 1-8.

Denison, Charles. 2005. *Mainline manifesto: The new inevitable new church.* St Louis, MO: Chalice Press.

Devine, Mark. 2007. *Fast friends or future foes: The emerging church and Southern Baptists.* Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Retrieved 15 July 2009 from http://www.theologyprof.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/04/theemergingchurchandsouthernbaptists.pdf.

_____. 2009. The emerging church: One movement – two streams. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement.* ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 4-46. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

DeYoung, Kevin, and Ted Kluck. 2008. *Why we're not emergent: By two guys that should be.* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

_____. 2009. *Why we love the church: In praise of institutions and organized religion.* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

Donaldson, David. 2006. Constructing a postmodern church with ancient building blocks. *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 6 (2003-2006): 154-67.

Doornebal, Robert. 2012. *Crossroads: An exploration of the emerging-missional conversation with a special focus on missional leadership and its challenges for theological education.* Ede: Eburon Academic Publisher.

Downing, Crystal L. 2006. *How postmodernism serves my faith: Questioning truth in language, philosophy and art.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Driscoll, Mark. 2004. *The radical reformission: Reaching out without selling out.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2006a. A pastoral perspective on the emergent church. *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (2): 87-93.

_____. 2006b. *Confessions of a reformission rev.: Hard lessons from an emerging missional church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007a. Response to Dan Kimball. In *Listening to the beliefs of emerging churches: Five perspectives,* ed. Robert Webber, 106-09. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007b. The church and the supremacy of Christ in a postmodern world. In *The supremacy of Christ in a postmodern world,* ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor, 125-49. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2008. Navigating the emerging church highway. *Christian Research Journal* 31 (4): 1-10.

_____. 2009. *Religions saves: And nine other misconceptions.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2013a. The answer for racial and cultural divisions. *Outreach Magazine* (January 2013): 4-5.

_____. 2013b. *Who do you think you are? Finding your true identity in Christ.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Driscoll, Mark, and Gerry Breshears 2007. *Vintage Jesus: Timeless truths and timely methods.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2008a. *Death by love: letters from the cross.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2008b. *Vintage church: Timeless answers and timely questions.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2010. *Doctrine: What Christians should believe.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Drucker, Peter. 1995. *Managing in a time of great change*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Easum, Bill, and Dave Travis. 2003. *Beyond the box: Innovative churches that work*. Loveland, CO: Group.

Easum, Bill. 2000. *Leadership on the other side*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Engstrom, Ted, and Paul Cedar. 2006. *Compassionate leadership: Rediscovering Jesus' radical leadership style*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Erickson, Millard J. 2001. *Truth or consequences: The promise and perils of postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Erickson, Millard J., Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds. 2004. *Reclaiming the center: Confronting evangelical accommodation in postmodern times.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Feddes, David. 2012. *Missional apologetics: Cultural diagnostics and gospel plausibility in C.S. Lewis and Lesslie Newbigin.* Monee, IL: Christian Leaders Press.

Finzel, Hans. 2004. *Change is like a slinky*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.

Fitch, David E. 2005. *The great giveaway: Reclaiming the mission of the church from big business, parachurch organizations, psychotherapy, consumer capitalism, and other modern maladies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Flores, Aaron. 2005. An exploration of the emerging church in the United States: The missiological intent and potential implications for the future. M.A. thesis, Vanguard University.

Flory, Richard W., and Donald E. Miller, eds. 2000. *Gen X Religion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

_____. 2008. *Finding faith: The spiritual quest of the post-boomer generation*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Foust, Thomas F. 2000. The missiological approach to modern Western culture according to Lesslie Newbigin and Dean E. Walker. Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, UK.

Foust, Thomas F., George R. Hunsberger, J. Andrew Kirk, and Werner Ustorf, eds. 2001. *A scandalous prophet: The way of mission after Newbigin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Frei, Hans. 1992. *Types of Christian Theology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Friedman, Thomas L. 2006. *The world is flat (updated and expanded): A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Friesen, Dwight. 2003. *Scale-free networks as a structural hermeneutic for relational ecclesiology*. George Fox University. Retrieved 4 June 2007 from http://www. georgefox.edu/seminary.

Frost, Michael. 2006. *Exiles: Living missionally in a post-Christian culture*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. 2003. *The shape of things to come: Innovation and mission for the 21st-century church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

Fullan, Michael. 2006. *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Gibbs, Eddie. 2002. The emerging church. Retrieved 8 January 2007 from http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/exploratory/articles/gibbs02.doc/on.

_____. 2005. *Leadership next: Changing leaders in a changing culture*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Gibbs, Eddie, and Ryan K. Bolger. 2005. *Emerging churches: Creating Christian community in postmodern cultures.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Gilley, Gary. 2006. *This little church stayed home: A faithful church in deceptive times.* Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press.

Gilmore, James G. 2006. Divine appointment: Patterns of engagement between burning man and emerging churches. D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary.

Goben, Allen Floyd. 2005. The X factor: Generation X leadership in the early 21st century American community colleges. Ph.D diss., University of Texas.

Goheen, Michael. 1992. Mission in the ecumenical and evangelical traditions. *Pro Rege* (December): 1-10.

_____. 1999. Toward a missiology of western culture. *European Journal of Theology* 8, (2):155-68.

_____. 2000. As the Father has sent me. Ph.D. diss., University of Utrecht.

_____. 2001. Theology in context: Lesslie Newbigin's contribution. *Christian Courier* 2668 (9): 16-17.

_____. 2002. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology. *International Review of Mission* 91, 345-69.

_____. 2004. The significance of Lesslie Newbigin for mission in the new millennium. *Third Millennium* 7: 88-99.

Goncalves, Kleberdo. 2003. A critique of the urban mission of the church in light of an emerging postmodern condition. Ph.D. diss., Andrews University.

Graham, Ellen, and Heather Walton. 1991. A walk in the wild side: A critique of "The Gospel and our Culture. *Modern Churchman* 33:1-7.

Green, Colin J.D. 2001.Trinitarian tradition and the cultural collapse of late modernity. In *A scandalous prophet,* edited by Thomas F. Foust, George R. Hunsberger, J. Andrew Kirk, and Werner Ustorf, pp. 5-72.

Grenz, Stanley J. 1996. *A primer on postmodernism.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 2005. (Pop) Culture: Playground of the Spirit or diabolical device? *Cultural Encounters: A Journal for the Theology of Culture.* Portland OR, Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Institute for Theology of Culture. Mp3.

Groothius, Douglas. 2004. *Truth defined and defended*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Guder, Darrell. 2000. *The continuing conversion of the church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 2005. Worthy living: Work and witness from the perspective of missional church theology. *Word and World* 25 (4): 424-32.

Guder, Darrell, and Lois Barrett, eds. 1998. *Missional church: A vision for the sending of the church in North America.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Guinness, Os. 2000. *Time for truth: Living free in a world of lies, hype and sin.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Gunderson, Denny. 1998. Leadership in a postmodern world. *Mars Hill Review* 12: 51-54.

Hammett, John. 2005a. *Biblical foundations for Baptist churches: A contemporary ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.

_____. 2005b. A manuscript on an ecclesiological assessment of the emerging church movement. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**.**

_____. 2009. The church according to emergent/emerging church. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 219-61. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Hart, Chris. 2001. *Doing a literature search.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hart, D. G. 2004. *Deconstructing evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the age of Billy Graham.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. 1989. *Resident aliens: Life in the Christian colony.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Henard, William D., and Adam W. Greenway, eds. 2009. *Evangelicals engaging emergents: A discussion of the emergent church movement.* Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr. 2000. *Leading congregational change: A practical guide to the transformational journey.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hesselgrave, David J. 2007. Brian McLaren's contextualization of the gospel. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (1): 92-100.

Hesselgrave, David J. and Edward Rommen. 2000. *Contextualization: Meaning, methods and models.* Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Hick, John. 1995. *The rainbows of faiths.* London: SCMS.

Hiebert, Paul G. 1985. *Anthropological insights for missionaries.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Hinkl, Brent Nathan. 2005. Discipleship in the age of whatever: Becoming better disciples of Christ while living in a postmodern world. Ph.D. diss., Anderson University.

Hirsch, Alan. 2006. *The forgotten ways: Reactivating the missional church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Hock, Dee. 1999. *The birth of the chaordic age.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

_____. 2000. The art of chaordic leadership. *Leader to Leader* 15 (Winter): 20-26.

Holland, Richard L. 2006. Progressional dialogue and preaching: Are they the same? *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17 (2): 207-22.

Holyoake, George. 1860. *The principles of secularism.* London: Oxford Press.

Horton, Michael. 2008. *Christless Christianity: The alternative gospel of the American church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Hoult, T. F. 1969. *Dictionary of Modern Sociology.* Towota, NJ: Littlefield and Adams.

Hunsberger, George R. 1987. The missionary significance of the biblical doctrine of election as a foundation for theology of cultural plurality in the missiology of J.E. Lesslie Newbigin. Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.

_____. 1991. The Newbigin gauntlet: Developing a missiology for North America. *Missiology: An International review* 19 (October): 391-408.

_____. 1995. Cutting the Christendom knot. In *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Context,* edited by Shin Chiba, George R. Hunsberger and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, 53-71. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____. 1998. *Bearing the witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's theology of cultural plurality.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1999. Biography as missiology: The case of Lesslie Newbigin. *Missiology* 27, (4): 523-31.

Hunsberger, George R., and Craig Van Gelder, eds. 1996. *The church between gospel and culture: The emerging mission in North America.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Johnson, Phil. 2006. Absolutely not! Exploring the errors of the emerging church. Mp3 of the *Shepherd's Conference.* Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA, Grace Community Church.

Johnson, Steven. 2001. *Emergence: The connected lives of ants, brains, cities, and software.* London: Penguin.

Jones, Andrew. 2003. Postmodern truth 2.0 the cheesy skinny response. Retrieved 19 August 2006 from http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com /tallskinnykiwi/ 2003/12/postmodern_truth_1.html.

_____. 2010. Begbie: N.T. Wright and emergent ecclesiologies. Retrieved 2 February 2013 from ttp://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2010/04/begbie-nt-wright-and-emergent-ecclesiologies.html.

Jones, Tony. 2001. *Postmodern youth ministry.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2003. Toward a missional ministry. In *Stories of Emergence: Moving from absolute to authentic.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2005. *The sacred way: Spiritual practices for everyday life.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2006. A manuscript on the relational ecclesiology of the emerging church. Princeton Conference on Faith Practices, Princeton Seminary, Princeton, NJ.

_____. 2007. The emergent church and biblical authority. *The Journal of Student Ministries* 3: May/June 2008.

_____. 2008. *The new Christians: Dispatches from the emergent frontier.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2009a. *The teaching of the 12.* Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press.

_____. 2009b. Tony Jones. Biography. Retrieved 4 August 2009 from http://tonyj. Net/wp-content/themes/jonesing/multimedia/Tony_Jones_Bio.pdf.

_____. 2010. Google wave as a sermon preparation tool. In *WorkingPreacher.com.* St Paul, MN: Luther Theological Seminary.

_____. 2011. *The church is flat: The relational ecclesiology of the emerging church movement.* Minneapolis, MN: The JoPa Group.

_____. 2012. *Beyond atonement: Beyond the doctrine of original sin.* Minneapolis, MN: JoPa Group.

Keskitalo, Jukka. 1988. The mission of the Triune God: The theological basis of Lesslie Newbigin's Missiology. M.Th. thesis, University of Helsinki.

Kimball, Dan. 2003. *The emerging church: Vintage Christianity for new generations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2004. *Emerging worship: Creating worship gatherings for new generations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Emergent/YS.

_____. 2006. Creating a missional culture in your church. *National Outreach Convention* [CD-ROM]: November 2006.

_____. 2007a. *They like Jesus but not the church: Insights from emerging generations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007b. Please do not stereotype the emerging church. *Next Wave: Church and Culture.* Retrieved 4 June 2007 from http:nextwaveandculture.com/ church and culture.

_____. 2008. Humble theology: Re-exploring doctrine while holding on to faith. In *An emergent manifesto of hope*, ed. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, 213-24. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2010. Dan Kimball on the Record. *Apprising Ministries* (online). Interview conducted by Chris Rosebrough. Retrieved 2 January 2013 from http:// apprising.org/ 2010 /11/20/dan-kimball-on-the-record.

_____. 2011. *Adventures in churchland: Discovering the beautiful mess Jesus loves.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Kimball, Dan, and Lilly Lewin. 2008. *Sacred space: A hands-on guide to creating multisensory worship experiences for youth ministry.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties.

Kinnaman, David, and Gabe Lyons. 2007. *UnChristian: What a new generation really thinks about Christianity . . . and why it matters.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Kotter, John P. 1996. *Leading change.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kraft, Charles H. 1974. *Christianity and culture.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Kunkle, Brett. 2006. Essential concerns regarding the emerging church. Mp3 of the *Evangelical Theological Society's Annual Meeting*. Washington, DC.

Lawless, Church. 2009. The emerging church and evangelism. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 308-32. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Leadership Network. 1996. Ten issues from Gen X forum. PowerPoint presentation.

Leeman, Jonathan. 2006a. Contextualizing the gospel in an egalitarian world. *9 Marks Journal* (September). Retrieved 3 April 2013 from http://www.9marks.org/journal/contextualizing-gospel-egalitarian-world

_____. 2006b. What in the world is the missional church? *9 Marks Journal* (October). Retrieved 13 March 2013 from http://www.9marks.org/journal/what-world-missional-church.

Lemons, James D. 2008. The pastor as missional church architect. D.Min. project, Asbury Theological Seminary, Asbury, KY.

Leonard, H. Skipton. 2003. Leadership development for the postindustrial, postmodern information age. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 55 (1): 11.

Lewis, C. S. 1980. *The weight of glory and other addresses*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Lewis, Robert, and Wayne Cordeiro. 2005. *Culture shift: Transforming your church from the inside out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lindbeck, George A. 1990. A review of "The gospel in a pluralist society," by Lesslie Newbigin. *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14 (October): 182.

Little, Dale W. 2000. The significance of theology of the Holy Spirit for theology of religion and for theology of mission with special reference to the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and Clark Pinnock. Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill.

Loder, James E. 1998. *The logic of the spirit: Human development in theological perspective. S*an Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Long Thomas E. 1990. Eschatological dimensions of church and kingdom in Lesslie Newbigin, John Zizioulas, Jurgen Moltmann, and Hans Kung. Th.M. thesis, Duke Divinity School, Duke University.

Lull, Timothy, ed. 2005. *Martin Luther's basic theological writings.* Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

MacArthur, John. 2006. Perspicuity of Scripture: The emergent approach. *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17 (2): 141-58.

_____. 2007. Counterculture's death-spiral and the vulgarization of the gospel. *Pulpit Magazine* January 2007.

_____. 2011. Grow up, settle down, keep reforming. *Grace to You Blog.* Retrieved 10 April 2013 from http://www.gty.org/blog/B110720.

Mahajan, Vijay, and Robert A. Peterson. 1985. *Models for innovation diffusion.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Mayhue, Richard L. 2006. The emerging church: Generous orthodoxy or general obfuscation. *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17 (2): 191-05.

McGavran, Donald Anderson. 1974. *The clash between Christianity and culture.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

McGrath, Alister. 1995. *Evangelicalism and the future of Christianity.* Downers Grove, IL:InterVarsity Press.

McKnight, Scot. 2005a. What is the emerging church? Protest. Retrieved 2 January 2007 from http://www.jesuscreed.org/?p=512.

_____. July 13, 2005b. Pro missional. Retrieved 8 January 2007 from http://www.jesuscreed.org.

_____. 2007. Five streams of the emerging church: Key elements of the most controversial and misunderstood movement in the church today. *Christianity Today* 51 (2): 35-39.

_____. 2010. *One life: Jesus calls, we follow.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

McLaren, Brian. 1998. *Reinventing your church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2000a. *Finding faith.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2000b. *The church on the other side: Doing ministry in the postmodern matrix.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2001. *A new kind of Christian: A tale of two friends on a spiritual journey.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

_____. 2002. *More ready than you realize.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2003. The method, the message, and the ongoing story. In *The church in emerging culture*, ed. Leonard Sweet, 191-34. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2004. *Generous orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties Book.

_____. 2005a. *The last word and the word after that.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

_____. 2005b. (?) Q & R: Newbigin. Retrieved 31 July 2009 from http://www.brianmcaren.net/archives/blog/q-r-newbigin.html.

_____. 2006a. *The secret message of Jesus.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson

_____. 2006b. Values and Practices. Retrieved 23 July 2008 from www.emergent village.com/about-information/values_and_practices.

_____. 2007a. *Everything must change: Jesus, global crises, and a revolution of hope.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

_____. 2007b. *Finding faith: A search for what is real.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007c. *Finding faith: A search for what makes sense.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2008. *Finding our way again: The return of the ancient practices.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

_____. 2009. The greatest heresy in the history of monotheism. Retrieved 8 February 2013 from http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CGGEA/422/#bmclaren.

_____. 2010. *A new kind of Christianity: Ten questions that are transforming the faith.* New York, NY: Harper.

_____. 2012. *Why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed cross the road? Christian identity in a multi-faith world.* New York, NY: Jericho Books.

McLaren, Brian D., and Tony Campolo. 2003. *Adventures in missing the point*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

McLeod, Hugh, and Werner Ustorf. 2003. *The decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McNeal, Reggie 2003. *The present future church.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, Donald. 2003. *Blue like jazz: Nonreligious thoughts on Christian spirituality.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

_____. 2004. *Searching for God knows what.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Miller, M. Rex. 2004. *The millennium matrix: Reclaiming the past, reframing the future of the church.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Minatrea, Milfred. 2004. *Shaped by God's heart: The passion and practices of missional churches.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Missional Manifesto. 2011. Preamble. Retrieved 27 March 2011 from http://www.missional manifesto.net/index.html.

Mobsby, I. J. 2006. Emerging and fresh expressions of church: How are they authentically church and Anglican? M. A. thesis, Anglia Ruskin University.

Moreland, J. P., and Garrett DeWeese. 2004. *The premature report of foundationalism's demise.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Murray, Iain H. 2000. *Evangelicalism divided.* Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth.

Murray, Stuart. 2001. *Church planting: Laying foundations.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

Musk, Terry C. 2004. Perspectival methodologies: A complementary understanding of the history of religion and missiology. In *Mission to New Religious Movements* 45-56. Prepublication manuscript.

Neely, Alan. 2000. Missiology. In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions.* Edited by A. Scott Moreau, 633-35. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Netland, Harold. 2001. *Encountering religious pluralism: The challenge to Christian faith and mission.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Newbigin, Lesslie. 1937. *Christian freedom in the modern worlds.* London: SCM Press.

_____. 1941. The kingdom of God and the idea of progress. In *Signs amid the rubble: The purposes of God in human history,* ed. Geoffrey Wainwright, 1-55. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1951a. Comments on "The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches." *Ecumenical Review* 3: 252-54.

_____. 1951b. *A South India diary.* London: SCM Press.

_____. 1952. *That all may be one.* New York, NY: Association Press.

_____. 1954. *The household of God: Lectures on the nature of the church.* New York, NY: Friendship Press.

_____. 1955. The Quest for unity through religion. *Journal of Religion* 35: 17-33.

_____. 1956. *Sin and salvation.* London: Society of Christian Missions.

_____. 1957. The nature of the unity we seek: From the church of South India. *Religious Life* 26 (2): 181-90.

_____. 1958. *One body, one gospel, one world: The Christian mission today.* New York, NY: International Mission Council.

_____. 1960a. Mission and missions. *Christianity Today,* 4: 911.

_____. 1960b. *The reunion of the church: A defense of the South India scheme.* 2nd ed. London; SCM Press.

_____. 1961a. *Is Christ divided? A plea for Christian unity in a revolutionary age.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1961b. *A faith for this one world?* London: SCM Press.

_____. 1962a. The missionary dimension of the ecumenical movement. *Ecumenical Review* 14: 207-15.

_____. 1962b. Missions in an ecumenical perspective. Unpublished manuscript. World Council of Churches. Ecumenical Centre Library, Geneva, Switzerland.

_____. 1963. *The relevance of Trinitarian doctrine for today's mission.* CWME Study Pamphlets, no 2. London: Edinburgh House Press.

_____. 1965. Review of "Ecumenics: The science of the church universal, by John A. MacKay. *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 59: 60-62.

_____. 1966. *Honest religion for secular man.* London: SCM Press.

_____. 1968. The world mission of the church. *South India Churchmen* 9: 2-4.

_____. 1969. The finality of Christ. The Lyman Beecher Lectures, Yale Divinity School.

_____. 1973a. Journey into joy. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1973b. The form and structure of the visible unity of the church. *National Christian Council Review* 92: 444-51.

_____. 1977a. The basis, purpose, and manner of inter-faith dialogue. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30: 253-70.

_____. 1977b. *The good shepherd. Meditations on Christian ministry in today's world.* Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1978. Christ and the cultures. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31: 1-22.

_____. 1980. *Signs of the kingdom.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1981a. Integration – Some personal reflections. *International Review of Missions* 70: 247-55.

_____. 1981b. The missionary dimension of the ecumenical movement. *International Review of Mission* 70: 247-55.

_____. 1982a. Crosscurrent in ecumenical and evangelical understandings of mission. *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6 (October): 146-51.

_____. 1982b. *The light has come: An exposition of the fourth gospel.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1983. *The other side of 1984: Question for churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

_____. 1984a. Christ, kingdom, and church: A reflection on the papers of George Yule and Andrew Kirk. Unpublished paper.

_____. 1984b. The basis and form of unity. *Mid-Stream* 23:1-12.

_____. 1986. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The gospel and Western culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1987a. Can the West be converted? *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 6 (1): 25-37.

_____. 1987b. *Mission in Christ's way: Bible studies*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

_____. 1988a. Religion, Science, and truth in the school curriculum. *Theology 91*, no 741 (May 1988): 186-93.

_____. 1988b. Sermon preached at the Thanksgiving service for the 50th anniversary of the Tambaram conference of the International Missionary Council. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 77: 325-31.

_____. 1988c. *Trinitarian doctrine for today's mission.* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

_____. 1988d. The enduring validity of cross-cultural mission. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12 (April 1988): 50-53.

_____. 1989a. Gospel and culture – but which one? *Missionalia* 17 (1989): 214

_____. 1989b. *The gospel in a pluralist society.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1989c. The place of Christianity in religious education. Unpublished paper, March 8.

_____. 1990a. Episcopacy and authority. *Churchman* 104, no. 4 (1990): 335-39.

_____. 1990b. Religion for the marketplace. In *Christian uniqueness reconsidered: The myth of a pluralistic theology of religions,* ed. Gavin D'Costa, 135-48. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

_____. 1991b. *Truth to tell: The gospel as public truth.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1992a. The gospel as public truth. *Touchstone: A Journal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy* 5, (3): 1-2.

_____. 1992b. The Legacy of W. A. Visser 't Hooft. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16 (2): 78-82.

_____. 1993a. Certain faith: What kind of certainty. *Tyndale Bulletin 44,* (2): 339-50.

_____. 1993b. Culture and theology. In *The Blackwell encyclopedia of modern Christian thought,* ed. Alister McGrath, 98-100. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

_____. 1993c. Religious pluralism: A missiological approach. *Studia Missionalia,* 42: 227-44.

_____. 1993d. *Unfinished agenda: An autobiography.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1994a. Confessing Christ in a multi-religion society. *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 12 (Autumn): 125-36.

_____. 1994b. Ecumenical amnesia. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 18: 2-5.

_____. 1994c. Truth and authority in modernity. In *Faith and modernity,* ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, 60-88. Oxford, England: Regnum books.

_____. 1994d. *A word in season: Perspectives on Christian world missions.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1995a. As the Father has sent me. *Missionary Herald,* July: 127-29.

_____. 1995b. *The open secret.* An introduction to the theology of mission. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1995c. *Proper confidence: Faith, doubt, and certainty in Christian discipleship.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1995d. Can a modern society be Christian? Gospel and Culture lecture, King's College, London.

_____. 1996. *Truth and authority in Modernity.* Valley Forge, PA: Gracewing/ Trinity Press International.

_____. 1997. The Trinity as public truth. In *The Trinity in a pluralistic age: Theological essays on culture and religion,* ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 1-8. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing.

_____. 1998a. Evangelism and the whole mission of the church. *The Auburn Report (Forum on Faith and Society, Australia)* 10, no. 4 (August): 7-9.

_____. 1998b. A light to the nations: Theology in politics. In *Faith and power: Christianity and Islam in 'Secular' Britain,* ed. Newbigin, 133-65. London: SPCK.

_____. 2003. *Signs amid the rubble: The purposes of God in human history.* ed. Geoffrey Wainwright, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Newbigin, Lesslie, and Hendrik Kraemer. 1948. *The church's witness to God's design.* Amsterdam Assembly Series, vol. 2. New York, NY: Harper Brothers.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1951. *Christ and culture.* San Francisco, CA: Harper.

Noll, Mark. 2003. *The rise of evangelicalism.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Norman, Stan. 2004. Ecclesiological guidelines to inform Southern Baptist Church planters. *North American Mission Board.* Paper delivered to new church planters.

Oakland, Roger. 2007. *Faith undone.* Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails.

Oden, Thomas C. 1992. *Two worlds: The death of modernity in America and Russia.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Pagitt, Doug. 2002. The consumer trap: What postmodern people need is a different relationship with money. *Christianity Today,* (10): 32-34.

_____. 2005. *Church re-imagined: The spiritual formation of people in community.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2006. *Preaching re-imagined: The role of the sermon in communities of faith.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007. The emerging church and embodied theology In *Listening to the beliefs of emerging churches*, ed. Robert Weber, 117-43.

_____. 2008. *A Christianity worth believing: Hope-filled, open-armed, alive-and-well faith for the left out, left behind, and let down in us all.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

_____. 2010. *Church in the inventive age.* Minneapolis, MN: Sparkhouse Press.

_____. 2011a. *Community in the inventive age.* Minneapolis, MN: Sparkhouse Press.

_____. 2011b. *Preaching in the inventive age.* Minneapolis, MN: Sparkhouse Press.

_____. 2012. *Evangelism in the inventive age.* Minneapolis, MN: Sparkhouse Press.

_____. 2013. About Doug Pagitt. Retrieved 20 December 2012 from http://doug pagitt.com /about.

Pagitt, Doug, and Tony Jones. 2007. *An emergent manifesto of hope.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Pagitt, Doug, and Kathryn Prill. 2005. *Body prayer: The posture of intimacy with God.* Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press.

Pascale, R., M. Millemann, and L. Gioja. 2000. *Surfing the edge of chaos.* New York, NY: Crown Business Publishing.

Patterson, Paige. 2001. *The church in the 21st century*. Wake Forest, NC: *Magnolia Hills Papers*.

Pearcey, Nancy. 2004. *Total truth: Liberating Christianity from its cultural captivity*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2010. *Saving Leonardo: A call to resist the secular assault on minds, morals, and meanings*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing.

Penner, Myron B., ed. 2005. *Christianity and the postmodern turn*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Perriman, Andrew. 2005. *The coming of the Son of Man: New Testament eschatology for an emerging church*. Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster.

Peters, Tom 1987. *Thriving on chaos: Handbook for a management revolution*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

Pettegrew, Larry. 2006. Evangelicals, paradigms, and the emerging church. *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17 (2): 159-75.

Polanyi, Michael. 1962. *Personal knowledge: Toward a post-critical philosophy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Poole, Marshall Scott, Andrew H. Van de Ven, Kevin Dooley, and Michael E. Holmes. 2000. *Organizational change and innovation processes: Theory and methods for research*. New York, NY: Oxford Press.

Ramseyer, Robert L. 1983. *Sharing the gospel*. Elgin, Il: The Brethren Press.

Reilly, John, S. J. 1978. Evangelism and ecumenism in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin and their basis in his Christology. Ph.D. diss., Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome.

Reymond, Robert L. 1976. *The justification of knowledge: an introductory study in Christian apologetic methodology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R.

Richmond, Helen. 1995. Daring to believe: Exploring the missiology of Lesslie Newbigin. M.A. thesis, Sydney College of Divinity.

Riddell, Michael. 1998. *Threshold of the future: Reforming the church in the post-Christian West*. London: SPCK.

Ring, Blake. 2011. The ministry of Dan Kimball: A model for reaching emerging generations. Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rogers, Everett M. 2003. *Diffusions of innovation*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Free Press.

Rogers, Everett M, Una E. Medina, Mario A. Rivera, and Cody J. Wiley. 2005. Complex adaptive systems and the diffusion of innovations. *The Innovation Journal* 10 (3): 66-75.

Rollins, Peter. 2006. *How (not) to speak of God*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press.

Roozen, David A., and James R. Nieman, eds. 2005. *Church, identity and change*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Rousei, Christopher. 2007. De-scribing theology. *Church and Postmodern Culture* 1 (1): 33-36.

Roxburgh, Alan J., and Fred Romanuk. 2006. *The missional leader: Equipping your church to reach a changing world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Saucy, Robert 1972. *The church in God's program*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Schmist-Leukel, Perry. 2001. Mission and Trinitarian theology. In *A Scandalous prophet: The way of mission after Newbigin,* ed. Thomas F. Foust, George R. Hunsberger, J. Andrew Kir, and Werner Ustorf, 57-64. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Shaddix, Jim. 2009. To preach or not to preach. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 281-307. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Shehadi, Nabil. 2005. Mission transforming mission: Gospel and culture in a post-Christendom world. *Theological Review* 1 (2005): 91-110.

Shutls, F. Leron. Reforming ecclesiology in emerging churches. *Theology Today* (January) 2009: 429-38.

Simcox, Kate D. 2005. Performing postmodern Christian: Communication in the emerging church and the renegotiation of divine knowledge. Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University.

Sintitiere, Philip L. 2005a. A new evangelical ekklesia? Reflection and rumination on the emergent church. *Reformation and Revival Journal,* (4): 14-25.

Smith, Adam. 2010. The end of the emergent movement? *Neue* (2): 57-67.

Smith, Charles Frederick. 1999. An evangelical examination of key elements in Lesslie Newbigin's apologetics. Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

_____. 2004. Lesslie Newbigin: A theological life. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.* (6): 366-67.

Smith, James A. 2006. *Who's afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Focault to church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Smith, R. Scott. 2005. *Truth and the new kind of Christian: The emerging effects of postmodernism in the church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

_____. 2007. Brian McLaren, the emerging church, and the issue of foundationalism. *Knowing and Doing* (2) 2007: 1-4.

_____. 2007. Reflections on McLaren and the Emerging Church. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 129-56. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Stafford, Tim. 1996. God's missionary. *Christianity Today* 40 (9): 24-33.

Stanford, Eric. 1999. The new wave of Gen X churches: Get your glimpse of the future here. *Next Wave: Church and Culture* (12) 2-12.

Stark, Rodney. 2003. *For the glory of God*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of faith: Explaining the human side of religion.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Stetzer, Ed. 2006. *Breaking the missional code: When churches become missionaries in their communities*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman.

_____. 2009. The emergent/emerging church: A missiological perspective. In *Evangelicals engaging emergent: A discussion of the emerging church movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, 47-90. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic.

Stone, Jon R. 1997. *On the boundaries of American evangelicalism: The postwar evangelical coalition.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Stott, John. 1975. *Christian mission in the modern world.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Strauss, William, and Neil Howe. 1997. *The fourth turning: An American prophecy.* New York, NY: Broadway Books.

Street, R. Allen. 2006. An interview with Brian McLaren. *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (2): 6-14.

Stults, Donald LeRoy. 2005. Grasping truth and reality: Lesslie Newbigin's theology of mission to the Western world. Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, U.K.

_____. 2008. *Grasping truth and reality: Lesslie Newbigin's theology of mission to the Western world.* Portland, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Sweeney, Douglas A. 2005. *The American evangelical story: A history of the movement.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Sweet, Leonard. 1991. *Quantum spirituality: A postmodern apologetic.* Dayton, OH: United Evangelical Seminary.

_____. 1999. *Aqua church: Essential leadership arts for piloting your church in today's fluid culture*. Loveland, CO: Group.

_____. 2000. *Postmodern pilgrims: First century passion for the 21st century world*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman.

_____. 2003b. *The church in the emerging culture.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2004. *Summoned to lead*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

_____. 2007. *The gospel according to Starbucks: Living with a grande passion.* Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press.

Sweet, Leonard, Brian D. McLaren and Jerry Haselmayer. *A is for abductive: The language of the emerging church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Taylor, Justin. 2007. An emerging church primer. Retrieved 8 January 2007 from http://www.9marks.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/ 0PTID314526%7CHID5980148%7CCIID2249226,00.html.on.

Taylor, Steve. 2004. A new way of being church: A case study approach to Cityside Baptist Church as Christian faith, Ph.D diss., Otago University.

Tennent, Timothy. 2002. *Christianity at the religious roundtable: Ecumenicalism in conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Thomas, Joe Matthew. 1996. The centrality of Christ and inter-religious dialogue in the theology of Lesslie Newbigin. Ph.D. diss., St. Michael's College, University of Toronto.

_____. 2011. *Christ and the world of religions: Lesslie Newbigin's theology.* Carrollton, TX: Ekklesia Society Publications.

Phyllis Tickle. 2008. *The Great emergence: How Christianity is changing and why.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

_____. 2012. *Emergence Christianity: What it is, where it is going, and why it matters.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Tomlinson, Dave. 2003. *The post evangelical.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Tucker, Ruth A. 2006. *Left behind in a megachurch world: How God works through ordinary churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Upkong, Justin S. 1987. What is contextualization? *Neue Zeitschrift fur Missionswissenschaft* 43:161-68.

Van Gelder. 2004. From corporate church to missional church: The challenge facing congregations today. *Review and Expositor* 101 (Summer): 425-50.

_____, ed. 1999. *Confident witness – changing world: Rediscovering the gospel in North America.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., ed. 2003. *The Cambridge companion to postmodern theology.* New York, NY: Cambridge Press.

Van Rheenen, Gailyn. 1996. *Missions: Biblical foundations and contemporary strategies.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press.

_____. 1997. Modern and postmodern syncretism in theology and missions. In *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics,* ed. C. Douglas McDonnell, 164-207. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Veith, Gene Edward Jr. *Postmodern times: A Christian guide to contemporary thought and culture.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Veldhorst, Berend. 1989. *Lesslie Newbigin: A Christian voice in a world without God.* thesis, University of Utrecht.

Verkuyl, J. 1978. *Contemporary Missiology: An introduction.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. 2000. *Lesslie Newbigin: A theological life.* New York, NY: Oxford University press.

Walsh, Brian J., and J. Richard Middleton. 1995. *Truth is stranger than it used to be.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Ward, Peter. 2003. *Liquid church.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

Webber, Robert E. 2002. *The younger Evangelicals: Facing the challenges of the new world.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

_____, ed. 2007. *Listening to the beliefs of emerging churches: Five perspectives.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Wells, David. 1993. No *place for truth: Whatever happened to evangelical theology?* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1994. *God in the wasteland: The reality of truth in a world of fading dreams.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 1998. *Losing our virtue: Why the church must recover its moral vision.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

_____. 2005. *Above all earthly powers: Christ in a postmodern world.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Weston, Paul. 2004. Lesslie Newbigin: A Postmodern missiologist? *Mission Studies* 21 (2): 229-47.

_____. 2006. *Lesslie Newbigin, missionary theologian: A reader.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

White, Heath. 2006. *Postmodernism 101.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Whitesel, Bob. 2006. *Inside the organic church: Learning from 12 emerging congregations.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Willard, Dallas. 1997. *The divine conspiracy. Rediscovering our hidden life in God.* New York, NY: Harper Collins.

_____. 2006. *The great omission: Reclaiming Jesus' essential teachings on Discipleship.* San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

Wolfe, Alan. 2003. *The transformation of American religion: How we actually live our faith.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Woodward, J.R. 2008. A working definition of missional church. Retrieved 9 March 2013 from http://jrwoodward.net/2008/04/a-working-definition-of-missional-church.

Wolffe, John. 2007. *The expansion of evangelicalism: The age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers, and Finney.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Yaconelli, Mike, ed. 2003. *Stories of emergence: Moving from absolute to authentic*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF NEWBIGIN'S MISSIOLOGY ON SELECTED
INNOVATORS AND EARLY ADOPTERS OF THE
EMERGING CHURCH PARADIGM

Joe Randell Stewart, Ed.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Chair: Dr. Hal K. Pettegrew

This dissertation examined the influence of missiologist Lesslie Newbigin on the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. The work has demonstrated a connection between Newbigin's missiology and the innovators and the early adopters of the emerging church paradigm. His influence emerged in three primary arenas: the belief that Christendom crippled missionary consciousness in Western culture, the emphases on the communal dimensions of mission, and the necessity of a gospel expression that unleashed a timely message with a timeless word. Examination of the writings of Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Dan Kimball, and Mark Driscoll revealed great familiarity with Newbigin's work as well as a desire to adopt and adapt his stances to their own ministries.

Newbigin's staunch polemic against the mindset of modernity was one avenue that each of the early adopters and innovators addressed. The emerging church embraced Lesslie Newbigin's contention that Western culture emasculated the church from true gospel expression. Newbigin's influence on the epistemological views of the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm revealed a new dynamic engaged heavily with the Kingdom of God.

Lesslie Newbigin's contention that a true missionary movement required a communal dimension of witness as the congregation served as a hermeneutic of the gospel resonated fully with the emerging church paradigm. The emerging church practitioners saw the corrective idea of Newbigin emphasizing the corporate nature of discipleship contra the consumerism and individualism of Western culture as a needed emphasis. Each proponent of the emerging church paradigm embraced incarnational praxis, although expressions varied and were not uniform in practice.

Newbigin's viewpoint of the necessity of placing the church in the center of contextualization was tempered by a desire to avoid syncretism and irrelevance. Each of the innovators and early adopters of the emerging church paradigm reacted against what Newbigin termed the confinement of the gospel in the existing plausibility structures of the West. The emerging church attempted to bridge the arbitrary divisions in the culture between the sacred and secular.

The embrace of practices and prospects emerged from Newbigin's connection with the emerging church paradigm. This final focus demonstrated a connection with emerging church proponents as they embraced the dynamic of identifying with the life of Jesus, transforming secular space, and living communal lives. The fracturing influence of the emerging church paradigm was seen as largely a result of embracing theological liberalism rather than a result of a focus on Newbigin's missiology. Proponents of his conclusions adopted different monikers such as "missional" to be able to fully embrace Newbigin's missiology and social emphases while downplaying theological ambiguity.

VITA

Joe Randell Stewart

EDUCATIONAL
      Diploma, Seminole High School, Seminole, Texas
      B.A., Angelo State University, 1983
      M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993

MINISTERIAL
      Pastor, St Joe Baptist Church, Deleon, Texas, 1988-1991
      Pastor, First Baptist Church, Lipan, Texas, 1991-1994
      Pastor, Bethany Baptist Church, Breckenridge, Texas, 1994-1999
      Pastor, First Baptist Church, Littlefield, Texas, 1999-2010
      Pastor, Sabino Road Baptist Church, Tucson, Arizona, 2010