
Book Reviews

Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality.

By George R Hunsberger Grand Rapids, Mich Eerdmans, 1998 Pp xii, 341 Paperback \$28

Church historian Geoffrey Wainwright has said that when the history of the church in the twentieth century comes to be written, Lesslie Newbigin will be considered one of the ten or twelve most influential figures. The significance of Newbigin's legacy can already be gauged by the number of Ph D dissertations in process that deal with his thought.

Bearing the Witness of the Spirit is a pioneering work that examines Newbigin's missionary theology. Hunsberger is professor of missiology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and coordinator of the growing Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America. In this book Hunsberger uncovers a "theology of cultural plurality" implicit in Newbigin's writings. I believe Newbigin may have responded to this proposal in a way similar to the remark he made upon hearing that a Dutch philosopher had written a paper entitled "Newbigin's Philosophy of Culture." "I

became rather alarmed because I didn't know I had a philosophy of culture." However, Newbigin's ad hoc and contextual theology has always issued from a sound theological foundation. Hunsberger has exposed that theological foundation for cultural plurality by examining themes essential to Newbigin's missionary theology: the missionary, significance of the doctrine of election, Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God as the clue to the meaning of universal history, conversion and the boundaries of the community called church, and the relationship of the Gospel as "secular announcement" to other religions. The concluding section exposes Newbigin's theology of culture by employing a triangular model with culture, Gospel, and church at the three corners, and examining the three axes of Gospel-culture, Gospel-church, and church-culture.

The book is clearly written, highly

nuanced, and brimming with insight into the structure of Newbigin's theology and into a number of significant issues discussed in missiology today. This book is a (slightly revised) publication of Hunsberger's 1987 doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary, with a new opening chapter that shows its relevance in the present context. As such, it does not contain any assessment of Newbigin's writing in the last ten years of his life (about eighty items, by my count), including perhaps his most important book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. However, this does not at all detract from the valuable contribution this book will make to missiological discussion today.

—Michael Goheen

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Strategy of the Spirit: J. Philip Hogan and the Growth of the Assemblies of God Worldwide, 1960-1990.

By Everett A Wilson Carlisle, Cumbria, England, and Irvine, Calif Regnum Books/Paternoster Press 1997 Pp xiv, 214 Paperback \$19.95

If missionary biography is a means to understanding mission history and strategy, then Everett Wilson's important new book is a significant doorway through which one can enter into the ethos of the Assemblies of God (AOG), the prototype denomination of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement. Everett Wilson is the president of Bethany College in Scotts Valley, California, and director of CINCEL—the Latin America Language and Research Center in San Jose, Costa Rica—both of them AOG institutions.

Being an insider of the denomination and an obvious admirer of J. Philip Hogan makes it difficult for Wilson to offer an objective analysis of Hogan or a critique of his own missions organization. Nevertheless, the author is to be credited for

bringing the far-reaching contributions of Hogan into wider circulation.

Hogan, who had served the Assemblies in pre-Communist China (Ningpo, Chekiang Province, East China) and Taiwan, was AOG director of the Division of Foreign Missions during the turbulent and transitional years of 1960-90. Wilson presents him as a rugged individualist who combined a passionate heart with a singular tough-mindedness. Hogan, typical of his generation of Pentecostal leaders, was more of an activist missions promoter/strategist than one provided with the luxury of time for reflection and writing. Yet, the samples of various quotations from Hogan's writings (mostly informal articles from denominational publications) invite

further inquiry and dialogue. Perhaps this is a project whose time has come—a missions-specific compilation of biographical legacies/autobiographical reflections and bibliographic resources from the twentieth-century Pentecostal missions community.

—Grant McClung

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God-Mystery-Diversity: Christian Theology in a Pluralistic World.

By Gordon D Kaufman Minneapolis Fortress Press, 1996 Pp xii, 233 Paperback \$21

Gordon Kaufman presents a forthright challenge to the traditional Christian understanding of world mission. He forcefully argues that truth is not



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