LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS

TAUGHT BY ROBERT CUNNINGHAM
Who is Lesslie Newbigin?
What is the driving question in foolishness to the Greeks?
How does Newbigin seek to answer it?
How we’ll navigate the next few weeks
J.E. LESSLIE NEWBIGIN
Have you ever participated in cross-cultural missionary work?

How did you prepare?

What were your assumptions – about the host culture, yourself, the gospel?
What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call “modern Western culture”?
“The result [of a post-Christian culture is not simply...] a secular society. It’s 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.”
“Under the union of church and state that came to be called Christendom, surrounded by what was ostensibly a Christian culture... the missional identity of the established church ... began to fade. Since the whole of society was now assumed to be Christian... the church became preoccupied with its own welfare and maintenance; the pastoral dimension and inner life of the institution came to define the church’s identity.”

- Michael Goheen, A Light to the Nations
If one looks at the world scene from a missionary point of view, surely the most striking fact is that, while in great areas of Asia and Africa the church is growing, often growing rapidly, in the lands which were once called Christendom it is in decline; and, moreover, wherever the culture of the West, under the name of "modernization," penetrates, it carries with it what Lippmann called "the acids of modernity," dissolving the most enduring of religious beliefs including the beliefs of Christians. Surely there can be no more crucial question for the world mission of the church than the one I have posed. Can there be an effective missionary encounter with this culture - this so powerful, persuasive, and confident culture which (at least until very recently) simply regarded itself as "the coming world civilization." – Lesslie Newbigin, *Can the West be converted?*
QUESTION

What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call “modern Western culture”? 
WHAT IS A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER?
1) NOT FORTIFICATION
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2) NOT DOMINATION
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2) NOT DOMINATION
3) NOT ASSIMILATION
“For some on the liberal wing of Protestantism, Christian missions were to be almost absorbed into the worldwide spread of Western culture... but those at the opposite end of the spectrum, the conservative evangelicals, were often unaware of the cultural conditioning of their religion and therefore guilty of confusing the gospel with the values of the American way of life without realizing what they were doing.”

_Foolishness to the Greeks, p 2_
WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER?
1) RECOVERING A MISSIONAL ANALYSIS OF WESTERN CULTURE
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2) RECOVERING THE GOSPEL AS PUBLIC TRUTH
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2) RECOVERING THE GOSPEL AS PUBLIC TRUTH
3) RECOVERING THE MISSIONARY NATURE OF THE CHURCH
The Church... is the community of the Holy Spirit who is the earnest of our inheritance. [However,] the Church can only witness to that inheritance because her life is a real foretaste of it, a real participation in the life of God Himself... It is precisely because she is not merely instrumental that she can be instrumental... [for,] an unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary Church.

Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God*
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<td>Challenges and issues of cross-cultural communication of the gospel</td>
<td>Where are we? Examine some of the features of modern Western culture</td>
<td>How do we understand the role of Scripture in this endeavor?</td>
<td>Encounter with Science: what and how we know?</td>
<td>Encounter with Politics: what should we do?</td>
<td>Task of the Church: who should we become (or be becoming)?</td>
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Three things necessary to recover in order to have a Missionary Encounter—

1) A Missional Analysis of Western Culture
2) A Recovery of the Gospel as Public Truth
3) A Recovery of the Missionary Nature of the Church