



**The Revd Dr Martin Robinson is a minister in the Churches of Christ. He is Director of Mission and Theology at Bible Society, and is a well-known lecturer and writer.**

Regular readers of *Transmission* may well wonder why we have included a special edition dedicated to the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin. Two reasons predominate. First, it is virtually certain that Lesslie will be counted as one of a handful of significant shapers and shakers amongst church leaders in the twentieth century. Few can match his astonishing contribution to the world of ecumenism and mission. His offerings include his writings but beyond the written page his unceasing energies as teacher, pastor and ecumenical statesman mark him out as one that matched a keen mind with personal kindness and zealous conviction.

Second, Lesslie's work in recent years in connection with the Gospel and our Culture movement has acted as an important catalyst for the Bible Society in re-imagining the role of the Bible in the emerging mission field of the West. In this he has acted both as a friend and a mentor. The sub title of *Transmission* "a forum for change in church and culture" reflects Lesslie's significant influence.

Many of the contributors have commented on the breadth of Lesslie's activities in a long life of Christian service. Tom Faust, a Ph.D student at Birmingham University, has helpfully compiled the following outline of Lesslie's life and ministry which readers may find a helpful reference point in appreciating his immense contribution to the Church's mission.

# A Passion for Mission

by *Martin Robinson*

## Lesslie Newbigin

1909 Born 8 December

1909-28 Early life

1928-31 Cambridge University

1931-33 On staff with Student Christian Movement (Glasgow)

1933-36 Theological training at Westminster College, Cambridge University

1936-47 Missionary in India with Church of Scotland

1947-59 Bishop in the Church of South India at Madurai and Ramnad

1959-61 London: seconded to International Missionary Council

1962-65 Geneva: seconded to The World Council of

Churches: Division of World Mission and Evangelism

1965-74 Bishop in Madras, India

1974 CBE

1974-79 UK: Lecturer in Theology at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham

1977-78 Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

1980-88 Minister with United Reformed Church, Winson Green, Birmingham

1983-98 Retired: active with The Gospel and Our Culture Movement, writing, advising, and teaching

1998 Died 30 January

*"And finally, it follows that the missionary encounter of the gospel with the modern world will, like every 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."*

*(Foolishness to the Greeks, SPCK, p. 64.)*