



A Review of "Red Tape and the Gospel: A Study of the Significance of the Ecumenical Missionary Struggle of William Paton (1886-1943)," By Eleanor M. Jackson

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J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

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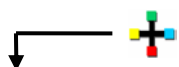
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William Paton was one of the half-dozen men whose influence was decisive in the ecumenical movement of the first half of this century. Shortly after his death, an account of his life was published by his colleague Margaret Sinclair, but there was need for a fuller assessment which could only be written from a more detached position. This need is now well met.

As an account of a great and lovable man, the book holds one's interest throughout. The title points to the tension which runs through his life, between a deep commitment to the gospel, dating from Paton's conversion as an Oxford undergraduate, and the complexities of the political and administrative issues to which his life was given, Dr Jackson organizes her material thematically, not chronologically, which sometimes makes it difficult to remember where we are in his life story, but is much more than a biography of the issues on which he was engaged. This is much more than a biography of Paton: it illuminates (from much fresh research) the struggles of the churches to move from colonial-style missions to inter-church fellowship, to relate to the world religions, to maintain the supranationality of missions in wartime, to relate constructively to Judaism, to nourish a Christian vision for society, and to create a World Council of Churches. Paton was not an original thinker but he has enormous capacity for work, wise judgement, and shrewdness about political realities. He got things done.

This is not hagiography. Paton's weaknesses are not glossed over. Nor is Dr Jackson tender towards the follies and blindnesses of the ecclesiastics who



Pass under the review. One feels that she set out with a bias against, rather than for, the sort of evangelical missionary commitment which was the driving force of Paton's life, but that Paton won another friend. Her account of his life is the more valuable because it helps the reader to see

both the grace and the judgement of God at work in the struggles of Christians to be faithful to their missionary calling.

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