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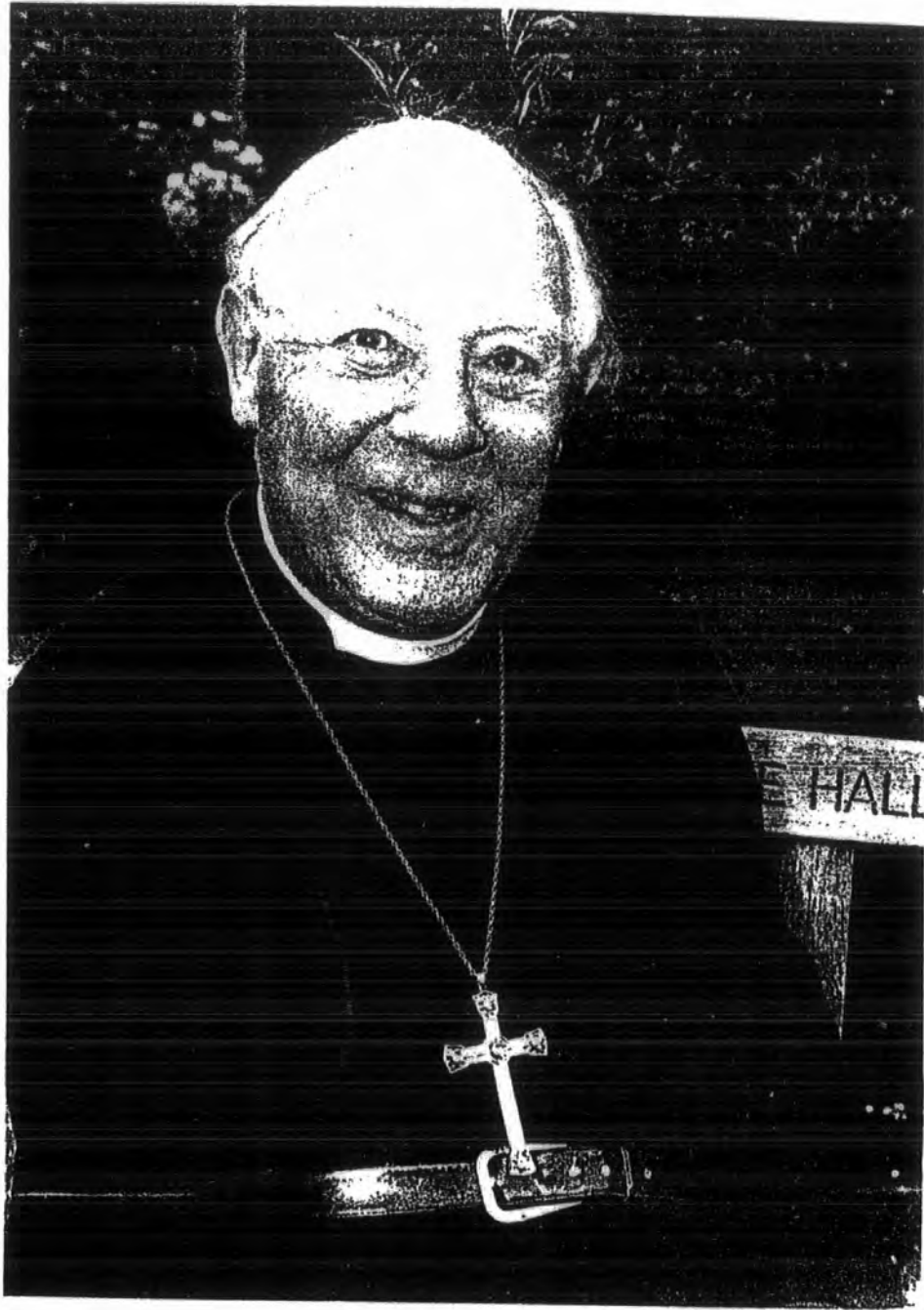
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STEPHEN NEILL :

A TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATOR IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION



John Paul II in St. Peter's Square, Rome 1983

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January 1993.

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ABSTRACT

"Stephen Neill:

A Traditional Communicator in an Age of Revolution."

by

Jolyon Peter Mitchell.

M.A. thesis, submitted February 1993.

Bishop Stephen Charles Neill's life and work is one of the best kept secrets in Twentieth Century Church History. His enigmatic life story has been virtually ignored by Church Historians. This thesis attempts to fill that gap. Consideration of Neill's life and work provides a series of windows onto many of the key theological movements, personalities and debates which have dominated this century.

This work is an attempt to construct an extensive historical narrative of Neill's life and work. It goes beyond, however, a mere retelling of his life, to the search for an interpretative key that will help explain this story of brokenness and brilliance.

First, the methodology employed to construct this explanatory account is outlined. Autobiographical, psychological, expressive and theological approaches to his life are individually explained. With these tools in our hands the following structure is then followed: Chapter 2): His formative years at home and school are investigated. Chapter 3): His adventures and development as a student of Classics and Theology at Cambridge are recounted. Chapter 4 & 5): His work as a missionary, teacher and bishop in Southern India, as well as the premature conclusion to his Indian ministry are discussed.

Chapter 6): The impact of this sudden departure is then evaluated, as are his ceaseless efforts as an ecumenist in the development of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Chapter 7): His methodology as a historian, New Testament scholar, and ecumenist whilst in Hamburg is uncovered through his most significant writings. Chapter 8): His labours in Kenya, both as a Professor in establishing the first Department of Religion at Nairobi university and as a bishop are described. Chapter 9): Neill's last years in Oxford and particularly his work as a historian and apologist are analysed. Chapter 10): The concluding discussion focuses on the four heuristic devices that have been employed to describe and explain Neill's life and work.

The overriding aim of this thesis is to assess whether Neill's Christo-centric beliefs are the "silver thread" which runs through his life and work of expression.

PREFACE

Stephen Neill is one of the enigmas of Twentieth Century Church History. On the one hand, an outstanding scholar, a lucid writer, a mesmerising speaker, a talented linguist and an agile theologian. On the other, as he himself admits, a man prone to both bouts of deep depression and "Irish" rage, as well an insomniac who never appears to have ceased from his labours. This combination of brokenness and brilliance has continually fascinated me.

On an academic level his writings have both provoked me to reconsider my attitude towards, and also challenged my shallow understanding of, New Testament Scholarship, Church History and Comparative Religion.

On another more emotional level, it is the living out of his firm faith in Christ both in times of triumph and of despair which has proved not only intriguing, but also moving.

At times I have felt like a detective trying to piece together Neill's complex and extraordinary life. This thesis, therefore, contains a large amount of unpublished material. It is the product of over four years part-time study and a considerable amount of travel.

I am particularly grateful to Charles Neill, Stephen's nephew, in Oxford. He gave me access to all his uncle's unpublished papers, including his weighty fellowship dissertation and his unpublished "Autobiography" of over a thousand pages. The originality of this thesis is partly guaranteed by the fact my references to this work are primarily from this full text rather than the considerably shortened edition. This was recently edited by Dr.E.M.Jackson, and has been published as God's Apprentice. Through most of my work I was unaware of this project, so I was grateful to Hodder and Stoughton who provided me with the basic manuscript of this book.

I also appreciated the help of the C.M.S. library in Birmingham University, who gave me special access to previously embargoed material, and to the Lambeth Palace Library in London, who allowed me to read the unpublished "Fisher Papers".

I owe a special thank you to Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin in Birmingham, Bishop Leslie Brown in Cambridge, Dr F.W.Dillistone in Oxford and Reverend Tim Yeats near Derby who each provided invaluable memories in extended interviews. Reverend Oliver Scallan in Dublin kindly sent me his provocative thesis on Neill. I also valued the helpful comments of Lord Coggan, and Professors Henry and Owen Chadwick. There is not enough space here to thank by name all of Neill's colleagues and students from as far a field as Nairobi, Yale and Hamburg who have helped me understand his life and work better.

This thesis is dedicated to Princeton's Center for Theological Inquiry and its director Professor Daniel Hardy whose generosity in providing me with an office and house facilitated its completion. Professor Hardy's patient supervision has frequently widened my horizons and stretched my theological imagination. I am, of course, responsible for any of this works' inadequacies.

Jolyon Mitchell,

Princeton, USA. and Durham , UK.
January 1993.

Chapter 1: Methods for all Seasons

Stephen Charles Neill is a much underrated and little known figure in Twentieth Century Church History. In three recent major books, Adrian Hastings' A History of English Christianity 1920-1985, Paul Welsby's A History of the Church of England 1945-80 and David Bebbington's Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, he receives no mention. In M.E.Gibbs' work on The Anglican Church in India - 1600-1970, the only reference to Neill is in a list of bishops at the end of the book.[1]

This is surprising, especially when one considers his prolific and ceaseless work for the Church as a writer, speaker and scholar. One would have expected that a man who had over twenty lines in Crockford's Clerical Directory, nearly fifty in Who's Who and a series of publications which fills over five pages of bibliography, would have received more attention. One of the aims of this thesis is to rectify this omission.

The primary goal of this work is to draw together the various strands of Neill's life and work as a scholar, teacher, writer, historian, missionary, ecumenist, preacher and apologist in order to provide an explanatory account of Neill's life and work. To do this a variety of approaches will be used.

First, attention will be given to the autobiographical and biographical material. The aim of such an approach is to tell

Neill's story, and thereby to add to the small body of material already written about this man.[2] Each chapter will, therefore, contain a brief description of Neill's life and, where appropriate, his context.

This will be arranged as a narrative which plots his progression from his early years (Chapters 2 and 3) via his time in India (Chapters 4 and 5), through his European experiences (Chapters 6 and 7), African initiatives (Chapter 8), to his last decade based in Oxford (Chapter 9). It will be demonstrated, especially in the Conclusion, that this approach does not provide a complete explanation. Simply to tell his story with no further comment, would be like presenting the reader with a series of snapshots without any commentary.

A second "psychological" approach is, therefore, closely linked to the first to provide an explanation of Neill's story. This will not involve an in depth psychoanalysis or an excursion into the world of "pop psychology". It will rather be an attempt, to paraphrase William Dray, to penetrate behind appearances, achieve insight into the situation, identify more sympathetically with Neill, and project ourselves imaginatively into his world.[3]

Unfortunately, it would be impossible to present a complete "revival, re-enactment, rethinking, re-experiencing" of all Neill's "hopes, fears, plans, desires, views, intentions, etc." [4] Nevertheless, the goal of this "psychological approach" is to go behind Neill's brilliant exterior in order to

understand more fully the complex personality behind.

The aim of this method is not simply to focus on the shadows or darker side of Neill's story, but also to highlight the influences which strengthened his character. On the one hand, therefore, the more positive influence from his family (Chapter 2), his teachers (Chapter 3) and his cultural context (esp. Chapters 4 and 8) will be examined.

On the other hand, Neill's "darkness" will be frequently be returned to. A spotlight will be shone on his early tensions (Chapters 2 and 3), through his Indian stresses (Chapter 4), his "genuinely human writing" in Geneva (Chapter 6) and the beginning of his healing in Cambridge (Chapter 7).

A third and "expressive" approach will act as a further unifying force in a thesis which will inevitably cover a large amount of ground. This window into Neill's world will concentrate more on "externals" such as his message and his methods. Here was a man naturally gifted at expressing himself through a variety of media. Both his content, or to borrow George Lindbeck's categories, his "cognitive propositional understandings", and his methods or "expressive" techniques will be studied.[5] The reason for focussing on what many would see as merely "techniques" is to discover further ways of going beneath the simple narrative of his life.

Hopefully, by examining his techniques of culturally appropriate or rhetorically skillful communication, his deepest convictions will be further uncovered. Thus, both the central

content of Neill's message and his method of expressing it will be integrated or placed into the context of his life-story.

This work of integration leads to questions such as, "In what ways did he become more sensitive to his audience and more refined in his presentation through the rigours of practical experience?" and "Why did his basic methods of expressing himself remain primarily the same throughout his life?" and most fundamentally "Why was he committed to communicating the Gospel throughout his life?" This passion can be seen not only in his theoretical research in Cambridge on the subject of expressing the "euangelion" in an alien culture (Chapter 3), but also, even more clearly, by his tireless attempts to put this theory into practice in an Indian context (Chapters 4 and 5) as well as amongst students across the world (Chapter 6).

This ceaseless oral and written activity throws up a number of questions. First, why did he find it necessary to verbalize his faith and thus act as a spokesperson? Secondly, does this expressive-centred faith derive from a personal need to win an audience, a theological belief in the supremacy of the word or a conviction that this was the most effective and appropriate way for him to live out his faith? Thirdly, did his underlying message radically change as he grew in knowledge and experience?

In short, is it possible to see a common theme running through his work as a missionary in India (Chapter 4 and 5), as a ecumenist in Geneva (Chapter 6), as a historian in Hamburg

(Chapter 7), as an educator in Nairobi (Chapter 8) and as scholar in Oxford (Chapter 9)? Is he more than simply a habitual verbaliser who found his security and value in oral or written expression?

Neill lived through a period when, in the words of McIntyre, there was a "radical reassessment" of how to understand and express a Christ-centred faith which put "an exclusive emphasis upon the absolute significance of Jesus Christ".[6] Nevertheless, in spite of the scepticism^{ci} encountered in Cambridge (Chapter 3), the questions of Bultmann (Chapter 7), and the assertions of Hick (Chapter 9), Neill maintained a style which expressed the theological validity of his own highly Christo-centric faith. As he grew older he became progressively more open to such new ideas, but ultimately he does not appear to have been radically affected by scholars such as Bultmann or Hick. Part of the reason for this may be found in the "autobiographical", "psychological" or "expressive" explanations, but ultimately his theological "conservatism" must be explained in the context of our fourth approach.

The fourth "theological" approach, which has certain parallels with a technique praised by Samuel Coleridge, will be an attempt to uncover the central foundation stones of Neill's life.[7] If his life story, his internal development, and his way of expressing himself only make complete sense in the light of his theological beliefs, then it is vital to trace, define and assess them. In short, to answer successfully

explanatory questions such as "Why was he the way that he was?" or "Why did he express himself in the way that he did?" or "Why did he believe what he did?" one needs to turn to a theologically-based explanation.

It is neither enough to build an explanation of Neill out of a clear telling of Neill's story, an imaginative "disengagement" from our own peculiar point of view, and a stepping into his autobiography, nor develop an empathy for his internal tensions, nor even to analyse the content and methods of his expression. The Conclusion will argue that these approaches can never individually provide a comprehensive explanation of Neill.

In other words, this thesis is *based* on the supposition that to give a fair account of the man it is necessary to view him from as many angles as possible. Whilst it would be possible to interpret him ~~solely~~ from a biographical, psychological, or rhetorical viewpoint it would create an incomplete picture. As a consequence of providing the first extended biographical account of his life combined with these heuristic devices the main text of this thesis is over fifty five thousand words long.

Hopefully this extended length will do justice to the man and so create an adequate final picture. To do this it is also necessary to see beyond the brokenness and brilliance of Neill to the theological themes which further explain his life and work. It may be difficult to identify a recurring theological tune, especially in the work of a man who appears at one moment to play out Latourette's Christian Understanding of History and

then at the next to echo some of Bultmann's song as heard in The Christian Faith and History. [8] Nevertheless, in order to explain fully the "Neill phenomenon" it is crucial both to identify and mark out his own peculiar theme tune.

Is Oliver Scallan correct when he asserts that "the thread running through the life of Neill is, to use the title of one of his books, The Call to Mission" [9] or is it more appropriate to argue with Tim Yeats that "Christ as Truth of God runs like a silver thread through all his theological and missiological enterprise"? [10]

This thesis attempts to assess whether there is a single theological thread which runs through and explains Neill's life. Or, to change the metaphor, is the "staircase" of his life built on a single, unchanging foundation?

Notes on Chapter One

1. M.E.Gibbs. The Anglican Church in India. - 1600-1970. (Dehli: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [S.P.C.K.] 1972) p.378.
2. See Secondary Bibliography. (At the end of this thesis.)
3. W.Dray. Laws and Explanations in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.119f. This imaginative leap by the historian is encouraged by many practitioners. For example, M.Bloc asserts that the historians task is to step "inside the event itself." [M.Bloc, The Historian's Craft (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), pp.134f.] While V.A.Harvey echoes both Bloc and Dray when he argues that the historian "must not only imaginatively disengage himself from his own peculiar point of view, but he must try to identify himself with his subject". [V.A.Harvey The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief (London: Student Christian Movement, 1967) p.94.]
4. W.Dray. Laws and Explanations in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.119.
5. G.Lindbeck. The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age (London: S.P.C.K., 1984)
6. J.McIntyre. The Shape of Christology. (London: S.C.M.,1966)
7. H.J.Jackson (ed.) Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Oxford: O.U.P., 1985) For instance, in the collected version of his periodical

"The Friend", Coleridge uses the metaphor of the staircase and then writes that the "foundation stones" of the author's "edifice must lie open to common view, or the friends will hesitate to trust themselves beneath the roof." Hopefully, by uncovering Neill's "foundation stones" it will become easier to understand, "trust", and assess the "staircase" of his life and work.

8. Neill's distinctive "theme tune" is not solely a synthesis of Latourette and Bultmann's views, as he drew upon hundreds of scholars during his life. But he does display certain similarities to their distinctive approaches. Whilst his beliefs were not derived from them, in both preaching and writing Neill often implicitly combined Latourette's emphasis on Jesus' final, decisive act in history and Bultmann's call to an immediate decision today. This is ironic when one compares statements illustrating the divergent, even conflicting, suppositions of these two theologians.

For example, K.S. Latourette asserts in The Christian Understanding of History. (p.46-66.) that the "distinctively Christian Understanding of History centers upon historical occurrences" and that "in Jesus of Nazareth, God once for all disclosed Himself and acted decisively".(p.52.) This stands in marked contrast to Rudolf Bultmann's argument in The Christian Faith and History [pp.97-111.] "that Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time, but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and

now in preaching."(p.108.)

Especially after the early 1950's Neill both drew on, and related his views to, countless such diverse scholars. This illustrates not only his range of reading, his skill at collation, his thirst for knowledge and his ability to absorb a wide spectrum of approaches, but also the complexity of accurately tracing, as well as defining, any specific theological thread or "tune" which runs through his life and work.

[K^s Latourette and R. Bultmann are cited in this extended note from their essays in C.T.McIntire (ed.) God, History and Historians (New York: O.U.P. 1977).]

9. O.Scallan. The Supremacy of Christ: Inter Religious Dialogue in the Writings of Bishop Stepen Neill. (Dublin School of Ecumenics: Unpublished M.Phil),p.iii. Obtainable from Dublin University with author's permission.

10. T.E.Yeats. "S.Neill: Some Aspects of a Theological Legacy" in Anvil (Vol 5. No. 2, 1988.), p.152.

Chapter 2: Beginnings (1900-19)

My upbringing as a child and during my school days was what would now be called distinctly Victorian and old-fashioned..... The result of this upbringing was that when I went up to Cambridge, I found myself very much out of touch with what was then the modern world.[1]

Neill's description of his "upbringing" provokes a number of questions, not only about life at home and school, but also about his relation to the "modern world". First, how far was he influenced by the "world of change" which characterises so much of the late 19th and early 20th century? Secondly, was he merely a child of a "distinctly Victorian and old-fashioned" environment? In other words, was he a boy trapped in a "world of tradition", which was maintained by his parents and reinforced by his teachers? Thirdly, how far did the "world of conflict" impinge on this brilliant child?

Finally, were the seeds of his recurring "darkness", his passion for expression, and his Christo-centric assertions planted at this time? If they were, did they come from the "world of change", the "world of tradition" or the "world of conflict?" This chapter will explore these three worlds as Neill moves from infancy to adolescence via childhood.

a) World of Change

Stephen Neill was born into a world of change, on the last day of 1900. The population was increasing. The towns were expanding. Industries were developing. Science was moving forward. The curtains were closing on the Victorian age. From an Anglo-centric position some of the dreams of the Great Exhibition of 1851 were becoming a reality. Neill was but one of a growing population which had expanded from under 14 million in 1831, to over 32 million in 1901. The land of villages had been transformed into a land of towns.

Even Edinburgh, the city of his birth, was enjoying the second wave of the industrial revolution. Electricity and improved transportation were its newly discovered driving forces. The following year Marconi sent the first wireless message across the Atlantic, Mme Curie discovered that radioactive atoms were unstable and their disintegration could lead to a release of energy. Atomic Physics was thus born. "The 19th century ended with a fundamental and revolutionary change in the physical sciences." [1] 1901 also saw not only the death of Queen Victoria, "The Empress of India", but also the birth of the ILP (Independent Labour Party).

Yet though the spread of democratic ideas, scientific advance, industrialisation, urbanisation, and population explosion, may have affected Neill's lifestyle, it does not appear to have changed his own view of the world. In his own words,

cited at the opening of this chapter, he was "out of touch with what was then the modern world". The reason why he was will be discussed in the following section, entitled "World of Tradition".

Only later would he describe, analyse, and assess the "modern world"; and then, it was often to ask questions such as: "Why did the Church not live up to the optimistic expectations of the Victorian Era?" The mature Neill's answers demonstrate not only how he would become more "in touch" with "modern world", but also more open to its changes.

In Christ, His Church, and His World a Lenten Book written almost half a century after his birth, his analysis of the Church's decline begins with the Industrial Revolution. This caught "the Church unawares and unprepared." [2] Characteristically, he goes deeper than changes in "social and economic conditions" as explanations of the "cause of religion going by default".[3] He also graphically describes the five waves of a "grand assault". The most important changes he perceives are to be found in the world of ideas. He draws most of his evidence from various seminal books.

He takes his readers on a typical high speed review of works such as D.F. Strauss's Life of Christ (1846: *English Translation*), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' The Communist Manifesto (1848) Lyell's Principles of Geology (1871), Darwin's Origin of Species (1859), Tylor's Primitive Culture (1871) and Freud's Religion, the Future of an Illusion.

These works represent the changing agendas brought about

by the development of historical criticism, the proclamation of the Communist ideal, the emancipation of science, the comparative study of religions and birth of modern psychology. Such comprehensive citation not only points to a widely read academic able to make inter-disciplinary connections, but also a man who had become increasingly "in touch" with some of the catalysts which changed many peoples' view of the world.

Nevertheless, it took him some time to recognise that he was born not only into a changing social order, but also into a European society where a growing number of the intellectual elite were viewing the world in the light of new evidence, and new discoveries. In the mature Neill's eyes their conclusions disturbed and challenged orthodoxy: "In the years that followed 1860, Christians were almost in a state of panic".[4] There is, however, no evidence to suggest that such "assaults" and subsequent "panic" had an impact on Neill as a child or adolescent.

The younger Neill would probably have been surprised if, by some trick of time, he found himself reading his own description and analysis of the origins of this "panic". Both the location and the characters would have been unfamiliar. The mature Neill invites his readers across the channel for a sidelong glance at the German Enlightenment. He begins at "small and remote Königsberg". There "Master Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) sat and brooded on all the mysteries of thought and existence; having destroyed metaphysics with one hand he proceeded to build it up with the other".[5] Here perhaps is the

"founder and creator of modern philosophy".[6] He continues on to Heidelberg and Berlin, briefly introducing Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

He does not use these names to mark out important German philosophers he has encountered, but rather as examples of a fundamental change in the way of thinking, describing it as "the awakening of the critical spirit in a new form, and particularly in relation to the use and handling of historical evidence" [7]. The implication is clear, once "the critical spirit is aroused, no boundaries could be set to the areas to which it could be applied".[8] The young Neill's "critical spirit" appears initially to have remained sleeping, protected by the boundaries set by his parents and teachers, safe from the questions provoked by this new approach to "historical evidence".

Hence ideas inspired by technical books such as D.F.Strauss's Life of Jesus, and Renan's more popular, imaginative Life of Jesus would have been alien to the younger Neill even in his first months at Cambridge. This change in ways of thinking and the development of a more "critical spirit" led to books such as Life of Jesus where nothing was too sacred to question. In Anglicanism Neill notes:

Renan's first principle was that the supernatural must be discounted; Jesus was the Son of Man but He could not be in any transcendent sense the son of God.[9]

The new ideas and questions asked on the continent were restated and developed in works such as the Oxford-based work, Essays and Reviews (1860). While the mature Neill might describe and explain these radical approaches, he would rarely echo their sceptical conclusions.

Far more significant for Neill would be the work produced from his future home, Trinity College, Cambridge, by Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort. Neill often cites them as an antidote to "the rising tide of criticism in Germany".[10] They dominate his chapter on 'New Testament and History', (in Interpretation) and are also used as an example of how to walk the middle-way in a "time of grave uncertainty"[11] at the end of the 19th century. They rejected both the "obscurantism which refused to ask any questions" as well as the "rationalism which was hardly willing to admit the possibility of any answers."

The frequency with which these three appear in Neill's work underlines his deep respect of their methods, achievements and goals. They faced "every assault on the faith without anxiety and without resentment" [12], seeking to discover the truth, as "all their own work was based on a confident, reasoned, humble faith in Jesus Christ".[13] Such confidence in their approach illustrates how Neill stands with those who attempted to reconstruct on the rubble of the "grand assaults". Perhaps his loyalty to what many would describe as a traditional and highly Christo-centric faith partially derives from his early shielding from the changing world into which he was born.

How far and when he moves from the humble, but deep faith of his parents, to the more questioning explorations, represented by the Trinity triumvirate and the German scholars will be examined later. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that he was born into a world of intellectual and social change, a world where many theological presuppositions were being questioned for the first time. As has been demonstrated, this was a world that only later he would interpret. Even then his approach would be in a highly literary, cerebral and descriptive form. His somewhat distant, even defensive analysis, combined with his "confident, reasoned, humble faith in Jesus Christ" may partially be explained by the world of traditional evangelicalism in which he was brought up.

b) World of Tradition

The windows that Strauss and Darwin had opened, that Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort peered through, were kept securely closed by Stephen's parents, Charles and Margaret ("Daisy"). "Charlie" had wanted to be a vicar, but his forceful father would have none of it. He, therefore, became a doctor whose medical skills were but one part of his job. "Although a layman and doctor, my father was first and foremost a missionary", [14] the same was true of his mother; to the end of their lives both were "fundamentalists". [15] Stephen uses this title cautiously recognising it as an anachronistic description.

He also refers to this label in The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961, where he argues that at the time of

Essays and Reviews (1860):

.....all good Christians would be called "fundamentalists". Whether it was Mr Newman or Dr Pusey, Lord Shaftesbury or Dean Close, Gladstone or Dr Dale, there was very little between them; all accorded the Bible an unqualified reverence, and all believed that if its inerrancy were successfully impugned, the whole Christian Faith would collapse.[16]

Neill here is using an impressively broad selection of Christians to support his point. If the term "fundamentalist" is to be applied to his parents, it seems fairer to avoid the negative connotations and see them as children of the Victorian views described above. Nevertheless, in belief and liturgical practice they would stand much closer to Dean Close and Lord Shaftesbury than Mr Newman and Dr Pusey. Neill's parents were members of what could be loosely termed as the evangelical community, within which they were protected from the immediate impact of books such as Origin of Species and Essays and Reviews. If these works do mark a new movement of discovery and questioning, they stand outside it.

Admittedly, their response was not as informed or as extreme as Bishop Wilberforce's attack on Huxley, or the ten thousand clergymen who signed a memorial condemning the essayists. They could not see Darwinism, with the young Oxford writers of Lux Mundi, as doing the "work of a friend" under the

"disguise of a foe".[17] Nor would they have been able to support Charles Gore's (1853-1932) acceptance of "the reasonable results of scientific criticism".[18] At the end of their lives they still unashamedly viewed the world through literalistic biblical spectacles. For them, to do anything else was worse than a mere mistake, it was sin. Stephen rebelled against this attitude as an adult, the sin for him was not to face the difficult questions with integrity.

His father became more traditional as he grew older. After the age of fifty, unlike his son Stephen, he rarely read a book he did not agree with. He was eventually ordained, and as a "noted evangelical, and because of his activity on the mission field"[19] was invited to be secretary of the London Mission to the Jews. This interest in mission was complemented by concern for education. He was also a prominent and active governor of the evangelically based foundation of Dean Close School.

Stephen applauded his mother's spiritual discipline, which ensured an hour's early morning devotions, even in the midst of a freezing Edinburgh winter [20]. This discipline would extend to her duties as a mother. She encouraged the young Stephen to say his prayers in bed. He admits :

Ours was a Christian Household. Religion was present all the time, but I do not think it obtruded.... God was the unseen mover of the household [21].

Stephen would both consciously and subconsciously have taken in

much Christianity. His own description of life at home stands in sharp contrast with general the trends outside this "Christian Household".

At the turn of the century England continued "to grow much more secular" [22], The number of people who did not go to church was far larger in 1901 than in 1837. "The Sea of Faith" which was once full, was continuing to withdraw:

Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.[23]

The conservative Prime Minister of 1901, Lord Salisbury, may have been a devout Anglican influenced by the Oxford Movement, but he did not point families back to the Church. There can be no doubt that the "Christian Household" familiar to Neill, was becoming a rarer phenomenon.

In this household the windows onto Arnold's doubting, Harnack's liberal protestantism, and Tyrell's modernism were kept firmly shut, but the door of "educated conversation"[24] was often thrown open. Stephen believed his mother "had an extremely good general education" which went much further than the pious story-books she wrote for girls. [25] Whilst the desire to keep up with his elder brother and sister meant "he missed the natural stages of growing up" [26], it probably advanced his development. He claims he never learned to read, he "simply found he could".

He was not a product of Galsworthy's aristocracy, or L.P.Hartley's stately home owners, but he certainly was not

part of the 'submerged tenth'. Nor did he have real contact with the People of the Abyss [27], or hear the Bitter Cry of Outcast London [28], or experience the Life and Labour of the People of London [29]. Like most of the middle and upper classes in Edwardian England he would have been waited on by some of the 1,658,000 domestic servants. The wealth earned by his grandfather both in Australia and through the wine-trade in Europe ensured a financially secure base and a comfortable standard of living.

On the surface Neill appears to have had a happy and busy childhood. He was one of seven children, all born between 1898 and 1909. He was the third eldest child, and second eldest son of parents "devoted" to their children's welfare. Neill later wrote that they were all able to enjoy the "inestimable gift" [30] of his parents' happy and traditional marriage.

There are, however, a number of less positive influences which may explain some of Neill's later difficulties. First, there was the "deep shyness" between his parents which "years and experience did little to alleviate" [31]. He believed, that this "old enemy", which sometimes haunted him, was passed on in "double portion" from his parents. Secondly, there were psychological illnesses. His aunt, Julie Crawford was probably psychosomatic; he admits this is perhaps a pointer to an "element of instability in the family".[32]

This can be seen even more clearly in Neill's father, who was "never one to spare himself. Driven on, perhaps, by some deep uncertainty about himself, he found it hard to cease from

work".[33] These words could equally well be applied to his son Stephen. He too would grow into a man who would "never spare himself" and who "found it hard to cease from work". In the autobiography a picture emerges of his father who worries too much about his work, his family, and his finances. "This managed to produce a fairly comprehensive breakdown, in 1913".[34] Nearly thirty years later Stephen followed in his father's footsteps, and also had a breakdown, though for different reasons.

Ironically, the money which brought security, also facilitated his father's propensity for travel. The "family odyssey which never really ended until his death" [35] may have had an unsettling influence on both father and son. Stephen would also live a peripatetic and often restless life. He believed his father's constant movement was because "India was in his heart and his blood, and he could never settle down to the life of England." [36]. Edinburgh, India, Switzerland, Cornwall (Liskeard), Northern Ireland (Lisbon-Usher Green), Cheltenham, Chiswick, Nutley, Liskeard, and Mt.Sorrow, were some of the Neills' residences. The theology may not have changed much, but the scenery certainly did. On the one hand, there was the stability of a large caring family, whilst on the other there was the unsettling constant movement.

This tension between change and tradition is also visible in his family history which dominates the early pages of Neill's full autobiography. The family tree is drawn in all its glory. A range of roots is uncovered. Perhaps this

delving backwards is partly a search for stability. Both his grandfathers make a fascinating contrast. On the Neill side, the Irishman who had a "capricious and violent temper"[37], was also a highly successful business man, working even in Australia.

On his mother's side, James Monro collected the Edinburgh University gold medal in philosophy. His "extraordinary ability"[38], took him high in Indian civil service, and in spite of being forced to resign this post, he would go even higher in the Metropolitan police force. He was their commissioner picking up the pieces after the Ripper debacle, and is reputed to have saved the Queen's life. He dressed so well, he even found himself caricatured in Punch, but he also risked setting up an independent medical mission in India.

Stephen's parents met in Edinburgh, but, grew into love in India, in the middle of a Bengali culture. The activist Neills, fishermen and yachtsmen, were thus united with the more reflective, literary clan of Monro's. Activism and reflection, two sides perhaps, of the same Stephen Neill coin.

As medical missionaries they were prepared to travel and on some levels risk changing cultures. They put their medical skills to full use, but were also keen to preach in Bengali to the waiting lines of patients. How traditional their methods were, is open to debate. Nevertheless, crossing continental divides, whether for financial gain or evangelism, were part of the family tradition. From the beginning Stephen was brought up in a family that looked not simply beyond the Channel and

Alps, but also across the Indian Ocean. "In the whole of this narrative India is the background and in a sense India is the hero".[39]

Whilst he had no recollections of India from his first trip at the age of one, he would grow to love this country. He would not however become so caught up in his own passion or the missionary zeal of his parents, that he was unable to question this tradition of work in India:

It was difficult for the missionary not to be affected by the unpleasantly blatant imperialism of the nineteenth century, not to assume what was good for the West must necessarily be good for India also, not to accept without question the superiority of western to eastern man...[40]

If he was partly a product of "blatant imperialism", and missionary fervour, what freed him later to listen humbly to the Indian cultures, to step back from the traditions of the Victorian age, and to differentiate between "the flag" and "the cross"? Such a movement and development of a "critical spirit" demonstrates he was not simply following in the footsteps of his father. Part of the explanation of Stephen's own changes and development of a distinctive identity lies in his career at school.

c) World of Conflict

The world of change and the world of tradition would

collide both at home and at Dean Close School. Whilst the "Christian" nations were fighting the war to end all wars[41], Neill's eyes would be further opened to the world of books and the world of faith. Did the "moving passages"[42] of Plato and the "evangelical enthusiasm which tended to swamp the school" [43] protect him from the world of conflict? Or was it during his seven years at Dean Close (1912-1919) that the seeds of exploration were planted? Was it the War itself that drove him to face the world of conflict and change?

The declaration of war (4 August 1914) came late at night during the hot summer holidays. At first it made little immediate impact. He assumed with his family :

that civil war had broken out in Ireland. It had not occurred to us that the murder of an obscure Austrian Archduke far away could affect the destiny of all of us for ever and ever.[44]

Such an attitude was by no means uncommon and reflects the widespread surprise at the crossing of British and German swords. Like family and school the young Neill seems to have been more concerned by the "violent activities" [45] of the suffragettes, whose actions were not well received at home or in the school debating society.[46] Likewise, the great strikes of 1911 and 1912 made an "indelible impression" on his mind.[47]

These questions such as "whether the Unionists would use force in Ireland, whether the strikers would use their indus-

trial muscle.....whether the militant suffragettes would make the men surrender,"[48] rather than the out break of war initially absorbed the Neills, the school's and the nation's interest. He claimed, however, to go beyond these common preoccupations to a perceptive analysis of the implications of the violation of Belgium's neutrality.[49] There seems to be no reason to doubt the self-portrayal that emerges in his autobiography of a reasonably well-informed thirteen year old.

This awareness of the wider world can only have been heightened by the impact of the war upon the school. The initial excitement grounded in the expectation it would all be over by Christmas, was soon replaced by a fearful realisation that the 'lovely war' had turned sour. It is hard to imagine the impact upon adolescents of saying good-bye to friends at the end of the summer term, and returning to discover they had died in action.[50] By the end of the war over 120 Old Deaconians had lost their lives in action. Many more of the 700 who enlisted were crippled for life.

News of these casualties would have been doubly painful in "a school which had always been run so much as a close-knit family concern." [51] The final national fatality toll was three-quarters of a million, many from amongst the "gentlemen of England". [52] Nearly one in ten Edwardian men under forty-five was killed, and another one in five was wounded. [53] These figures must have been made more disturbing for Neill by the weekly reading out of those Old boys or masters who had lost their lives. As the war dragged

on a growing number from this list of death would have been personally known to him.

Physical conditions at school, *according to Neill*, became extremely gruelling, especially when the men-servants disappeared into military service. Add to this a poor diet, which included half-slices of a "greyish substance" called bread and described by Neill as "nastier than anything else I have ever eaten"[54], and it is not surprising that epidemics raged, and Neill himself developed a sciatic disorder. Both brothers were also struck but not moved by the "increase of military drill and training".[55]

The war inevitably put considerable stress upon the staff who remained. The head-master for example, William Flecker, had to cope with the wounding of his son and the loss of both his colleagues and his dignity.[56] The world of conflict thus ensured shortage of staff, of food and of freedom. School life have been a haven compared to the mud filled trenches of France, but it still left many pupils, including Neill, hungry and over-worked. Here, through the increasing pressures and tensions within this small community, of just under three hundred people, was a rude awakening to the world outside. What else would force him to face this world of conflict?

Perhaps the world of the library and of books provided a welcome escape for the shy Neill. Dean Close, like other independent schools of the age, put great stress upon "adherence to the classical curriculum"[57]. It was in this context his eyes were opened to a new world:

One of the great moments in my life was when he [Edam Ellam, his classics' teacher] read aloud the closing passages of the Phaedo on the death of Socrates, amongst the most moving passages in the whole of human literature.[58]

Thus he became what he would stay for the rest of his life, a "Plato worshipper".[59] Why was this passage so moving for Neill? Did he perhaps identify with the outcast ugly intellectual who cared little for his appearance, but much for his philosophy? Were there parallels between the *Sparta* which placed so much importance on physical fitness, sporting excellence, and military training and the atmosphere of Dean Close? Or did he stand with Socrates' weeping friends, who were usually confined by social convention to hide their feelings?

This account of Socrates' last day in prison is more than a tribute to a noble death, it is an attempt to encourage by every means a belief in the immortality of the soul. The calm confident death of "the bravest.. the wisest and the most upright man"[60] who had argued for the immortality of the soul, has obvious links with another innocent sufferer. Perhaps this scene in Phlius (a little town in the north-east of the Peloponese) also took his mind to Jerusalem and another more gruesome death scene, to which his parents and his teachers would often have pointed him.

It was this second scene that would prevent him from contracting "out of the world and people and things, and set-

ting to live only in the world of books and of imagination".[61] In retrospect he saw this as a real danger, and he claims it was because just before the war he became a Christian that he was freed from such escapism.

He did not experience blinding lights on the Damascus Road, nor an exegetical breakthrough in a tower, nor even a "heart strangely warmed" on a street corner, he could recall no "emotional accompaniment" to his conversion. [62] He had not needed to witness stonings, nor struggle with lecturing on the Psalms, nor cross the Atlantic care of the Moravians. Instead, whilst convalescing at School, he considered the implications of Christ's death:

As I was lying in bed, it occurred to me that, if it was true, as I had every reason to believe, that Christ had died for my sins, the rest of my life could not be spent in any other way than in grateful and adoring service of the One who had wrought that inestimable benefit. Fifty-seven years later I see no way of improving on that discovery.[63]

Whilst this portrayal was written towards the end of his life, an experience "so much more important than anything else"[64] is unlikely to have been radically misrepresented, especially by a man with such an exceptional memory.[65] His decision appears to be rooted in an objective historical event, which he

reasons, rather than feels to be true.

This specific understanding of the implications of the atonement was a doorway into a general awareness of God's presence. In other words a rational conclusion led him to a new feeling. The Pauline language he uses here is significant not simply because it reflects the Keswick strain of evangelical spirituality, but also as it provides an insight into Neill's motivation. The fact Christ died for him demanded an individual response - a life of service. For Neill, even at this early stage, yesterday's events combined with today's interpretation were central to his faith. God had acted thus he too must act.

Inevitably the boy Neill was influenced by his environment. The Jesus he perceived may have been clothed in a Victorian evangelical guise, but he was still free to ignore him. The headmaster's son who was from a similar background did exactly that, denying his family name and his family faith.[66] Neill on the other hand, chose not to, and instead based his faith in God, on Jesus the Christ who had acted in history. This personal experience, combined with his love for classical history may partly explain his later criticisms of Bultmann [67] and Barth [68], who in his eyes and in different ways did not give enough importance to the Jesus of History.

The agenda may have been set by those around him, the tools he used may have been borrowed, but the decision to follow was his. It would be too easy to caricature his various stages of faith in order to fit them into a neat pattern.[69]

He seems even at this early stage to go beyond the conventional. At 14 he decided to read a chapter of the Greek New Testament every day. By 15 he claimed to have taught himself Hebrew and to be able to read "without difficulty the simpler parts of the Old Testament." [70]

His conversion, his growing identification with the classical world, his fascination for words, his facility with languages, and his love of reading combined to draw him into the world of primary sources. [71] This unique synthesis of skills enabled him to make independent decisions, to begin to think originally and so step back from his own environment.

This was facilitated by certain members of staff. The chaplain (John A. Luce) was a "steadying and stabilizing influence amid the waves of evangelical enthusiasm". [72] Likewise, Tom Cooper lent Neill many books, such as William James' Varieties of Religious Experience (The 1901-2 Gifford Lectures). This "daring naturalistic view of the facts of religion" [73] was described by Neill as "one of the most impressive books I have ever read". [74] This is interesting as James was an American psychologist and philosopher, who admitted he "lacked the germ" of explicit belief. Even a cursory read of James' seminal work highlights the apparent gulf between these two brilliant minds from different generations and cultures.

In this series of twenty lectures James comes to no firm conclusion about what religion should be. Rather, he draws on his scientific background to *describe accurately* and catalogue

the diverse world of religious experience. Tolstoy, Bunyan, Saint Teresa, Luther, Mohammed and various Buddhist monks are but a few of the witnesses called by James. He does not use them like the mature Neill as evidence for Christ, but rather as an attempt to "reduce religion to its lowest admissable terms"[75], and thereby demonstrate the veracity of the religious hypotheses - "that our lives are continuous with a larger spiritual world from which help comes to us." His observations leave him edging towards a "pluralistic universe with a finite God", and even nervously advancing polytheism.[76]

At first sight it seems extraordinary that the young Neill was impressed by such a book as it appears to be in direct conflict with his own developing faith, or as James would say his "over beliefs". This Harvard professor worked from a completely different set of presuppositions. For James, influenced by the father of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839- 1919), doctrinal formulations had far less significance than empirical evidence. Implicit throughout the lectures is the assumption that what matters is concrete conduct and not specific belief.

This presupposition sets him apart from Neill who saw belief leading to changed conduct. Underlying his view was the assumption that the sovereign God had acted in Christ and would continue to act. Perhaps it was the intellectual explorer within Neill which drew him towards both the method and content of James' work. His mind was obviously stirred by the scientific approach to religion, which could place Tolstoy next to

Bunyan[77], or Hindu fakirs, Buddhist monks, and Mohammedan (Muslim) dervishes beside Jesuits and Franciscans.[78]

If the homogeneous atmosphere of Dean Close restricted the ever hungry mind of Neill, here were new worlds to be explored, which could be entered into by familiar doors, such as "conversion" or "saintliness". James' indefinite conclusions, later did not meet with Neill's full agreement [79], but his broad ranging approach clearly stimulated an intellect that enjoyed being stretched. Here, in James, was a pragmatic philosopher who captured Neill's imagination, partly because of his approach and partly because he accepted religious experience as a universal phenomenon, and not an aberration due to disease or abnormality.

Neill also described Varieties... as "the best book in existence on the meaning of conversion"[80], perhaps because it touched a number of chords in his own experience. The varied evidence demonstrated how conversion can:

overcome temperamental melancholy
and impart endurance to the
Subject, or a zest, or a meaning,
or an enchantment and glory to the
common objects of life.[81]

Neill's own conversion had forced him out in two main directions, a zestful interest in others and an enchantment with natural beauty. Whilst his out-going concern was "tinged by an evangelical inquisitiveness about" others' "spiritual state", the beauty of the natural world led him "to worship and

move out of the narrowness" of his "own inner being".[82] Unlike Charles Raven, the keys into these new worlds were found with the historical Christ. Neill believed his experience also brought healing and release, as his temper and shyness began to come under control. For James this would have been more data to be catalogued, for Neill it was God transforming his life.

He was not however, rewriting his own history to create a spiritual thriller with instantaneous conversions solving all the problems. His commitment to Christ did not and would not remove his bouts of melancholy. By the end of his school career a combination of hard work as an Oxbridge candidate, as headboy, as quartermaster sergeant, as well as intensive religious activity and frequent insomnia led not quite to a full breakdown but to extreme exhaustion. Even in his late teens the clouds of depression, which would haunt him for the rest of his life were beginning to form. His deepening faith provided stability, endurance, and in the words of his favourite poet, Browning, the ability to "welcome each rebuff".

James' lectures on "the sick soul" and "the divided self"(ch.6-8) may also have brought comfort. He would have remembered that as a sufferer he did not stand alone. He was in solidarity with not only the cries of the Psalmist, but also the despair of the likes of Tolstoy, Bunyan and company. The naming and categorizing of different illnesses, with the psychological symptoms and spiritual implications spelt out,

demonstrated they were both common and controllable. Unification and recovery had happened to others, and therefore could happen to Neill. His own illness, even at this early stage, seems not to have driven him inwards, but rather outwards to a more sensitive appreciation of the world of conflict.

One of the most fascinating passages in his unpublished autobiography begins with his description of travelling by train into London at the age of seventeen, the day after the end of the war (12 November 1918) He feels a sense of relief and deliverance. But as he travels through the empty streets of the half-asleep capital, surveying the debris from the "wild revels" of the night before, a new feeling of fear takes root.[83] Once safely inside his room at the Kingsley Hotel, he opened his bible to read:

For though we live in the world we
are not carrying on a worldly war,
for the weapons of our warfare are
not worldly but have divine power
to destroy strongholds.[84]

He emphasizes how struck he was by this extract from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. This is not the pious escapism of a naive teenager, but evidence of a mind both continually soaked in biblical imagery and intent on theological reflection, which forced him to look again at what he observed. He looked and saw more than a city recovering from a corporate hangover; like Robert Bridges he felt some trepidation for Europe. His faith, his own suffering and his agile mind took him both through the

"worldly war" and to further explanations behind it.

In Neill's eyes, there were more sinister forces at work than the Kaiser or the war hungry cries of the bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram. Whilst he did not experience the war first hand like Tillich and Raven, nor lose confidence with his teachers like Barth, nor have his creativity heightened like Owen and Sassoon, he was forced to face the impact of the conflict not simply on his school but also on the nation as a whole.

The confidence and optimism of the late Victorian and Edwardian ages had been shattered. Alan Wilkinson in his excellent impressionistic book on The Church of England and the First World War (1978) argues:

The three major modes of thought in the nineteenth century - Romanticism, Liberalism and Evangelicalism, together with their counterparts in the Church of England - were all weighed in the balances between 1914 and 1918 and found wanting.[85]

But did Neill find his faith inadequate to answer the questions thrown up by the war? Admittedly, he did not make such a volte-face as R.J.Campbell, who had withdrawn his radical and optimistic New Theology (1907), replacing it with essays such as "The Illusion of Progress" (1916). In many ways Neill stands closer to P.T.Forsyth who described the war in The Justification of God (1916) as judgment on a godless civilisation, proving that no evolutionary process could save us, only

redemption provided the answer.

Whilst H.G.Wells's Mr.Britling in the face of the naked power of evil, was forced to question his easy-going liberalism, Neill did not throw over his view of humankind. The regular Anglican liturgy and teaching he received no doubt reinforced belief in his own sinfulness, and underlined a more pessimistic understanding of the human race. These presuppositions he learnt at school would have been reinforced by news from abroad. The war was yet another symptom of living in a sinful world.

Combine this with the huge gulf between school prayers and the horrors of the Front and it is not surprising his belief in God did not radically change as he faced some of the tragedy of war. Rather it was deepened and even strengthened. The reality of conflict, which was brought closer by the loss of friends, sleep and food, made the message of reconciliation and unity more urgent for Neill. His distance from the world of trenches made it easier for him to avoid questions of theodicy and still trust in a providential God.

In short, his school career opened the doors into many new worlds and is a good guide, borrowing H.G.Wells's title, The Shape of Things to Come. He would delight in the world of the classics, explore the world of theology, and work against the world of conflict both in the church and on his own mind. His chief weapons were to be words:

Since earliest childhood I have been fascinated by the sight and sound of words, by

the patterns in which they can be arranged and by the subtleties of meaning that they can express.... Even then I dimly understood the power of the man who can choose and arrange words exquisitely either in speech or in writing.[86]

His early sensitivity to language and his dexterity with words were skills which would stay with him all his life. Even at this early age his linguistic abilities were developing fast.

Nevertheless, his frantic Oxbridge preparation, his desire to learn new languages, his exploration of the civilised discussions of Greek philosophers, and his overall pursuit of academic excellence may have been more than a product of aesthetic enchantment, parental encouragement, school discipline, and Christian duty; perhaps it was also rooted in an unconscious quest for power.

It is open to debate how useful these renaissance skills were in a violent era, where many saw power not in mere words but rather with newly developed tanks and warplanes. Nevertheless it was at school he learnt the basics of duelling with words. A major motivation for later putting these skills to work as a missionary, apologist, historian and professor was his Christo-centric faith.

This "silver thread" of Christo-centric faith, which was put in place by his parents, was first woven by Neill into his life at Dean Close. It was at school that his Christianity came alive and set its roots more firmly in the evangelical

tradition. But even living at Dean Close nestling in Gloucestershire, Neill was by no means isolated from the changing world outside.

If anything he was drawn outwards both in mind and in comment. But he could not escape his own "angst". Whilst his mind was not yet at "the end of its tether" it could be argued that the seeds of discontent were further sown in this regimented, intense all male boarding environment, where "sexual irregularities"[87] were not unheard of. Perhaps the dominant personality of William Flecker, the headmaster, both refracted the evangelical legacy of the school and also ensured a repression even suppression of these tensions.

The terrifying public school world portrayed in the film If... is obviously an anachronistic caricature, but is probably closer to Neill's experience than the romantic black and white images of Good-Bye Mr Chips. The school's competitive atmosphere and emphasis upon sporting excellence also may not have assisted the social development of this brilliant scholar.[88]

In other words, he was equipped to acquire facts, but was less well prepared in terms of practical and personnel skills. Neill worked his way out of this small world, typically breaking academic records and family traditions by going not to Gonville and Caius but to Trinity, Cambridge. Here his horizons would again be expanded, as he stepped into a new world.

Notes on Chapter Two

- 1: D.McKie, The New Cambridge Modern History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), Vol.12 - The Era of Violence. pp.100-124.
- 2: S.C.Neill, Christ, His Church, and His World (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1948), p.12. Hereafter referred to as His Church.
- 3: His Church. p.14.
- 4: The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.32. Hereafter referred to as Int.
- 5: Int. p.2.
- 6: Int. p.2.
- 7: Int. p.4.
- 8: Int. p.4.
- 9: S.C.Neill, Anglicanism (London: Mowbray, 1977 - 1st published by Penguin 1958.), p.264. Hereafter referred to as Ang. For more on Renan, see also Int. pp.193-4, p.199, and p.281.
- 10: Int. p.34.
- 11: Ang. p.271.
- 12: Ang. p.272.
- 13: Ang. p.272.
- 14: S.C.Neill, Autobiography. p.27. (Nearly all references are to the full unpublished manuscript of over 1000 pages [see Preface] This was made available by the kindness of his

literary executor, nephew, and The Revd. Charles Neill of Oxford. Hereafter Neill's Autobiography will be referred to as Auto.

15: Auto. p.165.

16: Auto. p.31.

17: Aubrey Moore, Lux Mundi (First edition, 1880), p.99.

18: Ang. p.272.

19: Charles Neill interviewing Gerald Neill, Stephen's younger brother. (Tape no.2 out of a series of 3 interviews.)

20: Auto. p.19

21: Auto. p.48

22: Owen Chadwick, Victorian England, Pt2. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970), p.423.

23: Ang. S.C.N. quoting Matthew Arnold. p.265.

24: Auto. p.48.

25: Auto. p.29.

26: Auto. p.32.

27: Jack London, People of the Abyss. (London: 1902) passim.

He contrasts the festivities for the Coronation in London's West End with the squalor of the East End.

28: Andrew Mearns. Bitter Cry of Outcast London, An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor. (London: J. Clarke, 1883)

29: C. Booth, Life and Labour of People of London. (Vol.1 of 17, 1889). These three studies [27-29] illustrate various attempts to understand poverty. There is little evidence to suggest that the Neill's family or his own views were influenced by the Christian Socialist Movement with its emphasis upon "collective

responsibility" towards those in need. *Towing to his father's puritanism his upbraiding was probably more stern than many of his contemporaries.*

30: Auto. p.26.

31: Auto. p.30.

32: Auto. p.3.

33: Auto. p.31.

34: Auto. p.51.

35: Auto. p.34.

36: Auto. p.34.

37: Auto. p.2.

38: Auto. p.8.

39: Auto. p.30.

40: S.C.Neill, Colonialism and Christian Missions (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), Hereafter referred to as C.C.M.

41: A.Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London: Macmillan, 1965), p.48, describes the three writers who first used this ironic phrase. H.G.Wells was the one most frequently used by Neill, as an example of a man who had lost his optimistic view of the world. In 1914 he had hopefully written of "the War that will end War".

42: Auto. p.45.

43: Auto. p.46.

44: Auto. p.64.

45: Auto. p.64.

46: R.J.W. Evans, in The First One Hundred Years, Dean Close School 1886-1986. ed. by M.A. Girling and L. Hooper. (Unpublished, 1986), p.6.

47: Auto. p.65. He saw the General Strikes of 1911/12 not as an

"attempt to right civil conditions" but "a declaration of civil war" and an attempt to "blackmail the public." Assuming this is not interpretation after the event it illustrates either parental judgments or extraordinary perception for a twelve year old, perhaps even both.

48: D.L.Edwards, Christian England (London: Collins, 1984), p.358

49: Auto. p.65. The news of the invasion led him to say "tomorrow we shall be at war". The root cause in his eyes was the breaking of a promise.

50: Gerald Neill, described in interview by his son. (2nd interview out of a series of 3.)

51: R.J.W.Evans, The First One Hundred Years, p.29. Over a third of the total number of Old Deaconians fought in the war.

52: A.Hastings, A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985 (London: Collins, 1986), p.19.

53: P.Thompson, The Edwardians. (St.Albans: Granada,1977), p.267.

54: Auto. p.68.

55: Auto. p.68.

56: R.J.W. Evans, in The First One Hundred Years, p.30, describes the apprehension of Flecker for shop-lifting. Whilst he was acquitted on grounds of "mental prostration", he was encouraged to take a term off by the governors. (Autumn 1916.)

57: R.J.W. Evans, in The First One Hundred Years, p.22. Flecker allowed some flexibility, he wrote in the Public Schools' Year Book: "The school is not definitely divided into a classical

and modern side....." Nevertheless, the "modern" disciplines such as the living languages and the sciences were given less emphasis, except for those of lower ability training for vocations in the army and colonial service.

58: Auto. p.45.

59: Auto. p.45. This can be seen in one of his last books: The Supremacy of Jesus (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p.54, describes Plato's art and this final scene in Phaedo.

60: Plato, The Last Days of Socrates Phaedo 117a-118. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), p.183.

61: Auto. p.56.

62: Auto. p.60. T.E.Yates, "Stephen Neill: Some Aspects of a Theological Legacy" in Anvil (Vol 5. no 2 1988), p.151. Yates provides an excellent discussion of the importance of conversion for Neill and a slightly different interpretation of the events themselves.

63: Auto. p.60.

64: S.C.Neill, 'Conversion' in Scottish Journal of Theology (vol 3, no.4 Dec. 1950) p.352.

65: Both Bishop L.Newbiggin and Bishop L.Brown in separate personal interviews commented on his exceptional memory, which allowed him to deliver many lectures without notes. (Jan 1989)

66: R.J.W. Evans, in The First One Hundred Years p.28

67: Int. pp.233-34.

68: Int. pp.201-212.

69: J.W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), using Fowler's terms, Neill does seem to move from (1)

undifferentiated via (2) intuitive and mythic-literal to (3) synthetic-conventional faith. Neill is already beginning to find that a more complex faith structure is needed for a more complex life structure. But he already appears to display signs of stage 4, an individuative-reflective faith, in which he takes seriously responsibility for his own actions.

70: Auto. p.59.

71: Auto. pp.58-9.

72: Auto. p.46.

73: M.Eliade (chief ed.), J.Barzun on 'William James', Encyclopedia of Religion, pp. 517-9.

74: Auto. p. 42.

75: W. James, Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1902, 1925 edition used.) Hereafter referred to as Varieties. p.503

76: ibid. p.526. J.Macquarrie 20th Century Religious Thought(London: S.C.M., 1988. First published:1963) pp.176-9, gives a brief but helpful account of "Pragmatism", including James's contribution.

77: Varieties. pp.166-188.

78: Varieties. p.317.

79: S.C.Neill, "Conversio" in Scottish Journal of Theology. (Vol13, No.4 Dec. 1950), p.352.

80: Auto. p.42. [James' book also probably helped Neill understand his own conversion and see how it could happen to many more than just "the atheists" and "the heathen".]

81: Varieties. p.505.

82: Auto. pp.62-4.

83: Auto. p.79.

84: 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. (R.S.V.)

85: A.Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War.(London: SPCK, 1978), p.231.

86: Auto. p.58.

87: Auto. p.55.

88: Auto. p. 39. ^{At his prep school he} was even unfairly accused of cheating and comments: "I think that this experience did me permanent harm."

He believes his trust in "fellow men" and belief in the

"rationality of the species" was undermined by this experience.

This hyper-sensitive response needs to be examined more closely.

It reflects more than a mature cynicism or a boy who finds

criticism hard to cope with, but also a child brought up in a

home that put great stress upon honesty. This influenced his

academic work where intellectual integrity is an oft repeated

refrain throughout his writing. It is also a good example of

how his experiences at school would inevitably have awakened

him to a world which behaved differently from his protected ^{but peripatetic} family. Interestingly he always retained a great affection for Dean Close, a "stable environment", he says compared with the shifting sands of home life.

Chapter 3: The Great Court of Learning (1919-24)

Chapter One attempted to demonstrate how Stephen Neill was influenced by worlds of change, tradition and conflict. His family, his school and the wider world all played their part in shaping the communicator and his message. This chapter will begin with a brief outline of his five years at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Secondly, his decision to leave Cambridge will be investigated. Then his life as a classical, theological, and research student will be focused on. Finally, his work as "missionary student" working for various Christian student organisations will be investigated.

On first reading, his University record is nothing short of exceptional. In 1922 and 1923 he took Firsts in the Classical and Theological Triposes. He also won a series of prizes and finished his time at Cambridge by gaining a Fellowship at Trinity College. He did this by writing, in only ten months, a 100,000 word thesis on the relationship between the ^{Cappadocian} Fathers and Neoplatonism in the fourth century.

Behind this highly successful academic career lies a less secure figure. The second chapter of his Autobiography entitled "Apprentice Scholar" begins and ends with two self-portraits of a more fallible Neill. He starts this chapter with a description of a "shy and awkward" freshman entering a college of six hundred undergraduates. He ends it with a

moving portrayal of himself alone on a train, waving goodbye, and feeling "very forlorn and lonely" as he heads for India.

In order to understand Neill more fully it is vital to go beyond his "glittering prizes" to such images of apparent vulnerability. These are rare moments of self-revelation. In spite of his attempt to avoid it, much of this chapter from his Autobiography does read like a Who's Who of Cambridge in the twenties. It is as if almost fifty years on the "shy" Neill is still attempting to avoid constructing a "window onto his own soul".

He does this not only by pointing to his own academic success, but also by introducing his readers to over 30 personalities who made an impact on him. Theologians, Classicists, clergy and fellow students dominate these pages. Such encounters, combined with rigorous academic study and zealous Christian activism ensured Neill's five years at Cambridge was another significantly formative period of his life. This chapter will also, therefore, explore how Neill's study, teachers, contemporaries and extra-curricular activities did not destroy, but rather challenged, strengthened and deepened his faith.

His move from the austere Victorian buildings of Dean Close to the spacious courts of Trinity mark much more than a geographical shift. He himself believed that it was in Cambridge that "his theological and religious outlook had to undergo a thorough house-cleaning and resetting"[1] and his Christian faith "became less narrow and less dogmatic".[2]

Whilst both T.S. Eliot and C.S. Lewis were converted in their twenties, Neill's faith was extended.

His desire to live a life of "grateful and adoring service"[3] appears to have been further reinforced. This can be most clearly seen by examining how he finished his time at Cambridge. His decision to give up his hard-earned fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge, is probably the most significant decision he made during his time at University.

Many senior academics thought he made a premature, even foolish end, to a potentially brilliant academic career in Cambridge:

If there is any crime which ought absolutely to debar a man from being elected to a fellowship at Trinity it is that of going to India as a missionary.[4]

A.E.Housman's comment may have been said with a smile, but beneath such dry wit lies obvious astonishment at Neill's decision. Owen Chadwick, who spent most of his life in Cambridge, also describes Neill's leaving "the Great court at Trinity for membership of the Church Missionary Society in South India" as a "surprising decision".[5]

Neill's string of prizes, double First and Fellowship left the door wide open for him to continue his intellectual development within an environment he delighted in. He not only "loved the academic life", but also prospered under the guidance of lecturers[6], the friendship of students[7], the continual intellectual stimulation of debates[8], and the

beauty of Great Court. His descriptions are full of "nostalgic warmth" for Trinity College; even the "very stones" were "dear" to him.[9] The autobiography itself is structured in such a way as to suggest Neill himself thought he was giving up much. For a clearer picture of Neill as the communicator, his crucial decision to leave this "World of learning" needs to be further scrutinized.

He perceives that his move was motivated not by parental pressure, but rather by his own theological conviction. It was his passionate longstanding belief that "Christ must be preached to all men" [10] which appears to have forced him out of the world of Trinity. His faith in a first century figure with twentieth century relevance, which had been conceived at school and nurtured at home, continued to exercise a dominant hold over his decision making even after five years immersion in the world of Cambridge.

The following of the Galilean was far more for Neill than an intellectual exercise. For him "allegiance" to Christ would "cost him many of the things which he held most dear".[11] Whilst for some evangelical missionaries such self-denial became a "raison d'etre", for Neill this sacrifice came from an overriding desire: "Then as now, the thing I cared about far more deeply than anything else was that men and women should be brought to know Christ." [12]

This explanation sums up three pages of analysis in his autobiography of why he became a missionary. Behind what some would see as evangelical clichés, lies the assumption

that men and women without a knowledge of Christ are in a situation of desperate need. This is a dilemma upon which he could, and indeed must make an impact.

How someone is brought to Christ is not made clear from this passage. He is using shorthand to describe a key activity in his own life. It could be argued this drive to persuade was fulfilling a personal need to see his own position validated. It seems more likely to assume such a desire for others to "know Christ" was grounded primarily not in self-justification, but in his yearning to serve. This was still rooted in his own unemotional and personal experience of "knowing" Christ. Whilst he does not explicitly define what it means "to know Christ", it is the unstated assumption throughout the Autobiography that it is this knowledge which motivates him.

If one interprets this passage in such a way, it must be read as more than simply an attempt to put the record straight, or defend his own actions, and even rationalize his own choice to himself. Here also is an implicit attempt to persuade his potential readers that this is a route worth taking themselves. Even if they do not go abroad as missionaries, then at least they will reassess their own priorities. Thus he uses his own life as a hidden question mark not only on the secularism of Housman, but also the reader's own "worldly ambition". The question of how to approach his Autobiography will be more fully discussed in the Conclusion.

This subtle challenge of the readers of his Autobiography has resonances with what he did in 1924. The "dramatic and public" departure, which even "included a meeting in the Examination Hall"[13], also raised an implicit question-mark over the presuppositions and values of those attending his farewell. In short, his action of leaving can be interpreted not only as a "surprising decision", but also an act of simple indirect communication.

The dramatic claim that his desire to bring people to Christ was "the thing he cared for far more deeply than anything" also needs to be scrutinised further. Was this passionate, almost obsessive drive to communicate Christ as surprising as both Housman and Chadwick suggest? His academic studies may have had the potential to undermine his evangelistic zeal, but in reality, they appear to have reinforced his missionary goals.

a) The Classics Student

Scholars such as Ernest Harrison, Francis Cornford and Donald Robertson, facilitated Neill's continued enthusiasm for both the language and thought of ancient Greece and Rome. Whilst it is difficult to discern the exact extent of his teachers' influence, it is clear that he delighted in exploring the worlds of Homer, Aeschylus, Plato and Aristophanes. The classical foundations laid in Cambridge resound through much of his work.[14]

He admits to turning "again and again" to Aeschylus's

Agamemnon seeing in it the "wrestling of a noble spirit with the deepest problems of human destiny." [15] This should not be seen as evidence of an escapist who is happier dealing with historical figures, but rather as an early example of what would become a lifelong habit of using ancient texts to interpret and make sense of his own world.

He himself "never regretted the long years spent in the study of Latin and Greek." [16] This classical study would almost certainly have heightened his passion for words, his interest in rhetoric, and his fascination with history. In less than three years "possibly the most brilliant scholar ever to have come out of Dean Close" [17] had already collected a First in the Classical Tripos.

He also achieved the almost unique feat of gaining a distinction in both the history and philosophy sections, a fact he was proud of. This recurring emphasis on his own academic successes runs parallel in the Autobiography with his tendency to focus on the characters he encountered at Cambridge. Fifty years on, it appears that he was still attempting to win acceptance and recognition not only by the names he could name, but also by underlining his own academic prowess.

b) The Theological Student.

For his fourth year Neill "resisted" doing two years' work on philosophical theology under F.R. Tennant, and instead turned to the New Testament. He explains this decision as based on time (he only had one year to

spare), and laziness, (he claims he already knew much about the New Testament). Neill's study within the Classics Tripos of the "reigns of Claudius and Nero, AD41-65" would also have provided a firm foundation for his study in this area.

Once again, in this branch of academia, it is hard to discern the precise impact of various teachers, though he does speak with warmth about Alexander Nairne who for the later part of Neill's time was the Regius Professor of Divinity. He described him as an "artist and poet" and a man who read the Old Testament "with love and imagination".[18] Neill once even called him "my beloved teacher".[19]

Alan Brooke and F.C. Burkitt as teachers, and ^{E.}Clement Hoskyns as a friend appeared to have aided his concentration upon innovatory approaches to the New Testament. Brooke, for example, beat John Robinson by over half a century, in arguing that the Fourth Gospel could be read as an "independent historical source" for Jesus Christ's life.

During the years that he studied the New Testament in Cambridge he went to "very few lectures". He believed ^e that he was better employed sitting in the corner of his room reading German Theology". (20)

This passion for independ^ent reading combined with respect for many of his teachers suggests how "the boy from a very Biblical quasi-fundamentalist family now felt at ease in a much wider and more liberal divinity." [21] It is

however, important not to over-emphasize the radical nature of Theology which he encountered at Cambridge. In his own eyes the classic tradition of Cambridge New Testament scholarship was characterized by erudition, cautiousness, and devotion. Even if it was a more tumultuous time for British theology than he recognised, this context clearly eased his development, without completely undermining his faith.

It was his own explorations into the world of German Theology which were at first "highly disturbing to this young and pious student".[22] The catalysts for this crisis were the writings of scholars such as Weiss, Meyer and Wrede, but not the form critical works of Bultmann and Dibelius.

Whilst he is not specific as to the precise elements of their works which he found challenging, he does identify "an atmosphere of speculation and radical criticism"[23] which led to his "thorough theological house-cleaning and resetting" described earlier. This process took some time. It was, according to Neill, "without violent explosion" and came by "patient absorption of new ideas".[24] Thus his own positions appear to have been clarified by reading books with which he often radically disagreed.

One exception to this was F.C.Burkitt's The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus Christ. In the middle of Neill's encounters with German theologians, this text prevented him from "losing sight of the One who is the central

figure in the Gospels". This little book refocussed his attention on "the strong and mysterious person who walks through the pages of St.Mark." In the light of this book Neill saw how this short sharp gospel could be read simply as the story of a man.

In short, it brought him back to the texts concerning a first century figure, who continued to ask a twentieth century audience "Who am I?".[25] Thus at a time when the Christo-centric nature of his faith was being challenged, this book underlined for him the humanity and centrality of Jesus. One of the major theological concerns of the nineteenth century was the search for the "Historical Jesus", and more simply the portrayal of Jesus the Man. The quest, which was ignored by his parents, was engaged in by their son, Stephen, in his twenties. Neill describes this discovery of Jesus the Man as striking him with "the force of a revelation".[26]

Another issue at this time was his understanding of the Resurrection. He admits that at this stage he was strongly influenced by a mechanistic view of the Universe, where miracles "cannot and do not happen".[27] Interestingly he describes this as a "darkness of understanding" and draws a comparison with his "darkness of spirit" which also set in at various times whilst at Cambridge. Neill argues that they were brought on for different reasons, but it is hard to believe that they were entirely unconnected. His Autobiography may paint a picture of relatively smooth

development, but in this brief reference to "darkness" lies a hint that Neill struggled to relate parts of his faith with his studies.

The key turning point on the Resurrection came when he saw it as more than simply the resuscitation of a single man. It became for him an event with universal significance. Neill gives no explicit details of the causes or exact occasion of this lateral leap. The only clue is a passing references to Redemption from this World(1922) by A.G.Hogg and The Faith that Rebels by D.S. Cairns which question the prevalent naturalistic view of the Universe. Perhaps Neill's linking of Resurrection and Re-creation found its catalyst in the combination of these books and his re-reading of Romans 8.

In the Autobiography he makes another lateral leap in this section. He moves in the same sentence from this discussion of the Resurrection, to applying it to the individual believer. One feels that it is Neill the mature apologist rather than Neill the undergraduate who argues that:

The Gospel offers not new understanding of self in an unchanged world, but an invitation to adventure in a world in which all things have now become new....[28]

Neill's departure for India demonstrates how seriously he took the invitation to adventure. Whilst his explorations in the world of German theology clearly reshaped his faith,

they ultimately appear to have heightened his Christocentric convictions; which he significantly saw as being rooted in historical events and not myths of the first century. His view of the Resurrection may have developed, but it is clear from the thrust of this section that the individual physical raising of Jesus from the dead at one specific moment in time remained central to his faith.

c) The Research Student

A further impetus which appeared to heighten his desire to communicate into a new culture was his own research. The dissertation he submitted for his Trinity Prize Fellowship was entitled "Plotinus and the Cappadocians. A Comparative Study in Greek and Christian Ideal, in the last centuries of the Ancient World", and is the crowning achievement of his university academic career.

The classicist and the theologian in him joined forces to produce one hundred thousand words by a self-imposed deadline of ten months. For the first and last time work pursued him "into his dreams". The result was illness and a deep distrust of research for its own sake. Nevertheless, he could later write positively of this period: "I have never again in my life worked so hard, but I do not regret the exhausting labour of that expedition into Patristic thought".[29]

For both Henry and Owen Chadwick the significance of this piece of work is that it was a thorough elucidation of

a theory which more "modern technical scholarship has established for certain".[30] It was not until the work of the two continental scholars Paul Henry (1938) and Hans Dehnhard (1964) that it was accepted that "the three 'Cappadocian Fathers', Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, were all, in differing degrees, under the philosophical influence of Plotinus and his pupil Porphyry." [31] Whilst it is valuable to note Neill as ahead of his time, it seems more important to examine both his methods and final conclusions.

Throughout the thesis he is keen "not to treat Christianity as an isolated phenomenon" but rather a "movement which arose and grew in a unique historical situation." [32] Thus in his introduction he places Basil and the two Gregorys on the borderline between the early church and medieval context. For Neill they are "the last great representatives of the Greek tradition in Theology" [33], as they do not ignore Greek thought with the followers of Chrysostom but rather attempt to balance the claims of Christianity with the learning with which they were saturated.

As he explores and contrasts the education system (Chapter 1), the nature of God (Chapter 2), the ascetic ideal (Chapter 3) and the belief in immortality (Chapter 4) he illustrates that whilst it is inevitable that the Cappadocians "should think and speak in Greek and neo-platonic categories", they are continually endeavouring to

interpret a Christian system and striving to construct a Christian philosophy. In his conclusion he attempts to unravel some of their underlying motivations for this course of action. Significantly, much of Neill's life was spent trying to do what the Cappadocians had done, but in different contexts.

First, their pastoral activity, such as the compassionate letters of Basil, written to Jews and Christians within a Hellenistic environment, demanded flexibility in presentation. They attempted, for example, to demonstrate that the Empire and Mystery Cults were surpassed by the Gospel they offered. Interestingly, Neill appears constantly also to have been motivated by an interest in the ordinary non academic person. Later in his ministry, he too aimed to be infinitely flexible in his presentation in order to "bring people to know Christ".

Secondly, it is not surprising therefore that with subtlety he applauds their aim to communicate the Christian message in an intellectually plausible fashion. This too was a trademark of both Neill's later apologetic writings and lectures. Thirdly, for Neill it was their "desire to meet the Greeks on their own ground" and "to bridge the gap between Greek thought and the Church"[34] which led the Cappadocians to make so much use of Greek models. He perceives this "unlimited adaptability" and baptizing of philosophy as the key to the success of the Church over paganism.

Nevertheless, in his Autobiography, written almost half a century later, he does recognize that integration may lead to assimilation and even distortion. Thus the way in which the Cappadocians expressed themselves, did influence, even corrupt, the content of their message. Their sincere desire to express their faith in Christ in an easily accessible fashion, and to "mediate the Gospel to all sorts of people"[35] meant they accepted uncritically the Greek ideas of Apathes (non suffering) and enlightenment. They had failed to discern the differences between the Hebraic and Hellenistic manner of thinking. Ultimately, however, they gain Neill's seal of approval because they maintained a Christo-centric control on their thinking.[36]

This unpublished dissertation may have stretched his health, but it also laid more weighty mental foundations for his attempted communication in India. His mind had already been made up to leave for the sub-continent before he embarked on this thesis, but presumably the study of Christianity in a new environment would have heightened his own awareness of the importance of developing new bridges into old cultures. If his own academic study and his openness to a new set of teachers appears to have widened his faith, it also encouraged his desire to communicate the Christian message in an alien culture.

d) The Missionary Student

This process began for Neill with the Cambridge Mis-

sionary Campaign. Alec Vidler recalls Stephen Neill playing a noticeable role in these campaigns where "between fifty and a hundred undergraduates.....preached in schools, and other places, in the cause of overseas missions." [37] In the following year, 1921, he was overall secretary of the Campaign. This meant co-ordinating the Cambridge teams with the local Tyneside Churches, and speaking at numerous venues.

Typically, in this position, he was keen to ensure that there was no emotional appeal, and "the facts should be allowed to speak for themselves." [38] This early sortée outside the confines of Cambridge is further evidence of his passionate desire to "bring people to know Christ."

This ultimate goal would have been accentuated by being drawn into the "ardour of the C.I.C.C.U." (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union). He was clearly attracted by the "warm and loving fellowship", and understood the key strands of teaching: "the necessity of personal conversion, the obligation to holiness and the duty of Christian Witness". [39] These were all activities which he would recognise as marks of "sound" Christian discipleship.

Nevertheless, through friendship with various S.C.M. (Student Christian Movement) members he was drawn out of "the somewhat narrow, though intimate circle of the C.I.C.C.U into a wider Christian world." [40] Whilst he was surprised to find himself president of the less doctrinally exacting S.C.M., it is further evidence of widening hori-

zons. Both organisations offered the "shy" Neill friendship.

Perhaps more significantly was the fact that the majority of his friends were not Christians. In the shadows of the first World War, where Trinity Cambridge was still mourning the loss of over 600 former undergraduates, the Christian faith was now seen by many as bankrupt.

Part of the reason for this was the close identification of Christianity with the older generation who had been mistaken in so much else, and so were assumed also to be incorrect in this area. Moreover, the established Church was still partly linked with nationalistic forces that had driven many men to their deaths.

These two perceptions of the Christian faith must have further accelerated the marginalisation of Theology as an academic discipline. "The Queen of the Sciences" was seen by many as deposed and irrelevant. The increasingly sceptical atmosphere of Cambridge as well as the questioning agnosticism and atheism of many of his contemporaries was a new experience for Neill. Given his enjoyment of debate, their views would almost certainly have sharpened both his faith and his ability to express it.

Neill believes his experience within the world of learning taught him "patience in pursuit of knowledge", a growing ability to hear the other side, readiness to welcome the "variety" and "splendour" of truth and the importance of kindness.[41] Whilst it must be recognised that

this assessment came in the Autumn of his life, the point he reiterates on a number of occasions is that his own "Christian faith became less narrow". [42]

Nevertheless, the fixed point of his theology continues to be the central figure of the New Testament. The Matthean command to "go and make disciples of all nations" was also reinforced by his study, his teachers and his wider experiences. In the light of these influences and the worlds he had grown up in, his departure to communicate in India is less of a surprise than at first sight.

Notes on Chapter Three.

- 1: Auto. p.164.
- 2: Auto. p.207.
- 3: Auto. p.60.
- 4: Auto. p.204.
- 5: O. Chadwick, "Stephen Charles Neill, 1900-84" Proceedings of the British Academy. (London: Vol LXXI, 1985), p.605.
- 6: Auto. p.108.
- 7: Auto. p.115.
- 8: Auto. p.206.
- 9: Auto. p.206.
- 10: Auto. p.184.
- 11: Auto. p.185.
- 12: Auto. p.186.
- 13: O.Chadwick, "Stephen Charles Neill, 1900-84" p.605.
- 14: S.C.Neill, The Supremacy of Christ. (London, Hodder and Stoughton) In this book, which was published in the last year of his life, Greek philosophers continue to play a prominent part. Plato, for example, appears over half a dozen times.
- 15: Auto. p.150. *(The Agamemnon centres on patricide. This may be significant given his ambivalent attitude to his father.)*
- 16: Auto. p.148.
- 17: M.A.Girling, "Bishop S.C.Neill. In Memoriam" (Jan 1985, No.264), p.1. Decanian.
- 18: Auto. p.156.

- 19: O.Chadwick, "Stephen Charles Neill, 1900-84", p.604.
- 20: Auto. p.162.3. [As a classics student he attended more lectures. For Neill, the "major advantage of listening to lectures of the really learned, was the experiences of observing great minds grapple with reflecting material".
Auto. p.115.]
- 21: O.Chadwick, "Stephen Charles Neill, 1900-84", p.605.
- 22: Auto. p.164.
- 23: Auto. p.165.
- 24: Auto. p.166.
- 25: Auto. p.166.
- 26: Auto. p.166.
- 27: Auto. p.167.
- 28: Auto. p.167.
- 29: S.C.Neill, "Jesus and History" in The Truth of God Incarnate. ed M.Green. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), p.87.
- 30: O.Chadwick, "Stephen Charles Neill, 1900-84".
- 31: P.Henry, Les Etats du texte de Plotin.(Paris, 1938) and H.Dehnhard, Das Problem der Abhängigkeit des Basilus von Plotin (Berlin, 1964)
- 32: S.C.Neill, "Plotinus and the Cappadocians - A Comparative Study in Greek and Christian Ideal, in the last centuries of the Ancient Worlds." (Cambridge: Trinity College, 1924), p.2. [This unique text was kindly made available by Charles Neill in Oxford.]
- 33: id. p.29.

34: id. p.274.

35: Auto. p.192.

36: S.C.Neill, The Church and Christian Union. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.135, p.148, and most explicitly on p.142.

37: A.Vidler, Scenes from a Clerical Life. (London: Collins, 1977), p.32.

38: Auto. p.138.

39: Auto. p.126. For a comprehensive history of C.I.C.C.U. see J.C. Pollock's A Cambridge Movement (London: John Murray, 1953). He argues that one of the pressing problems facing C.I.C.C.U. in the post-war period (1918) was that of the relationship of S.C.M. "Intellectually one of the most brilliant (students) of this time", Neill^{also} bridged the divide by being both the C.I.C.C.U. college representative and S.C.M. president (p.214). It was not uncommon for students at that time to be members of both C.I.C.C.U. and the S.C.M.

40: Auto. p.130. See also Tissington Tatlow, The Story of the S.C.M. (London S.C.M., 1933). Tatlow makes no explicit mention of Neill's involvement in the S.C.M. He does, however, paint a graphic picture of the Cambridge Mission (1920) which "stirred the University to its depths". (p.644-5.) Neill's description of the Mission (Auto p.132ff.) illustrates his growing appreciation both of other traditions and thought-provoking evangelism. For another evaluation of this 1920 Mission see Douglas Johnson's

Contending for the Faith : A history of the Evangelical
Movement in the Universities & Colleges (Leicester : IVP,
1979) p.714 Johnson focuses particularly on C.I.C.C.U'S
largely "unsuccessflul" contribution.

41: Auto. p.207.

42: Auto. p.207.

Chapter 4: India, His first Love(1924-30)

My missionary parents Dr. Charles Neill (+ 1949) and Dr. Margaret Penelope Neill (+ 1951) carried me off to India in 1901. Since that time India has been at the very heart of my concerns and emotions.(1)

For Neill the Indian Sub-continent had a magnetic pull, which found its strength not simply in Theology but also in his experience at home. This chapter will attempt to plot the course of his life between 1924-30, the majority of which was spent in India as a missionary. In the following chapter his work both as a teacher and a bishop will be discussed.

At both of these narrative stages three primary questions will be posed: How did he express himself? In what way did he express himself? And why did he express himself? Hopefully such an analysis of the methodology he employed will cast light both on the content of and the reason for his communication. Furthermore, it should help explain why he acted in the way that he did. The key primary source material for the following two chapters are his private and official letters, his autobiography, his early published books and a number of secondary references.

a) Passage to India

During these early years his life, his study, his preaching and his openness to learn new methods all shed light on "how" he expressed himself. His departure from the safe, the known and the comfortable world of Trinity into the unknown territory of Southern India speaks more loudly than many of his sermons. It is easy to identify with Neill's feelings of loneliness and trepidation as he sets off for India.

Typically he makes little of such emotions in the Autobiography, and is quickly entertaining his readers with a thorough ecclesiastical history of Tinnevelly. He places his own autobiographical details within this wider context. Thus he is implicitly claiming a small but significant place within the historical drama of the South Indian Church.

So he encourages his readers not only to see the author's but also their own life and work in a much wider context. He employs this technique throughout the Autobiography, but it is most noticeable in the opening chapters. Here he is attempting to make sense of his own actions as well as underlining that whilst his role may initially have been anonymous, it was not without some importance. The specific autobiographical information has therefore to be sifted out from a plethora of descriptive and historical material.

He spent most of his first four years in Tinnevelly diocese located ^{with} in the Madras Presidency, now known as Tamil Nadu. Much of this time was taken up with attempting to heal ancient divisions in the Church, leading services, taking part

in itinerant evangelistic work, and learning Tamil. In the midst of this whirlpool of activity he found time to begin his writing career with "a simple introduction to the New Testament" entitled: How Readest Thou?(2) This would be the first of nearly fifty books.

b) The Missionary Ordained

He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Tinnevely in 1926, and priest by the Bishop of Ely whilst on furlough in 1928. He had enrolled at the Clergy Training School (now Wescott House) during his last year in Cambridge, so was not required to do any further residential training.

His calling and ordination as deacon are described in the third chapter of his Autobiography in a low key fashion. He was ordained not because of a blinding revelation or a overwhelming inner conviction, rather because his Bishop strongly advised him to do so. This was simply a pragmatic step to facilitate his service of the Indian Church.

Ironically the evangelical Neill may have had a non-sacramental view of the priesthood, but in terms of obedience to the Bishop and identification of him with the Church itself he displays a less pragmatic attitude. In other words, the Church in South India was more than simply a "boat to fish from" or "platform to speak on."

It was for Neill the location of some residual authority, but not final authority. Thus at the end of Chapter Three of the Autobiography he writes he has always thought ^{that} "the voice of the Church is a voice to which the Christian must

listen with the most careful attention," but in his eyes the Christian was not always "pledged to obey it".[3] Neill's ecclesiology would develop further when he left India. Nevertheless, his obedient attitude towards the Church and its leaders explains why he often taught in places he would rather not have been in, such as Nazareth (S.India) and Alwaye.

The reason why he disliked these locations was because Neill saw himself as a "front-line" missionary, he had little desire to be a "missionary to Christians". Hence he was frustrated when, on his return to India, he taught in Travancore at the Union College, Alwaye. His letters from this time reveal sadness at being away from Tinnevelly and frustration with his new home on the Malabar coast. "The teaching of English in a merely passable College is about the most desolating form of intellectual self-immolation which I can conceive."(4)

He felt unfulfilled, as he did not see this as a sphere where he could put his "many years of linguistic training", his "interest in theology" and his "passionate desire for the building up of the church" into use.(5) His return to missionary and parochial work for two years in Tinnevelly clearly allowed some of these gifts to be put to better use.

c) The Missionary's Methods

Whilst working in these dioceses of Tinnevelly and Travancore (1924 to 1930) he threw himself into comprehending South Indian culture. In the same way that he had immersed himself in the world of the Cappadocian Fathers, so he now

directed his energies into learning Tamil and exploring some parts of the multi-faceted world of Hinduism.

On one level studying works such as the Rig Veda, as well as various texts of Bhakti devotion satisfied an apparently insatiable intellectual curiosity for new discoveries; thus it is not surprising that "the mature knowledge of an ancient people"(6) reflected in a language that had been spoken for over 2000 years would hold his fascination.

On another level he came from a family where it was "taken for granted that, where you are, you learn the language of the people."(7) It would be fair to assume that there was a utilitarian goal in sight: to express Christian truth more effectively both within and outside the church. This certainly appears to be his primary motive for learning Malayalam whilst at Alwaye.

In his Autobiography he cites a number of problems of communication, but nearly all are associated with specifically Christian didactic or kerygmatic activities.(8) These included the mistranslation of biblical texts into Tamil and an initial inability to bridge the conceptual gulf between the Indian and Western mind.

Numerous secondary commentators underline his attempts to overcome these difficulties by his speedy mastery of Tamil.(9) His conquest of a language with some 1,330 distichs highlights both his facility at learning languages and the importance he associated with gaining control over a new means of expression.

Whilst as a Tamil speaker he stood in the tradition of

bishops from another generation (Sargent and Caldwell), he also isolated himself from some of his colleagues by what they saw as delving too deeply into the world of Tamil. He was, for example, criticised for reading a Tamil legend. His defence is illuminating, as he argues that a "good knowledge of Hindu Tamil was essential for the work I hoped to do" because he saw himself as coming to India as a "missionary to non-Christians".(10)

As an intellectual adventurer his explorations of the "endless world of Tamil poetry"(11) are not surprising. Nevertheless, these studies once again appear to have been motivated by a desire to understand the culture better in order to communicate more effectively.

This methodology is most clearly set out in Out of Bondage: Christ and the Indian Villager (1928).(12) He begins in Chapter One by painting a vivid picture of the Indian Village. He then attempts in Chapter Two to go beneath the externals, and step inside the mind of the Indian villager. His conclusions are pejorative, for he uncovers "confused masses of unregulated and unmastered experiences"(13) and a "farrago of evil and sheer unreason."(14)

The criteria he uses to make such harsh judgements are not explicitly stated. His implicit assumption is that the villagers general sense of "fear" is a symptom of a disordered world view. The young Neill makes here a classic error of using his own "ordered" Western world view to judge another less familiar culture. As an older man Neill would not have

negated their position so comprehensively.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this "chaos", he identifies a number of elements of truth which can be "turned to the service" of the missionaries' work. The triangle of "one supreme God, the universal fact of conscience and a striving for life after life"(15) are all seen as points which can assist in the delivery of the message.

His approach can be summarised by the statement that "successful preaching to simple people demands long and patient study of their minds and of the thoughts that they can grasp."(16) The method employed here, therefore, is first to acknowledge the huge gap between the preacher and his audience, and then to identify common themes and use them as bridges by which the "citadel of Hinduism" can be stormed.(17) The implicit assumption is that Christianity brings order and harmony over this world of apparent chaos.

Neill makes clear that he employed a variety of methods of expression; but his central tool was preaching. He adopted a variety of styles to suit a number of different contexts: from an hour in the early morning for workers on their way to work, via a ten minute story in the marketplace with the aid of simple pictures, to a short homily in a Hindu house.(18) According to Neill, the use of such visual aids once drew crowds of as many as a thousand weavers outside a mill.(19) Perhaps also he underrates the drawing power of a white face using Tamil which would have been rarely seen or heard in this area. X

It is debatable just how successful he was in his work. For example, in retrospect he believed that he preached "far above the heads" of his hearers, because it took time for him to "forget his abstract way of thinking and realise the limitations of his hearers' range of experience." (20) Neill slowly recognised that many of his more academic tools that had won him prizes in Cambridge were of little immediate use now in Southern India. Thus the abstract Greek discussions of Plotinus and the Cappadocians had no direct link with Neill's attempts to express himself in this new context.

His communication skills were aided by the American Methodist missionary, Dr. E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973). This well-known travelling lecturer, author and missionary, described by Neill as a "highly eloquent and skilled speaker", (21) did not simply deliver his message and leave, but he also encouraged discussion and even debates afterwards. His aim was to encourage his listeners to think and not force them to an immediate conclusion. This can be most clearly seen by the setting up of Christian Round Table Conferences, some of which Neill attended. The object of these discussions was not conversion, at least in any immediate sense of that term, but information and mutual enlightenment". (22)

Whilst it has been noted elsewhere how Neill's participation in these discussions would further provoke him to dialogue with the non Christian world (23), it is also worth underlining that Jones helped Neill within an alien Hindu culture "to present a Christian message without giving unneces-

sary offence".(24) At this early stage he was therefore slowly learning how to woo an Indian audience.

Take for example the use of the medical missionary to draw a crowd for the preachers and catechists. His aim here was not simply to capture an audience, but also to provoke a set of questions, such as: "What is at the root of all this love and service?" which would then point the questioner to "Him whose name is Love". Thus the practical care of the doctors would speak loudly of the "Love of God" as practised by His Son.(25)

What, however, was implicit in their actions was to be made explicit by the itinerant preacher. The aim of such preaching was to go beyond a general awareness of the "Love of God" to a specific knowledge of His Son; or in Neill's own words, the goal was "that people should get a picture of Jesus".(26) For Neill therefore, this first century preacher was at the heart of his own implicit and explicit expression.

d) The Missionary's Message

The variety of methods employed and sacrifices he was prepared to make highlight the importance he placed upon this message. But it was more than simply the "man" Jesus who was at the heart of his communication; it was also Christ the "conqueror of demons" who was presented.(27) This secondary emphasis upon the supernatural character of Jesus points not only to Neill's own beliefs, but also to a growing sensitivity towards his audience.

In Neill's eyes the Indian villager was trapped by fear of evil spirits, (28) and thus it is not surprising he emphasised this particular strand of the Gospel tradition. For here he had discovered a bridge between his message rooted in the first century and his Indian audience in the twentieth.

His mature reflections on this process are illuminating. Whilst he does not spell out the precise contents of the message in his Autobiography, he does criticise those colleagues who had focused too much on the material advantages of following the man from Galilee.

Ironically, his chapter on these six years builds up to a crescendo where he attempts to justify his work by arguing that "the knowledge of Christ is the pearl beyond price". (29) This language is also to be found in Out of Bondage where the appeal of Christ echoes throughout the pages. Such a comparison demonstrates that one fixed point within his theology was his Christo-centric faith.

The nature of this faith can be seen more clearly by investigating how he perceived there being a "conflict between custom and Christ". (30) To borrow Niebuhr's categories Neill at this time was operating primarily within the framework where Christ is set against culture. There are rare glimmers of a more positive approach which perceives Christ as the transformer of society, and even operating with culture. So for example, in the core chapters of Out of Bondage he looks at how to improve the school (Chapter 4), the village (Chapter 5) and the Church (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, a theme which echoes

throughout the book is the head on clash between Christ and certain aspects of the Indian Culture.

Towards the end of his life, books such as Crises of Belief (1984) illustrate how he had learnt to listen more carefully to alien cultures and avoid the pejorative language which seeps into his earlier works, though he does continue to speak of the "two great forces of Hinduism and the Christian Gospel" which "confront each other".(31)

Thus at both the start and finish of his career he made no attempt to syncretize the core content of his faith. Owen Chadwick's criticism that he did not allow this Indian world to seriously "interrogate" his faith is particularly valid through these early years of his career.(32)

A further criticism which could be levelled at Neill is his comparative indifference to the poverty which he regularly encountered. This can be highlighted by a comparison with the comments of Malcolm Muggeridge who stayed with Neill at Christmas 1925.(33) Whilst Muggeridge was shocked by the lack of medical care that led to the premature death of many villagers, Neill appears more perturbed by the spiritual poverty surrounding him.(34)

Neill's perception of disease, drink and debt merely as symptoms of a deeper theological malaise could be used as evidence of his apparent disinterest in the material world. One could go further and argue that Neill, like many of the Greeks he studied, held onto a Platonistic world view. Such an explanation of Neill however, must be qualified by the fact that he

wholeheartedly supported the work of medical missionaries who inevitably focused on the material world.

Neill's ultimate goal was not physical healing, but rather that all would have some "knowledge of God." (35) Here, then, were two bright Cambridge graduates faced with the same scenarios, but making apparently contrasting diagnoses. Their perception and interpretation of reality was shaped not simply by the surrounding environment, but also by their own distinctive beliefs.

e) The Missionary's Motivation

An examination of Neill's methods and central content leads naturally to a key explanatory question. Why was he so strongly motivated to express this particular message? The closing appeal of Out of Bondage may be directed at his readers, but it is obviously grounded in his own experience:

When a man by constant contemplation of the passion and the resurrection of our Lord, finds himself so inflamed with the love of God and man that he cannot bear the thought of any man living and dying without the knowledge of God, he may begin to bear the cross of Christ. If, as he bears it, this longing for the glory of God and the salvation of all men becomes so great that it fills all his thoughts and desires, then he has the one thing without which no man can truly be a messenger of Christ. (36)

This key passage is strong evidence to support the case that Neill was motivated not by cultural imperialism, nor Neo-Platonism but by a passionate belief in God's love which was expressed most clearly through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

His reflection upon these salvific acts compelled him to look out towards those who had no knowledge of their significance. As he perceived such ignorance or even rejection of this ultimate act of love, he began to identify with some of the pain of the cross. This participation in the suffering of the passion led him not to introverted bitterness or despair, but rather to an almost obsessive desire to proclaim the news of "salvation". In short he saw himself as a rescuer who himself had been rescued.

If one takes this perception of reality into account, it is not surprising that he saw spiritual poverty and ignorance as the most pressing needs. In order to assist the poor he was "compelled" to communicate the One who could alleviate the disease of sin, the entrapment of fear and the darkness of ignorance. His emphasis upon the preached and taught word illustrate how he believed that the spoken word was able to be used by God to bring healing.

His struggles to communicate effectively reflect not a lack of confidence in this method, but rather a concern to be the best messenger or mediator that he could be of this universal message. The model employed at this stage can therefore be seen as A passes X on to B, rather than A and B discover more

about X through their mutual discoveries. Perhaps this model is partially due to Neill's background where the lecturer, teacher, or preacher primarily passed on their particular gems of wisdom in a formal spoken context. It also illustrates further how Neill perceived God's own method of revelation.

Three examples from this period should suffice to illustrate his understanding of God's revelation. First, the energy he put into his "Simple Introduction to the New Testament" How Readest Thou?, as well as the huge amount of work he invested in translating the Tamil Bible underline how he saw the biblical tradition as fundamental to God's own expression.

Second is his justification of using medical missionaries. Obviously there was the pragmatic consideration that it drew a crowd, but Neill placed far more significance upon the example of Christ. For He had sent out His disciples to heal first and then to preach. Neill does not attempt to imitate Christ's example in its entirety, as he had neither medical training or the gift of healing. His overall hope, as stated earlier, was that a general following of Christ's life would result in new sets of questions being asked, which would ultimately point to the "love of God". Such use of the life of Christ as the model to follow demonstrates not only Neill's persuasive skills, but also is further evidence of the priority he gave to God's revelation through Jesus.

A third example lies with his interpretation of Indian Culture. Was his study of this world in any way motivated by a belief that God had communicated outside the traditional

Christian framework? It is hard to discover any firm evidence from his early years which would permit a definite affirmative answer. He does admit that "God had not left himself without witness" even "amongst the poorer folk of India." (38) This statement appears to echo Romans 1 more than a delight in discovering of God's revelation within the multi-faceted Indian culture.

His epistemological framework is, therefore, grounded within a Western Christian tradition. In short, a circle of communication emerges whereby the biblical tradition highlights the light of Christ, who in turn points to the Father. It is this circle which Neill would attempt to explain and encourage people to step into.

This is further reason why he was unhappy to narrow the circle into a simple transportable package to be proclaimed, as "the measure of a church's evangelistic activity is not the number of addresses given, nor the number of Gospels sold but rather the total impact of the church on the whole non-Christian community by which it is surrounded." (39)

This is a useful reminder of Neill's breadth of vision for communication. It was more than one individual to another individual, it was also one community to another community. Partly for this reason he would invest more and more energy in building up the church. In many ways this early period in India was merely a training period, where he further developed his skills of expression which were so necessary for the rigours of theological teaching and episcopal duties.

Notes on Chapter Four

- 1: S.C.Neill, A History of Christianity in India Part 1. (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), Preface. p.xi.
- 2: S.C.Neill, How Readest Thou? A simple introduction to the New Testament. (London: S.C.M. 1985).
- 3: S.C.Neill, God's Apprentice. (ed. E.M.Jackson) (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p.118.
- 4: S.C.Neill, Letter from "Union Christian College, Alwaye, Travancore." Nov 5th 1928. (At Birmingham University Library, C.M.S. holdings. Unpublished. 1929.), p.2.
- 5: ibid. p.2.
- 6: Auto. p.220.
- 7: Auto. p.225.
- 8: Auto. p.225.
- 9: Bp.Leslie Brown, "Stephen Charles Neill" Sermon at Memorial Service (31st Oct 1984), p.2. He recounted a story, confirmed by Bp.Lesslie Newbigin, where Neill saved the day for a Senior Indian Civil Servant by translating his lectures from English into "fluent, beautiful, absolutely correct Tamil".
(See also O.Chadwick in "Proceedings....." [1984], and O.Scallan, The Supremacy of Christ "Inter Religious Dialogue in the Writings of Bishop Stephen Neill" [1987]) p.48.
- 10: Auto. p.238-9.
- 11: Auto. p.259.
- 12: S.C.Neill. Out of Bondage. Christ and the Indian Villager.

(London: Edinburgh House Press, 1928), Hereafter O.B.

13: O.B. p.21.

14: O.B. p.31.

15: O.B. p.34.

16: O.B. p.42.

17: O.B. p.117.

18: O.B. p.43.

19: Auto. p.275.

20: Auto. p.274.

21: S.C.Neill. Salvation Tomorrow. (London: Lutterworth, 1976)
p.26 [Hereafter referred to as S.T.]

22: S.T. p.26.

23: O.Scallan. The Supremacy of Christ. Inter Religious
Dialogue in the Writings of Bishop Stephen Neill. (Dublin:
Unpublished M.Phil. 1987) p.28-9.

24: Auto. p.265.

25: S.C.Neill. O.B. p.39.

26: O.B. p.41.

27: O.B. p.51.

28: O.B. p.31.

29: Auto. p.323.

30: O.B. p.52.

31: S.C.Neill, Crises of Faith (London: Hodder and Stoughton,
1984) p.323.

32: O.Chadwick, Proceedings... p.605.

33: I.Hunter, M.Muggeridge : A Life. (London: Collins, 1980)
p.49. I am indebted to O.Scallan's thesis on the Supremacy of

Christ for this reference. (Cited earlier)

34: O.B. p.21 and p.31.

35: O.B. p.135.

36: O.B. p.135.

37: O.B. p.49.

38: O.B. p.116.

Chapter 5: Heat and Dust in India (1930-44)

He had that gift, of all gifts the most necessary for a missionary in India, tenacity. Through loneliness, depression, and not infrequent illness, he held on, and at his death left behind a cohesive and well-ordered church. He must be reckoned among the great pillars of the Indian Church.[1]

Neill wrote this about a sixteenth century French Jesuit missionary Henry Henriques.(1520-1600) Much of what he says could also be applied to his own experience in India. He too "held on" tenaciously through recurring bouts of depression. Details of his condition are most explicitly described in his Autobiography. For instance he writes that in 1926 "it was as if the lights went out"[2], and he even draws some parallels with the Danish theologian Kierkegaard who often felt "like a man feverishly treading water".[3]

Both these comments come from the mature Neill, who with the benefit of hindsight was able to analyse his psychological condition with greater objectivity. But even forty years on he confines almost all these self-diagnostic remarks to the first chapter of his Autobiography. The reason why he seems almost embarrassed to talk about these feelings will be ex-

plored in the next chapter.

Repression of such feelings is also to be found in his annual C.M.S. letters. There are however, occasional glimpses of his frustrations. For instance he describes 1936-7 as "a most difficult and painful year" where "the colours of life are sombre".[4] Four years earlier the Bishop of Tinnevelly describes Neill as "highly strung constantly on the verge of over-work and an over-strained nervous system." [5]

His continuous struggle with insomnia was probably both a cause and a symptom of his stress. A picture, therefore, emerges of a man who suffered from recurring endogenous (as opposed to reactive) depression.[6] Whilst, it is difficult to assess the exact impact of such internal storms, it is important to identify this tension as the hidden background to his work whilst in India. His enigmatic "tenacity" in spite of such anguish will be discussed later.

This chapter, whilst bearing this recurring internal turmoil in mind, will first focus upon his work as a theological educator (1930-9) and secondly as the Bishop of Tinnevelly (1939-44). This will be followed in both sections by a closer examination of methods, contents and explanations of his communication. During these fourteen years he produced eight published books, from the didactic history of Builders of the Indian Church (1933) via Foundation Beliefs (1942) to The Challenge of Jesus Christ (1944).

This productivity and variety is doubly impressive if one considers not only his psychological state, but also the lack

of library resources available to Neill. At this stage he was first and foremost a verbal communicator, as the majority of these written works were born out of spoken lectures or sermons. Eyewitness accounts suggest that in the lecture room or in the pulpit he was in total control of his material, often eloquently speaking without notes.[7]

It is crucial to recognize the dichotomy between the private troubled soul and the brilliant public orator, as perhaps some of the roots of his genius as a communicator are to be found in this tension. A number of questions are raised by these contrasting sides of the same life, and will be tackled tangentially in this chapter.

First, is it conceivable that the acceptance that he missed in an intimate relationship, he subconsciously sought as he wooed his audiences explicitly to Christ, and perhaps implicitly to himself? Or to put it more harshly did he need the arm of recognition to protect him from his own insecurities?

Secondly, does his comparative intellectual isolation, after the busy academic world of Cambridge, explain his preoccupation with education? Thirdly, does his work in India as a teacher, evangelist and bishop find its ultimate explanation in Neill's own character or is this but one element in a far more complex mosaic? In short, are his greatest strengths rooted in and explained by his weaknesses?

a) Theological Teacher (1930-39)

For eight and a half years theological teaching was my daily and hourly concern...as the fate of village teachers and catechists, more than a thousand of them, always lay heavy on my heart.[8]

Neill's desire to train local Christian leaders found expression in his efforts to improve the education system in Southern India. This is the most common theme running through ten years of C.M.S. letters. It is clear from these annual letters that theological education did indeed "lay heavy on his heart".

The majority of his time was taken up by work as warden at the Bishop's theological college, Tirumaraiur (the village of holy revelation), Nazareth. This commitment illustrates how important he saw theological education in the building up of individual Christians and the wider Church.

At the International Missionary Conference in Madras (1938) he was responsible for the "Report on the Training of the Indigenous Ministry" which argued that the present condition of "theological education is one of the greatest weaknesses in the whole Christian Enterprise." [9] This concern for theological education would become a passion here in India as well as later in both East and West Africa.

Some would argue that his teaching method in the classroom could ultimately be traced to the theological ^{+ pedagogical} revolutions for

which Luther set the foundations.[10] The mature Neill perceived that his objective was to help "students to cross the bridge from a pre-critical to a critical attitude towards theology." [10] As a teacher he apparently flew in the face of traditional missionary teaching methods by avoiding the use of sermon material or dictation notes; his aim was to help students "think for themselves" [11] and so make "their own discoveries". [12]

Beneath this didactic objective was a pastorally sensitive concern to challenge fundamentalist views without destroying his pupil's faith. He attempted to do this by starting with Paul, the prophets and the book of Judges. Here form and historical critical tools could be used without precipitating a crisis of faith. The implicit assumption of such a method is that as students matured they would be more able to discern both the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches to the biblical text.

On these foundations, they would then be able to grow up into a more balanced approach to the gospels and engage in what Neill saw as the fundamental quest for the historical Jesus. This was central for Neill, as can be seen in his books from this period, because his faith in Christ depended on the Jesus of the gospels originating primarily from historical event rather than communal myth.

Neill had managed to hold onto the "mysterious figure" from Galilee without ignoring the critical study of the Gospels. Thus his own escape from his fundamentalist background

was a gradual voyage of discovery, as opposed to an iconoclastic rejection of his past. Throughout he held firmly to his relatively simple faith in Jesus as the Christ. His teaching methods and goals illustrate the desire that his students should develop in a similar fashion.

Education for Neill was therefore more than widening horizons and promoting the search for truth. It had pastoral as well as academic ramifications. He was attempting to walk a tightrope between promoting the extreme approaches of narrow fundamentalism and continual scepticism.

Throughout his life he also came down on the side of what could be called a distinctively Christian approach to education and history. Thus in 1932 he admits to choosing church history as the base to his theological course in order to develop "a sense of the living power of God shaping the history of the church through all histories." [13]

This belief in the providence of God working through history is a significant and recurring theme in Neill's thought, and will be further explored. His teaching methods may have been influenced by pragmatic considerations, such as having to teach in Tamil in order to communicate effectively, but they were often strongly influenced by his own Christian reading of history.

For instance his book on Builders of the Indian Church (1933) sheds further light on both his methods and his underlying objectives. The sub-title "Present Problems in the Light of the Past" neatly summarizes a book which "looks forward as

well as back".[14] Here Neill uses mostly Western figures from the past, such as Robert de Nobili and William Carey, to teach the Indian Church in the twentieth century. In short, yesterday has many lessons to teach the Church today.

At times such a method is in danger of slipping into subtle Western colonialism which does not fully recognise the contribution of Indians to the building of their own church. Nonetheless, he does highlight the life of Bishop Azariah, one of India's leading bishops in the early twentieth century. But given both his reliance on written records and his own colonial background, his focus on Western leaders was perhaps inevitable.

The unstated theological assumption which underlies much of the book is that God is the unseen organiser and architect of history. This "salvation history" can and should be discovered by a careful reading of various saints' lives. Such historical interpretations lead to a theological conclusion that "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus and Him crucified and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake".[15]

Thus the preacher Neill attempts to persuade his audience. He does it through a certain reading of history. He also hopes his audience will view history in the light of Christ and on the basis of this vision change their own methods, contents and motives for preaching.

His skilful use of history as a rhetorical device, with which he hopes to persuade his audience to his own understanding, illustrates how his Christo-centric beliefs shaped

much of his teaching. He saw that effective education could ultimately "indoctrinate" (non-pejorative sense) his students into a deeper understanding of "Christ crucified". This does not however fully explain why he put so much emphasis upon education.

A further strand of explanation is to be found in a forceful, persuasive but ultimately unsuccessful letter written in 1928 on "The Future of Christian Education in India"[16] to the Church Missionary Society. He argues that the changing situation in India demands a "new policy" based on a "wide and statesmanlike conception of what Christian education is." [17] Neill saw, with the scholastics, Theology as the Mother of the Sciences, as it was the "essential link binding together all forms of knowledge." [18]

Hence in his eyes rigorous theological education would provide a truly Christian framework by which to make sense of the Universe. In the light of these beliefs it is not surprising that he concluded ambitiously there should be a "United Christian University" where both churches from the East and West would co-operate and so set a "standard for Southern India." [19] Nor, therefore, is it surprising that he invested so much energy in setting up a theological college and maintaining it as Warden.

The sheer diversity of his teaching matter speaks not only of missionary pragmatism, but also of a breadth of theological knowledge. In India he admits to teaching "Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Doctrine, Church History, Pastoralia, and

the Religion of India and Greece." [20] There is no obvious unifying factor to this diverse array of subjects, ^{except perhaps he had learnt them himself.} The immediate conclusion is that Neill's world of theology was, even at this early stage, far wider than biblical texts and a simple proclamation of "Christ crucified".

This breadth of vision is also illustrated by his interest in global current affairs. As a teacher he did not wish to become so obsessed with his work that he lost touch with the world outside India. Thus he regularly read The New Statesman, The Spectator and The Manchester Guardian, to be aware of the wider shifts of history. [21]

In a short book The Remaking of Men in India (1934) he parallels the mass movements in society at large with those within the Church. Both his research and his writing suggest, therefore, that Neill did not perceive God limited to working and revealing Himself through the narrow bounds of church history, but was in some way involved in national and international affairs. At this stage his understanding of the exact relation between the Church's and the World's history is not made clear.

Nevertheless, in Annals of an Indian Parish (1934) he still perceived the "church as a small island in a vast ocean of Hinduism". [22] This perception partly explains why he continued to put so much emphasis upon evangelism. In his C.M.S. newsletters, for example, he always heads one of his three sections "Evangelistic Work". Invariably this section is coloured by frustration at being unable to fulfil his role in

this sphere.

It is significant that he describes his lectures to a mixed audience of Moslems and Hindus at Tuticorin (1938/9) in almost euphoric terms: "In all my years in India I have never been more privileged to do anything more genuinely useful." [23] These series of apologetic lectures took on a typically non-confrontational style. His obvious enthusiasm for such an event illustrates both how much he enjoyed being stretched as a communicator and how committed he was to evangelistic activity.

Whilst there are no records of these lectures, another more weighty set have been preserved and published in Beliefs (1939) which he delivered at the Kodaikanal Missionary Conference in 1937:

If these lectures are to be of any use, I must try and forget the terrifying spectacle of an audience of missionaries, and concentrate my thought on the liberating work of Christ. [24]

This statement needs to be qualified with his own admission that he was "very sensitive indeed to the feel of an audience". [25] He undoubtedly found it difficult to forget his audience, though perhaps this sensitivity strengthened his ability as a communicator. There is, from this child of Victorian evangelicalism, typically little reference to his own experience in these lectures. Here Neill the teacher and the evangelist echo through the text as he elucidates the second half of the Apostles' Creed.

Two key words could be used to summarize the content of the book: Participation and Integration. He continually emphasises how God has participated in the world and involved Himself in history through the cross, passion and resurrection, and the believer can therefore participate in a similar pattern.[26] He also wonders what will happen when the "Gospel of Christ" is integrated or "injected" into various ancient ways of thought.[27]

An even more fundamental integration for Neill is the continual centrality of Christ in both the Church's and the believer's life.[28] This is primarily viewed in terms of an individualistic struggle reminiscent of the Pauline struggle of Romans 7. These lectures appear to be the product of Neill's own subjective personal reflections combined with a thorough analysis of more objective doctrinal roots. The end result is powerful series of exhortations, such as to "daily enter into the silence of the eternal, unchangeable world" in order to "see all things in" their "right proportions".[29]

He is not encouraging a Platonic escapism, but he is rather attempting to help his readers avoid the Charybdis of an over-negative attitude towards the world or the Scylla of an over-positive view of earthly matters, and so lead them into a more balanced attitude towards created matter.[30]

Thus Neill uses the complex issues surrounding the second half of the Apostle's Creed to make a series of didactic points. His language and expression is clear and in its simplicity acts almost as a parable of the restoration of

relationship and communication into which the book also aims to lead its readers.

In answer to the questions posed earlier, his continuing preoccupation with teaching and evangelism must not solely be explained as feeding his own personal needs for acceptance and fulfilment. His underlying motivation continues to be grounded in his own faith in the content of the message itself.

On one level as a teacher in Beliefs he perceives and presents his faith in a highly rational and clear-cut fashion. He locates it in a specific moment in history. On another level as an evangelist he is still moved by "that cross, that passion, that resurrection"[31].

Thus beneath the logical exterior is a heart gripped especially by the denouement of Jesus' life. His own internal "angst" may partly explain why he defends belief in the God who suffers. Whilst he does not engage at this stage in deep questions of theodicy, he argues that at Calvary "here surely is revealed the innermost heart of God himself".[32]

Neill, the most able of oral communicators sees that God reveals himself at the point of greatest weakness, vulnerability and apparent non-communication. His reason and his emotions appear to circle this event, and so provoke his faith to express and define itself in teaching and evangelism. Thus his rationality fired by deep but often hidden feelings had an ultimately creative result. This productive combination may partially explain why Neill's wardenship of Tirumaraiur was, in the eyes of the Church Missionary Society's historian,

"the most creative in the history of the college."[33]

b) Bishop (1939-44)

This section will focus on the five frantic years which Neill spent as Bishop of Tinnevelly. Firstly it will briefly describe the work which he was particularly involved. Secondly, it will note the variety and the impact of internal and external pressures which Neill faced.

Thirdly, these influences will be placed alongside certain recurring themes which he focused on, such as his theology of the Cross and Resurrection, as well as his understanding of revelation and history. Each of these strands of private struggles and public statements will hopefully further explain "Why?" he expressed himself in the way that he did.

Neill was consecrated Bishop of Tinnevelly at Dornakal cathedral in January 1939. "His six year episcopate brought to a splendid climax the first half of his career." [34] He saw himself as the "servant and shepherd" of "a flock of about 125,000 Christians" who lived in some 1,453 different villages. [35] "He was tireless in his stimulus to village pastors and unsparing in his travels". [36] As bishop he managed to cover much of the 11,000 miles of his diocese. In one year alone he took 122 confirmations with some 3,500 candidates.

He also took on a number of "extra-curricular burdens" [37] as a publisher, bookseller, ecumenist, translator and conference speaker. Both the amount and quality of work he achieved was prodigious. For example, he not only launched a series of books in Tamil but was also a member of the joint

committee on Church Union from 1934-44.

In the eyes of the historian of the Church of South India, Bengt Sundkler, "he stated the Anglican standpoint with brilliant lucidity and had a capacity to understand other traditions which was of particular value." [38] He was fascinated but exhausted by his translation work on the Tamil Bible. [39] Thus, even as a bishop, he employed a variety of written and spoken methods of expression.

The stress caused by the Second World War must have added to the weight of this work load. In retrospect Neill wrote the "war was always with us, mostly tragic, sometimes wearisome and occasionally absurd." [40] This would have been accentuated by worries whether the Japanese would invade or whether the Congress Party would follow their civil disobedience policy with open rebellion against the British Government.

The continuous pressure from the War can be most clearly felt through his Good Friday reflections in April 1943. Here he relates the War, "when hatred and wrong are unleashed in the world", to the apparent hopeless suspense of the cross. [41] It is clear, however, he worked not as a political commentator, but rather as a pastoral bishop. The War is mentioned in passing to emphasize the need for his audience to face the cross and bring themselves back to lives of "love", "humility and self-sacrifice". [42]

Such language was also used by Neill as he considered his own work as bishop. In the Autobiography this self-sacrifice takes the form of "service" towards "his flock" [43], whilst



in India he put more emphasis upon the "responsibility" of being the "father of a family of 130,000".[44]

He clearly took his responsibilities extremely seriously. For example, when as a bishop he was faced with cases of particular evil he would often have a crisis of confidence. He wondered whether he could have altered the outcome by acting differently: "If I had been a little more faithful, a little more loving, a little more prayerful, a little more like Christ, could this have been avoided?"[45] The standards, therefore, he placed upon himself as "servant" and "father" were rigorous and unrelenting.

These standards would have been heightened by his extremely high view of the episcopate. He was convinced that the second century model of the bishop, whose function was to "maintain the Apostolic faith and to exercise the Apostolic authority" was indeed the "rightly apprehended will of God". This, therefore, was an "inheritance" not to be "diminished or abandoned"[46], otherwise the Church would suffer a "grievous loss".[47]

Neill's emphasis upon the authority of the bishop manifested itself most clearly in his frequent parish visitations. In the eyes of a younger fellow missionary this tall, thin figure made an "impressive sight" in his episcopal garb.[48] Such an imposing appearance may have commanded personal respect, but it undoubtedly would have also distanced him from his "flock".

The picture of Neill's enthronement as bishop, preserved

in the Decanian and reproduced at the start of this thesis, surrounded by Indian faces, highlights how Neill would have stood out from those whom he was visiting.[49] This picture is a good reminder that whilst his explicit verbal communication may have spoken of service, his entire demeanour, accentuated by the colonial context, spoke of authority.

It appears, therefore, that he saw his service to the Church not simply in terms of verbally expressing himself well, but also effectively exercising authority. The writer and teacher also took on the added burden of administrator and personnel manager. Once again pragmatic needs combined with theological understanding to motivate the already energetic Neill. The result was a life of frenetic activity.

It is not surprising that these responsibilities and pressures gravely "overtaxed" Neill's strength.[50] Various serious allegations which are only hinted at in the Autobiography, clearly also made a serious impact upon Neill. The exact reason why Neill left India will probably always remain a mystery. It is widely thought, however, that he did not choose to leave, but was forced by Metropolitan Westcott to resign because he had struck his own clergy.[51]

It's also widely believed that "Neill was in the habit of administering corporal punishment, and that this was a factor in the termination of his episcopate in Tineⁿvelley.[52] These charges were never formally levelled at Neill. Whatever the truth and assuming (as the Autobiography implies) he heard them, they must have proved particularly hurtful, or if

grounded in reality, threatening.

Such accusations must have only added to stress from his work and his general poor health. He soon found himself struggling in a "sea of troubles".[53] He returned home on furlough for medical treatment in 1944. Taking into account his own medical history as well as the emotional, physical and self-imposed pressure he was under, it is not surprising he suffered a mental breakdown.

Whilst he was away the house of Bishops met in Calcutta, and advised him to retire.[54] His resignation and separation from India, "his first love", must simply have broken his heart. The full psychological impact of effectively being forced to stay away from India will be studied in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize how the personal and international storm-clouds which hung over his life appear to have had a creative impact upon the expression of his faith.

This is most clearly seen by his treatment of "Crucified Under Pontius Pilate" in Foundation Beliefs (1941). Whilst his argument is rooted in the biblical material, he is almost Ignatian in his final approach to what he perceives as a pivotal moment in history: Ignatian in the sense that he encourages his audience to "relive" the horror of Golgotha, and to approach it as if they have never heard it before. To make this difficult imaginative leap he recommends using the Markan account, for there he himself has found "more clearly than elsewhere the atmosphere of almost intolerable suspense and

strain".[55]

In order to draw his audience even further into the passion story he admits that his own intensity of feeling had been heightened by reading Kierkegaard's Christian Discourse. He cites this work in order to illustrate how the suffering of Christ can still have a real impact upon the believer today.

He balances the horror of the cross with its healing power. To make his point he uses a western musical metaphor. Bach's Passion According to St. Matthew proved for Neill "almost an unbearable strain", as Bach "tears the heart out of our breast with his successive images of beauty and terror".[56] He contrasts this conflict with the final Chorus "Rest here in peace".

This movement through conflict to final peace could be applied to Neill's entire life, though at this stage he is caught in a world of turmoil. It is as if, to borrow one of his titles from this time, he is caught between the Wrath and Peace of God. (1942)

These rare and precious glimpses of a man who clearly felt very deeply, also illustrate how the story of Christ had become inextricably tied with his own story. His graphic descriptions of the Passion which appear to be rooted in his own experience are a good example of this integration.

Another instance of Neill's moods colouring his response to the Passion narratives is when he admits there were disheartening times when the only statement he could "really believe" in was "crucified under Pontius Pilate".[57] In

moments of doubt or despair he appears often to have turned to the crucifixion as the historical bedrock upon which he could "reconstruct" the rest of his faith.[58]

In the light of this historical foundation Neill is able to deduce at least five theological conclusions which the cross reveals.[59] The climax of this highly rational argument ends, in contrast to its opening, on a positive note: "The cross gives us courage to face unflinchingly the reality of things as they are.....and to trust unhesitatingly the Unseen....and to hope unconquerably for the future." [60]

In short, it appears that historical fact provided security to a man whose world was far from secure. This perhaps partially explains why he put so much emphasis upon specific historical events as the basis for his belief.

Throughout this set of four lectures delivered at the Kodaikanal Missionary Convention in 1941 he reiterates the importance of historical revelation.[61] He appears to have little time for the philosopher who skirts such an approach. It is central to Neill's entire theological framework that "revelation has become particular in order that it might become universal." [62] Hence God is to be found not in human logic but rather in how he reveals himself at a specific moment in history.

It is, therefore, his belief in the scandal of particularity with universal significance which further explains why he returns repeatedly to the historical basis of his faith. Given that he assumed that Jesus was God's ultimate

communication, it is not surprising that his own life was based upon the pattern set out by Jesus:

The Missionary purpose of Christianity is not derived from one or two sayings of the Master. It is implicit in everything that He was and everything that He did.[63]

Here is another clue as to why he sought to communicate a message about a first century Galilean, to a 20th century Indian culture. At this stage Neill's controlling model was God's revelation through the incarnation. But God's revelation in Christ did not simply take the form of one single event in the first century which was sporadically repeated in the individual hearts of believers.

Neill also perceived God's revelation in a more continuous sense: "God has revealed Himself in many ways, and the physicist, the archaeologist, the historian, no less than the theologian, are concerned with the works of God." [64] There is a sense here in which the academic can, to paraphrase Kepler, "think God's thoughts after Him" as they uncover God's diverse revelation.

This statement also further explains both the growing comprehensiveness of his study and teaching, as well an increasingly positive attitude he had towards Indian culture.[65] Whilst he saw the Bible as his "ultimate authority, for doctrine, for worship and for conduct", he went much further than the conservative evangelicals who relied on the "plain words of scripture" to convey "the message of

salvation".[66]

This methodology should be interpreted on two different levels. First, he was well aware of the pragmatic need to bridge the huge gap between the "language of the Bible" and "the speech of ordinary people" in India.[67] Secondly, this broad understanding of the form of God's revelation further explains his emphasis upon teaching and his general support of those "Indian thinkers launching out on the gigantic task of restating Christianity in terms congenial to the Indian mind." [68]

On his arrival in India it is unlikely that he would have had such a positive attitude to their approach. Nevertheless, nearly twenty years immersed in an Indian culture had demonstrated the need not simply for translation, but also for restatement of his faith.

Neill was aware that this could be a dangerous process if the attempt to learn from and communicate into a new culture led to syncretism.[69] In order to prevent such a compromise he frequently emphasized not only the value of exploration, but also the completeness of God's revelation in Christ:

The educated Christian ought to be at home in Indian ways of thought. He will not, indeed, find in them any new truth which is not already there in Christ, but his study of Indian thought should bring him back with new eyes to see in Christ depths of truth which he had not previously apprehended.[70]

In this model Christ is not portrayed in conflict against Indian thought. It could not be held against Neill, as it is against other missionaries, that he failed to respect or even understand the Indian context.

Whilst discoveries from this world cannot add to the actual revelation of God in Christ, for Neill they could highlight the details of that disclosure. Thus when he writes that "Jesus is God's final word"[71] he is not suggesting he is God's only word. He is instead arguing that here lies the summation of God's revelation.

It is difficult exactly to mark out the form of revelation which Neill has in mind. On the one hand he perceives a series of specific revelations: "God who entered into history once decisively in the deliverance of the people of Israel, has entered in even more decisively now in the person of Christ."[72] The incarnation at its simplest level reveals God is love, whilst he sees the cross revealing a whole series of facts about God, Humanity and the Universe.[73]

His view therefore of history and God's relation to it is not of a passive, silent God who created the world and then withdrew, but rather a "God who Himself takes a hand in the game, intervening at certain times and through certain special people to achieve His purposes in the world."[74] The location of this revelation was, therefore, initially the history of Israel, but through the work of Christ, God "has changed His method of working in the world" to the Ecclesia, the New Israel.[75]

On the other hand, as shown earlier, he does appear to have a wider perception of God's revelation and his working through history. It has also been argued that he had an increasingly positive attitude towards Indian culture. This can be seen by the way he encouraged those attempting to Indianize Christianity to go behind the non-Christian religions "to the deep motives and ideals, which are truly, characteristically and universally Indian." [76] Admittedly he is not explicitly attempting in this passage to locate God's revelation, but the fact he encourages such exploration suggests he perceives God to be at work outside a narrowly Christian framework.

His interpretation of God's general revelation through His intervention in history is at times extremely Anglo-centric. This can be seen in a sermon he preached at the outbreak of the War whilst on furlough in Cornwall. It can be inferred from his argument that in the same way that God had protected the Nation from the ravages of the Armada and Napoleon, so he would also protect Her from this new War. [77] In such a picture God works outside the Church to protect the nation from the terrors of invasion. Thus the way God has apparently acted in the past is used by Neill to encourage belief and trust that he will act in the future.

Neill's comments on Dunkirk are also illuminating:

"I do not mean to claim Dunkirk as a miracle, in the ordinary sense of that word, as though God had directly and personally

intervened to distort the course of history.
But I do mean that God has made a world in
which the unexpected happens.... in which
sometimes astonishingly it does appear that
God honours the confidence of the
weak..."[78]

Neill's use of this recent historical event illustrates how he believed God to act in line with the natural order, and yet he uses this example in a surprising manner. Instead of citing this argument to support his case for interpreting the resurrection as a natural event, he includes it within his discussion of the supernatural character of the Resurrection.

His aim is to demonstrate, on the basis of the Resurrection, that it is legitimate to conclude God will also vindicate the weak. His starting point for this argument is a firm belief in the Resurrection. Thus the specific revelation of God through the Resurrection has become the control by which history can be correctly interpreted. Neill, therefore, appears to hold in tension the belief that God has definitively revealed himself through Christ, with the idea that he also acts in more general ways in and through history.

These ideas were rooted in his own experience, which must have been heightened by his own disciplined devotional life. He spent every morning between seven and eight in the chapel. This time was not to be disturbed except in extreme emergencies.[79]

Neill appears to have drawn strength from this traditional

Quiet Time which he argues "need not be very long"..... "but must be intense" for "it must give time for the unfolding of our souls, so that they are spread out in His light and His sunlight can penetrate to every part." [80] For Neill did not simply see this as a psychological boost rooted in positive thinking, it was a real experience of the living Christ.

This can also be seen in The Challenge of Jesus Christ (1943), which was based upon a series of addresses delivered in the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Lahore. Whilst Foundation Beliefs reaches its climax with the theology of the cross, this series imaginatively moves through the seven words on the cross to the light of the resurrection proclaimed by the church. He spells this proclamation out in no uncertain terms arguing that:

Jesus Christ is the contemporary of all the ages, that He is now alive, a real human person, with whom we can have fellowship, a fellowship that is as real as, that is the continuation of, that, which he begun in Galilee and perfected in Judaea. [81]

This address, given on Easter Day, concludes with Neill first spelling out how Jesus Christ is "the contemporary of all ages". For Neill, the Eucharist is a sign of this fact. It is celebrated therefore "not as a commemoration of a certain historic event which happened 1,900 years ago and was over, but

as the assurance that what was done on Good Friday was not in vain....and that triumph is ours today." [82]

He avoids a detailed discussion of Eucharistic theology and precisely how the bread and wine enables participation in this triumph; instead, he seeks to illustrate that one of the ways "we can have fellowship" with Christ is through the Eucharist. This feast and the subsequent belief in the "indwelling of Christ" in the Christian only makes sense, however, in the light of the Resurrection.

Secondly, he highlights the implications of the Resurrection for the Church. "Think of the message that is committed to it, the message of the triumph of Christ, that ought to ring throughout all the world with the note of authority and confidence." [83] Neill perceived a sharp contrast between the reality of the Church and this ideal of bold and confident proclamation.

In order to encourage his listeners to learn, live and proclaim the Easter message, he graphically portrays the once disorganised, scattered and broken-hearted disciples being healed by "the presence of a living master." [84] His listeners, readers and the rest of the Indian Church can experience a similar transformation through the power of the resurrection which makes sense of the horror of the cross. In short, participation in this experience will contribute to effective communication.

His desire to "present the Christian message in a modern age" [85] must first be understood as rooted in his rational

belief in the universal significance of the cross and resurrection. Secondly, his passionate desire to express this fact was rooted in his own personal integration with these stories. As time went on this would become even more of a reality. On leaving India he must have seen the world like the disciples did on Good Friday, "gray with gloom and heartsickness". But it will be demonstrated later that he gradually experienced the "miracle of transformation" and his "heart was also healed." [86]

It is the contention of this chapter that Neill was not simply serving his own needs as he communicated. He had rather found that the story of Christ fed both his and others' intellectual hunger and emotional yearnings, so that he was compelled by the love of Christ to communicate. [87]

He was, however, well aware of the dangers this compulsion brought with it. "Some of you may know the gift of eloquence; you know the thrill of holding a big audience in the hollow of your hand, of feeling that you have all these people under your control...There is no man in the world exposed to greater peril than the popular preacher." [88]

The next chapter will show how Neill, rejected by his first love, the Indian church, was torn between the peril of wooing audiences to himself and his stated aim of glorifying God.

Notes on Chapter Five

- 1: S.C.Neill, A History of Christianity in India, Part 1.
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.245.
[Hereafter referred to as H.C.I.]
- 2: Auto. p.95.
- 3: Auto. p.95.
- 4: Annual C.M.S. Newsletter, (Birmingham Library: Unpublished. 1936-7), pp.2 and 3. In all these letters there are few explicit references to his feelings.
- 5: Letter by Bishop of Tinnevely. 30th October, 1932.
(Unpublished. C.M.S. Holdings in Birmingham. University Library.) [Neill attributes his insomnia being partly due to the altitude *when he is in Nainitali*]
- 6: It seems from the cumulative evidence of both the Newsletter and Autobiography that at this stage there was no single cause for his bouts of depression. Owen Chadwick writes "It is probable that the long hours of work took their toll in some undiagnosed form. He became liable to shattering headaches and during the next twenty years he had difficulty in sleeping. Before long his mind began to show signs of unbalance, and to cause anxiety to his colleagues." Proceedings of the British Academy. p.606. (Chapter 6 will return to this subject and focus more on Neill's illnesses.)
- 7: Private interview with Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. (Dec. 1988)
He emphasized Neill's "effortless control over himself as a lecturer."
- 8: Auto. p.418.

- 9: C.W.Ranson, A Missionary Pilgrimage (Grand Rapids: Erdmanns. 1988), p.83. *9a: Neill, like Luther, believed strongly in vernacular education.*
- 10: Auto. p.336.
- 11: Auto. p.334-5.
- 12: Auto. p.338.
- 13: Annual C.M.S. Newsletter. (Birmingham: Unpublished. 1931-2)
- 14: S.C.Neill, Builders of the Indian Church. (London: Edinburgh. 1933) p.14. [Hereafter referred to as B.I.C.]
- 15: B.I.C. p.152.
- 16: S.C.Neill, "The Future of Christian Education in India." in a letter to Mr Wigram at C.M.S. (At Birmingham Library : Unpublished, 1928), (Hereafter "Christian Education in India").
- 17: "Christian Education in India." p.2.
- 18: "Christian Education in India." p.3.
- 19: "Christian Education in India." p.7.
- 20: Auto. p.374.
- 21: Auto. pp.412f.
- 22: S.C.Neill, Annals of an Indian Parish. (London: C.M.S. 1934), p.x.
- 23: C.M.S. Annual Newsletter, (Birmingham: Unpublished, 1938-9).
- 24: S.C.Neill, Beliefs. (Madras: Christian Literature Society for India. 1939), p.52. [Bs.]
- 25: Bs. p.4.
- 26: Bs. pp.75-6, and p.144.
- 27: Bs. p.21.
- 28: Bs. p.95-6.
- 29: Bs. p.95-6.

30: Bs. p.84.31: Bs. p.114.

32: Bs. p.74.

33: Gordon Hewitt, The Problems of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society, 1910-42. [Volume II. Asia Overseas Partners], (London: S.C.M. , 1977), p.143.

34: O.Chadwick, Proceedings. p.605.

35: Auto. p.448.

36: O.Chadwick, Proceedings. p.606.

37: Auto. p.532. One other "extra-curricular" activity was his work with the Tinnevely Theological Series. He published four to five books each year, writing one a year himself, and encouraging younger Indian clergy and missionaries to produce others. "In five years we published 2,500 pages of Theology." p.499.

38: B. Sundkler, The Church of South India: The Movement towards Union. 1900-1947. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954). p.184.

39: Auto. pp.534-6.

40: Auto. p.496.

41: S.C.Neill, The Challenge of Jesus Christ (Madras: S.P.C.K. in India. 1943) p.137.[Hereafter referred to as C.J.C.] Two pages earlier he admits: "We are oppressed by the sense of the chaos of the world.... It seems as though God had withdrawn himself and gone far off, leaving men to themselves to work out their own destruction."(p.135.)

42: E.A. p.137.

43: Auto. p.448.

- 44: S.C.Neill, The Wrath and Peace of God. (Madras: C.L.S.I. 1944) p.17. [W.P.G.]
- 45: W.P.G. p.17.
- 46: S.C.Neill, Ecclesia Anglicana. (Madras: S.P.C.K. in India. 1943) p.15. [Hereafter referred to as E.A.]
- 47: E.A. p.18.
- 48: Private unpublished interview with L. Newbigin. (Dec.88)
- 49: M.A.Girling, "In Memoriam. Bishop S.C.Neill. 1900-84" The Decanian (Dean Close School Magazine: January 1985, No. 264) pp.1-2.
- 50: Auto. p.481.
- 51: E.M.Jackson, (ed) "God's Apprentice" (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991) p.335, Dr Jackson agrees in her footnotes to Neill's vastly abridged Autobiography that "his leaving India presents the church historian with grave problems". She usefully adds that: "From village catechists in the most rural parts of Tinnevely, to present-day professors of theology, the common view is that he had to leave because of instances when he had struck his clergy." Such an act was doubly serious because of its colonial "overtones".
- 52: From unpublished Interview with L.Newbigin. (Dec. 1988) Bishop Richard Holloway provides a crucial commentary on these events in a Church Times book review (and) on November 8th, 1991. On the basis of his own experience he concludes that Neill suffered from some "version of controlled sadism". He also believes that something went badly wrong with his self-control in India in 1944, and he was banished from his beloved

Tinnevelly.

53: Auto. p.560.

54: L.Brown, "Stephen Charles Neill." (Memorial Service Sermon. Unpublished. 31st Oct. 1984) Bishop Brown knew Neill in Southern India from 1938. In an unpublished interview he argued that two key forces drove Neill. First and foremost, he was "totally devoted to Christ as Lord and Saviour". Secondly, he was "driven by powerful psychic, possibly sexual energy", (Cambridge: Dec, 1988).

55: S.C.Neill, Foundation Beliefs (Madras: Christian Literature Society for India. 1941), pp.106-7. [Hereafter F.B.]

56: F.B. p.108.

57: F.B. pp.84-5.

58: F.B. p.82.

59: F.B. For Neill the cross reveals: i) The true state of man. ii) The love of God. iii) That suffering can be creative. iv) The Universe is weighted on the side of Righteousness. v) There is healing as well as revelation in the cross.

In his earlier book Beliefs he deals with the "connection" between the Cross and Forgiveness in Ch.4 entitled "The Forgiveness of Sins"(pp.82-109,). Here Neill attempts to answer the question: "Is the Cross a real and full revelation of the nature and being of the eternal God?"(p.89.) He lucidly challenges both the Greek doctrine of divine Apatheia and those who set Father and Son in opposition. Instead he speaks of a suffering God, the unity between Father and Son, and of an

obedient Son who points to the Father. Thus he attempts to show that "the cross is the final revelation".(p.94.)

These arguments have been cited in more detail as further evidence to illustrate first, "the highly rational nature" of his discussions. Secondly, to answer why he saw "the message we have to proclaim is the nature of an earthquake."

(Bs.p.97.) Finally, to highlight how such interpretations of historical events provided security, as he could rationally find comfort and forgiveness from the story of a suffering God.

60: F.B. p.109.

61: F.B. For example, in the final lecture he admits that the "constant reiteration of historical emphasis may become tedious", but he denies importing it into the study as it "is already there in the material". p.82.

62: F.B. p.25.

63: F.B. p.26.

64: E.A. p.6.

65: E.A. p.26. "Every Christian should be quick to appreciate and honour everything that is good and noble in the ancient pre-Christian traditions of India." He does however later qualify this statement arguing that there is much in "non-Christian religions which we are bound to condemn and deplore." Once again Neill displays an ambivalent attitude towards Indian culture, and how the Christian should approach it.

66: E.A. p.4.

67: E.A. p.5.

68: E.A. p.8.

- 69: E.A. pp.27-8.
- 70: E.A. p.27.
- 71: F.B. p.63, is repeated in C.J.C. on p.151, "In the New Testament we find the final word of God to man."
- 72: F.B. p.63.
- 73: F.B. pp.75-6. He argues that God was in Jesus in a distinctive and unique fashion. The form of revelation portrayed here, therefore, is that God became involved not from "the outside" but from "within". Thus the phrase "God is Love" is ultimately articulated through the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. (See also note 58.)
- 74: F.B. p.62.
- 75: F.B. p.50.
- 76: E.A. pp.27-8.
- 77: Auto. p.468.
- 78: C.J.C. p.159.
- 79: Auto. p.453.
- 80: W.P.G. p.64.
- 81: C.J.C. p.156.
- 82: C.J.C. p.161.
- 83: C.J.C. p.163.
- 84: C.J.C. p.164.
- 85: Auto. p.523.
- 86: C.J.C. p.164.
- 87: W.P.G. "At the centre of the Christian Experience in all its varied forms is just this - the certainty of the love of Christ." p.86.

88: W.P.G. p.6.

Chapter 6: Much Ado in Geneva (1944-62)

I thought that everyone knew that my whole life had been broken in pieces by my inability to return to India.[1]

Neill's resignation from his see in Tinnevely was, in the words of Owen Chadwick, the "hardest decision he ever made. He loved India, and had a sense of vocation to serve that country. He seemed to be destroying his past and the trauma of the decision remained with him to the end of his life." [2] He was clearly a man whose heart had been broken, as now he was separated from "his first love, India".

Inevitably such a trauma accentuated his tendency to depression. The circumstances surrounding his premature departure from India may partially explain why Neill's depression was so intractable.[3]

His move away from India should not, however, be interpreted merely as a detrimental force upon his psychological life. As Bishop Leslie Brown put it in his memorial sermon it "marks the watershed" in his career. "Until then he had been completely dedicated to the Indian church and its problems and its hopes. Now he became a missionary of the world church - one of those who had a great influence on the ecumenical movement and its development." [4]

It can also, therefore, be seen as a painful, but

ultimately positive opening for Neill onto a wider international stage, with new opportunities and different challenges. This chapter will mark out both this new focus of his life and ministry, as well as the impact on his life as it was "broken into pieces". It will begin, however, by briefly plotting his frenetic movements following his return to Cambridge in 1944.

At first he stepped back into the career and environment he had given up some twenty years earlier. Both the faculty of Divinity welcomed him back as an occasional lecturer and his old college Trinity informally appointed him as a Chaplain, though, probably painfully for Neill, not a fellow. As a lecturer he focussed partly upon the New Testament (Romans or Corinthians) and also in the history of Christian Doctrine.

It was, according to Owen Chadwick, through his general lectures on "The Christian World Community" and his sermons around the University that he made his name in Cambridge. His apparent success was partially rooted in the combination of the ability to speak without notes, "lucid exposition, a superb memory of detail, and very wide reading". This enabled him to be able to hold undergraduate audiences fascinated even on Saturdays at midday.[5]

In the light of this external demonstration of brilliance it was not surprising he was offered the Mastership of Selwyn College, Cambridge in 1947 [6]; was considered as a potential head of a major public school [7] and even as a successor to Charles Raven in 1950 as the new Professor of Divinity.[8] But

in his own words "Cambridge was not for me"[9] for he "loved travel and was stimulated by it".[10]

Perhaps this partially explains why he worked both as a peripatetic Assistant Bishop to the Archbishop of Canterbury (1947-50) and in various posts for the World Council of Churches. This second line of responsibilities ensured he was primarily based in Geneva for the next fifteen years, until 1962 when he moved to Hamburg.

Once again he was a prolific traveller, writer and speaker. He visited numerous African countries in 1950, had over thirty books published and spoke in almost every major American University. It is not entirely surprising therefore, that he divides this lengthy part of the Autobiography, entitled "Ecumenical Developments" into subdivisions. They were i) Geneva and All That, ii) Of Making Many Books, iii) In Journeys Oft, and iv) Among the Students.[11] Various posts within the World Council of Churches, including Associate General Secretary, provided Neill with the opportunity to travel, write, speak, attend conferences and even entertain numerous guests in Geneva.

These five spheres of activity were used to differing degrees by Neill whether he was taking on the guise of an ecumenist and historian (This chapter: Section a.), or less obviously as a broken, fallible teacher and writer seeking self-understanding and peace (This chapter: Section b.) and arguably most important for fully understanding his actions in this period as an apologist and evangelist (This chapter: Sec-

tion c.).

This chapter will focus on each of these three interlocking roles. In order to continue with our attempt to explain Neill each section will particularly focus on both the themes and methods of his expression. Finally at each stage it will be asked "why" he passed on what he did in the way that he did as an ecumenist, teacher, and apologist. This chapter will once again be looking to identify whether there is one underlying "silver thread" or central theme which can explain this frenetic and varied activity.

A further significant focal point is the tension between Neill's outward brilliance and his inward brokenness. Thus, rather than looking for a single underlying theological theme, is it not more appropriate to interpret this outward life of apparent energy and competence as the method by which he came to terms with what was happening beneath the surface?

In other words, was his productivity a way of proving himself, and thereby a subconscious attempt to win the acceptance which he had lost through the apparent rejection, failure and brokenness inherent within his inability to "return to India"? Alternatively, perhaps his creative abilities were heightened by the turmoil within, and his life at this stage was, more than at any other time, a case of grace working through weakness.

Section a) Ecumenist and Historian

I was wholly committed to the ecumenical cause, as a movement for the unity and

renewal of the Church, though far from enamoured of the W.C.C. as it was beginning to take shape.[12]

Theoretically Neill was committed to the ecumenical cause, but his practical work for the W.C.C. left Neill far from satisfied. In the Autobiography there is a sense of frustration both with his brief and the organisation he was working for in Geneva. He believed that in Geneva, September 1949, there was "not a job for me to do".[13] Such a comment reflects more his frustration with the fledgling W.C.C. and the lack of a specific job description than too little work to do.

Nor did Neill find immediate fulfilment in "the endless committees in which the ecumenical pioneer finds himself involved in." He described such meetings which he was "involved in as excessively boring." [14] This boredom must have been heightened by the discovery that even in the "kaleidoscope in which one lives at the centre of the ecumenical movement" [15] a "multiplicity of jobs do not amount to a job". [16]

Nevertheless, this lack of a clearly defined role did not prevent him from engaging in numerous literary works promoting ecumenism. This included being editor of both the huge History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948. (1954) and the provocative Twentieth Century Christianity (1961) as well as author of the people centred Men of Unity (1960) and community orientated Christian Society (1952). His "survey of approaches to closer union among the churches" in Towards Church Union,

1937-1952 (1952), highlights not only his understanding of contemporary ecumenical movements but also his own participation in such work, especially within the context of the Church of South India. Neill was no theoretical armchair ecumenist writing from a safe distance; he was rather a man absorbed in bringing the churches together. In what ways did he do this as a writer?

i) Ecumenical Historian

The opening of A History of the Ecumenical Movement, which he wrote with the help of the editorial group, points the reader back to the origins of the local and international Ecclesia. Charity demonstrated by the sharing of goods, faith highlighted by the common acclamation that "Jesus is Lord", worship that took the form of baptism and the breaking of bread, and communication via letters are all used in this cumulative introductory argument to show that at the heart of the early Ecclesia was the unifying force of Agape. The implication may be unstated, but is nevertheless clear, Agape should also be the mark of the Church today, and if this was to become a reality then unity would be a more realisable goal.

Early Church history is thus used as a subtle rhetorical device to challenge the divisions within contemporary Christendom. Statements such as Basil the Great's comment that "our faith is not one thing at Seleucia, another at Constantinople, another at Zela, another at Rome.... but one and the same everywhere"[17] should be considered on two levels. On the first it can be read as citation of historical

interest, whilst on another it directs the reader towards a certain reading of history which emphasizes the potential for unity.

Whilst Neill also cites the positive and Christo-centric Pauline images of the new man (1 Cor. 15), the building (Ephesians 2) and the body (1 Cor. 12) in order to highlight what should be the goal for the "community of Christians", he does not ignore the divisions especially to be found at Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth and through the Johannine material.

He plots with even more rigour the schismatic sects which "destroyed the internal peace" within the post-Constantinian Church. Thus, it could be inferred that the less positive side of early Church History is used as a subtle warning against the forces of disunity.

Both this account and the entire work should also be read as an attempted explanation of today's situation. For instance, his analysis of the fourth crusade, especially the sack of Constantinople, is used as an explanation of one of the reasons why there is difficulty of rapprochement between Eastern and Western traditions today. Hence, by making clear the historical legacy of disunity which today's Church has inherited, it may become easier to move closer at least to mutual understanding, if not actual union.

History is used in this book not simply to encourage, warn and explain, but also to teach. Towards the end of this section the reader is encouraged to see, in the light of this brief initial survey, that there are certain conditions which

would prevent the ecumenical cause from prospering. There are lessons, therefore, to be learnt from the mistakes perceived with the advantage of hindsight.

It does not take too much imagination to read between the lines of this section to see that Church history is being used as warning to the present day Church. The message is implicit but clear. Do not allow political considerations to interfere in the sphere of the Church. Avoid compromise and evasion of difficulties. Maintain flexibility, and encourage support from the grass roots. If this advice is not taken then the "ecumenical religion will never prosper".[18] Thus Neill and his team highlight the importance of ordinary churchmen, flexibility, honesty and a political independence within the ecumenical process.

The overall impact of this book is to demonstrate what Neill and his editors found to be true, that:

there has never been a period in the life of the Churches in which there had not been certain groups deeply concerned about the problem of division and unity.[19]

The emphasis that he places upon this "discovery" illustrates how the selective use of history can be used, even in a rigorously academic and comprehensive manner, to validate the efforts of the W.C.C.. Thus by demonstrating that the ecumenical movement was no new thing he also implicitly supports the energy expended in the present day within the ecumenical movement.

The fact that he persevered to the bitter end in this project suggests he highly valued it. His Autobiography suggests he had a difficult and far from uncritical relationship with the other organising editor, Ruth Rouse.[20] The production of eight hundred and forty pages of print not surprisingly "excised three years" from his life.[21] The hard work expended on this huge book, which often reads more like the materials for history rather than history itself, made Neill ill.

A clue towards why he put so much energy into this work can be found in the Epilogue where he admits that his ultimate aim might be summed up by his wish that by looking back the reader might "glorify God for what he has wrought".[22] If God is seen as the ultimate author of the ecumenical enterprise it becomes less surprising that he should have gone into so much detail.

The reason for the production of this work appears, therefore, to be more than simply an attempt to encourage, warn, explain and teach through outlining the history of the ecumenical movement; it is also rooted in the belief that God is ultimately behind this entire progression towards unity.

This implicit theological belief in God working through the historical process will be examined more closely in Chapter Seven. At this stage it is important to recognise that this claim should be interpreted not merely as a rhetorical device to demonstrate that "God is on our side"; it is rather the crescendo of an argument. At its heart is a Christo-centric

belief whose precise nature will be examined more closely in section three. This is left unstated in what often reads like a slightly uneven collection of essays, though the roots of this belief, are implied in the highly Christo-centric introduction.

His belief in God working through the historical process may also explain why Neill puts so much effort into describing the work of individuals and the development of the Christian Society. The implication is clear, the people of the Church have a part to play as God's agents in the ministry of reconciliation.

ii) Ecumenical Observer

Neill also acted as an Ecumenical Observer, in the sense that he described much of what he saw within the Ecumenical movement. He uses what could be termed as a "descriptive rhetorical method" in different ways to encourage his readers to enter into the ecumenical cause. This means he describes events or personalities with the aim of persuading his readers to think and act more ecumenically.

In Men of Unity, for example, he describes the personalities and work of over a dozen key leaders who worked within or for the ecumenical movement. The cumulative impact of reading these highly selective accounts of diverse figures such as John Mott via Dietrich Bonhoeffer to John XXIII is threefold.

First, the cause of ecumenism is seen to be more than simply a denominational fad; it has rather become a concern of

all the Churches. Secondly, this has primarily come about through the efforts of highly committed individuals. They also represent the wider movements within their respective Churches. The third implication is that this cause should therefore also become a concern of the reader. Moreover, this diverse picture gallery of ecumenists demonstrates that all shades of theological persuasion can, or rather should, participate in this endeavour.

He paints on a much larger canvas in The Christian Society where he portrays in more extensive brush-strokes the development and seemingly unstoppable progression of the Christian Church. In many ways this reads as a prototype of a book which will be focused on in the following chapter, A History of Christian Missions (1964). Both have a sense of forward movement and both therefore carry a powerful implicit message. The Church has grown and will, therefore, continue to move forward. Neill describes a number of factors which may either hinder or assist such growth.

For instance, on the negative side, his description of the hardening of divisions between the post-reformation Western churches concludes with the statement that "each part of the Body has become impoverished by its separation from other members." [23] Once again, however, the pragmatic argument, based on the premise of "disunity impoverishes", is but one plank in a more fundamental and, in Neill's eyes, sinful malaise.

By rigorously portraying such disharmony, he subtly adds

weight to his argument that disunity contradicts both the nature and the task of the Christian Society :

The recognition of division as contrary to the very nature of the Christian society is a first and necessary step towards the recovery of that unity without which the Church cannot fully bear its witness to the redemption of the whole of humanity, and of every part and aspect of man's life, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[24]

In the opening chapter Neill gives a brief description of the nature of the earliest Christian Society, which found its ultimate origins in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Implicit throughout this book is the argument that it is He who defines the starting point and the nature of the Church.

Whilst, Neill admits there was initially some local variation, he balances such a view with the assertion that there was both "a sense of unity present from the start" and also a degree of doctrinal and inner cohesion.[25] Thus by so describing the first Christian community in this positive and unified manner he is able to hold it up against the present state of the Church. A simple portrayal becomes an insightful challenge.

The hope, clearly, is that a correct diagnosis of the disease named by Neill as "division" will provoke a realisation

of the need for repentance and restoration of this early and intended harmony. A further reason for this restoration of the "unity of the broken body of Christ"[26] is to ensure that a unified Church might become a living parable for the redemption and harmony brought through Christ. In short, unity is born out of the missionary role of the Church.

Another side to this descriptive technique can be seen in Neill's use of individuals. On the one hand Neill highlights the outstanding leaders such as St. Benedict who had "a profound understanding of human nature"[27], Hildebrand who was "remarkably effective in the affairs of men"[28], and Charles Borromeo who set out to visit every parson in 800 parishes of the diocese is himself described as a "remarkable man".[29]

On the other, he also underlines at different times the roles of the "hidden ones" such as an elderly nun in a Spanish convent, a tinker of Bedford, a chemist's assistant in Yorkshire, and a young girl whose drawings were greatly admired by Rushkin.[30]

Neill may not come from a tradition which has much place for saints, but he nevertheless cites both apparently significant and insignificant characters in order to demonstrate to his readers that they too have some potential agency within the purposes of God. More specifically in Men of Unity this individual agency is directed towards the ecumenical effort. Thus simple pen caricatures are used as a tool to encourage further participation within the ecumenical movement.

Behind both his closely linked historical and descriptive

methods lies a more central theological theme. For Neill, it is this belief which ultimately explains the effective agency of individual Christians and the community as a whole. Thus it is not surprising that he frequently employs what could be described as a Christological rhetorical device. For Neill it is still Christology which lies at the centre of his work.

iii) Christo-centric Ecumenism

The nearer we draw to the crucified, the nearer we come to one another, in however varied colours the Light of the World may be reflected in our faith. Under the Cross of Jesus Christ we reach hands to one another.[31]

Neill approvingly cites this extract from the report of the Stockholm Conference of 1925. Neill may have applauded this six page statement on the grounds of its "exemplary simplicity, modesty and humility"[32], but his selection presumably is based upon its Christo-centric content.

It is interesting to notice how the argument does not initially point Christians towards each other, but rather first to Christ at his point of greatest vulnerability. Thus the encouragement is that Christians should draw closer to Christ, in order that they will, in their diversity, also move closer to each other.

A similar, but inverted, use of this argument is cited later in the book. "The Western Churches are not one", quoting Dr. Timothy Lew, "because they are not willing to follow their

saviour all the way to Golgotha." [33] Here, instead of an encouragement to greater unity by drawing closer to Christ is an analysis of why the Churches are not united. Once again the implication is that unity would come if only Christians were more obedient in their following of Christ.

Whilst in the introduction of Men of Unity Neill does use a series of pragmatic arguments, such as that ecumenism will aid missionary work or protect the Church in a perilous age, it is the theological roots upon which he puts the greatest emphasis. Thus he argues that "in Christ, we are told, there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, ~~Scythian~~, bond nor free, but all together have been made one new man in Jesus Christ." [34]

In this context he does not cite Paul or Galatians Ch.3.v.23 to add authoritative textual weight to his argument. Here the focus is placed, therefore, not on biblical precedent, but rather upon the implications of being "in Christ". The point here is that the inner reality must also be expressed outwardly not in monochrome homogeneity, but in open worship and ministry.

His apparent ecumenical optimism, which is at times infectious, is rooted in his belief that "Christ is greater than the fragments into which His followers have broken His body; when men stretch out their hands directly to Him, they find themselves still mysteriously one." [35] He makes this conclusion at the end of his brief discussion of hymnody in The Christian Society on the basis that writers from many different

traditions are able to produce high quality material which is united by the nature of Christ.

Thus he made use of a Christological method of persuasion, not simply because it was a useful rhetorical device, but more importantly because it lay at the heart of his perception of God's own nature.

In a brief but persuasive article on "Co-operation and Unity" he argues that "the only reason for seeking unity is that God is one and that Christ is one, and that He prayed that His Church might be one." [36] Neill may use the word "only" here, but it would perhaps be more coherent to the rest of his work if he had written that here is "the primary reason for seeking unity."

The reader of his books on the need for greater theoretical and practical unity is, therefore, ultimately pushed back to a certain understanding of the ontology of God. It is on the basis of this reality made clear through the life and death of Jesus that the Christian Society has been able to survive in spite of its numerous tensions.

What streams out from Bethlehem and Calvary is the true life of men; whoever touches Jesus of Nazareth, even distantly, touches life, and enters at least upon the possibility of being transformed after the likeness of the Christ. [37]

For Neill, this is far more than a powerful metaphor to be used to draw the Churches together, it is reality which has the

potential to transform the "deep and disastrous" divisions of Christendom. The source of this "true life" is to be found in the agency of God in and through history.

This further explains not only why he put so much energy into the historical method, but also why he put so much effort into describing in detail how both individuals could become Men of Unity and communities could become the Christian Society through the touch of Jesus.

iv) Reasons for Ecumenism

Over this lengthy period based in Geneva Neill repeatedly used historical, descriptive and Christo-centric methods to promote the ecumenical cause. A variety of reasons may be cited for this activity.

First, Neill was inevitably influenced by his own context. His criticisms of W.A. Visser 't Hooft's leadership [38], for example, may further imply he was far from happy with the W.C.C. structures. His involvement at major conferences such as Whitby (1947), Amsterdam (1948 - 1st Assembly), and New Dehli (1961 - 3rd Assembly) clearly would, through personal contacts, have heightened his commitment to the ecumenical cause.[39] Furthermore, as he himself admitted, "the twentieth century so far has been the great century of Christian Union." [40] It is important not to underestimate the impact of this upon Neill's own thought and work.

Secondly, his prolific travelling appears to have continually stretched his imagination and perception of the international character of the Church.

The simple joyousness of the African, the austere simplicity of the Muslim world, the ethical sobriety of the Chinese, the passionate self-devotion of the Japanese to the cause may be equally indispensable to the perfection of the cause.[41]

This may sound slightly simplistic, or a caricature, but the thrust of the argument is to illustrate what he elsewhere argued. The Church is "meant to be the great international society." [42] This belief was clearly accentuated by his flights around the globe.

For instance, in 1950 he made a "long and complicated" three month journey around Africa. It took him from south from Cairo and Khartoum via Dar-es-Salaam and Zanzibar to Kenya and Uganda, then West to Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone.[43] The reason for this trip was both to make a survey of the African churches and also to examine theological education throughout the African continent.

In each of the three sources for this trip, whether it be his thirteen instalments of travel diary sent to Fisher [44], his article on this "African Theological Survey" [45] or his later comments on this trip [46], it is clear that he had little time for an "unimaginatively western" teaching method.

Such an approach ensured that "students become pale copies of their western teachers" and so lose "much of their joyful spontaneity which is the heritage of the African in almost every part of the continent." [47] Neill clearly

believed that the student "must.....add his own treasures to the wealth of the city of God." [48]

Even at fifty he appears to delight in the lessons that new cultures and experiences could teach him, and, therefore, by extension the world-wide Church. He made this survey specifically for the I.M.C. (International Missionary Council). Having experienced both the riches and poverty so apparent across the globe he hoped both could be shared within the World-wide Church.

Neill's context and personal travel and conference experiences are not enough to explain fully his involvement within the ecumenical movement. His own experiences in Cambridge in the twenties [49], and on the mission field in India in the thirties [50] obviously shaped his belief that ecumenism is a crucial part of missionary work. At times it feels as if ecumenism is but an appendix to the call for mission:

Every Church should live all the time in awareness of its membership in the great fellowship of all those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour; and at the same time in awareness of the unfinished task that lies before it. [51]

The visible divisions could not undermine the invisible unity that Neill perceived nor the calling to continue the unfinished task of "preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature". [52] Thus Neill is constantly attempting to persuade his audiences that the individual Christian has a crucial role

to play in both the movement towards reunion and effective proclamation.

It is, therefore, the final Christologically centred approach which lies at the heart of Neill's reason for promoting ecumenism. His theological understanding of Christ at the centre of reality enabled him to write comments such as "the Christian is called to judge the nature of Christian society from what he learns of Christ and His purpose in the Gospel." [53] Here is the unifying force, but was it enough to heal the brilliant, but broken Neill?

Section b) A Genuinely Human Writer

Perhaps a further cause for Neill's passion for unity was rooted in a projection of his own sense of disunity. As has been stated before this internal tension is described most extensively at the end of the first chapter of the Autobiography. There he describes how the strains caused by the Second World War meant that the arrow "turned down again" so in 1946, as twenty years before, the "darkness was complete". This is a euphemism for his depressed condition returning with a vengeance. This was in his own eyes the "longest and worst period of suffering which lasted for ten years." [54]

Interestingly, he does not link this "darkness" explicitly with his departure from India, nor does he make much of these feelings in his two extensive chapters covering this period in his Autobiography. One is left wondering whether he repressed such feelings or simply preferred to deal in euphemisms to avoid embarrassment.

From his frequent use of a metaphor of the former slave trader Newton it would appear that Neill kept the lid on much of what he felt. "Don't tell me of your feelings. A traveller may be glad of fine weather, but will go on whatever the conditions." The reason why he describes this statement as "splendid" must partially lie with his background. "I'm glad to say I was brought up in that tradition of evangelicalism, where any reference to your feelings was almost an indecency." [55] The extraordinary fact is that Neill was able to go on through these ten painful years with so little "reference" to the turmoil within.

His condition appears to have been worsened by repeated attacks of insomnia, an accidental overdose of barbiturates lasting for fifteen years and the unobtainability of the two doctors who seemed to have been any help. Moreover, he had been suffering from undiagnosed amoebic dysentery for over ten years. It was not until 1954 that he eventually received treatment for this condition at the Tropical Diseases Hospital in London. [56] Reading in between the lines of the Autobiography, combined with comments by Lesslie Newbiggin, who saw Neill from time to time during this period [57], it would appear this was a harrowing episode in his life.

It could also be inferred from the Autobiography that he draws an implicit parallel between his experience and Soren Kierkegaard's despair. Interestingly, he describes how this Danish theologian could be "the life and soul of the party, then go home to a lonely room and the waters of despair would

close over his head." [58]

One is left wondering whether Neill is attempting to describe his own experience in a slightly distanced fashion. Moreover, by highlighting Kierkegaard's agony he both validates his own state of depression and also even the reader's own shadows. Thus Neill places himself amongst a fellowship of sufferers, such as Lord Roseberry or Kierkegaard [59], and so demonstrates that this is no unique condition.

He claims that "whatever the state of my inner feelings" it made "no difference to the effectiveness of my Christian ministry." [60] Behind this statement is the implication that such brokenness appears occasionally to have facilitated his speaking and writing ministry. Nevertheless, he admits that "at times he wished there had been a little less suffering on the way I have trodden." [61] Here is a man who felt deeply and yet through his background was prevented from fully expressing his emotions.

Often he uses other people's experiences or examples from literature to make sense of or bring his own narrative to life. For instance, a key turning point came for Neill in 1956, at Trinity College, Cambridge, whilst taking Holy Communion at the feast of St. Paul (January 25th) Then he recognised that he no longer needed "to carry the burdens of the past".

One wonders whether he fully experienced the true forgiveness which he had so rigorously explored in the Hulsean Lectures of 1947 on Forgiveness at Cambridge [62], or defined in A Genuinely Human Existence as the "one completely adequate

method of putting the past back where it belongs - in the past." [63] Perhaps here at last he was able to put the events which led to his departure from India in 1944 back in the past.

Neill resorts to Dante to make sense of what he sees as a crucial moment in a long term healing process. "I can explain this experience only by referring to the tremendous passage of 20 and 21 of the Purgatorio." [64] The focus of this passage is the purification of the soul, and its liberation to rise to a higher terrace. The result of such movement is that the mountain shakes. Once again Neill uses a powerful metaphor to illuminate what he perceives as a highly significant experience.

At first sight it is surprising for a man with evangelical roots that he chose the image of Purgatory. But it is less of a surprise when one remembers how Neill's introduction to Dante by Alexander Nairne, the then Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, had brought such joy. [65] Neill also appears to have been more drawn by the motif of purification and progression rather than the specific image of Purgatory.

Three years later in A Genuinely Human Existence (1959) he also uses the Divina Commedia to illustrate how from time to time "in human history a man appears in whom intense sensitiveness in the intuitive apprehension of reality is married to perfect mastery of form." [66] It is clear from his writing that this book made a profound impact on Neill:

... such is his power over us that, open the book at any point, and we are immediately in

Dante's world; we stand by the glowing red-hot tombs in the Inferno; we share in the exultation of the spirits when the whole mount of Purgatory shakes for joy that one more of the redeemed has come to the end of its purgation.[67]

Neill's obvious delight in the Divina Commedia was clearly heightened by the feeling that he also had in some way "come to the end of" his "purgation." It is as if Neill is using Dante's sensual descriptions as windows onto his own feelings. The major thrust of this chapter in A Genuinely Human Existence is an attempt to integrate his intuition with his intellect.

It was typical of the man Neill that three years after this experience he would produce a comprehensive book attempting to set out a Christian Approach to Psychology, in A Genuinely Human Existence. As a work of psychology it lacks tight definitions, so terms such as sublimination or repression are often used but rarely fully explained.[68] Whilst as a work of theology it lacks sharp focus yet as an attempt to integrate the two disciplines it provides some provocative theories.[69] On a personal level it is the best example of Neill trying to rationalize his own painful experiences and turn these reflections into an aid for others.

This book may hold the keys to Neill's continued prolific written and spoken expression. On the one hand, throughout he identifies and attempts to explain the darker side of human nature. Presumably part of the reason for this is an attempt

to come to terms with his own shadows.

Here within a typical logical structure is a more intuitive analysis of sinfulness. He identifies tension within each human character and then personifies it as Mr Hyde in Chapter 4. This is the side of human nature which is suppressed and repressed, but occasionally leaks out through angry outbursts. This less desirable element in our human existence takes a number of other forms, some of which are characterised in Chapter 8. They include fear, frustration and resentment. In short this book is a partial attempt to be brutally realistic about the human condition, much of it is born out of his recent experience. Perhaps this is Neill's way of facing the "Mr Hyde" side of his character which appears to have taken over at times in India. He does not, however, leave his readers or himself in the depths of despair.

For Neill, "there is no frustration which, if imaginatively and calmly accepted, cannot be turned to creative use; no rind so bitter that it cannot be found to conceal sweet fruit within." Later in the same section he writes of those who have to cope with an "inward and invisible" handicap. This is a "lonely and hard" conflict. But for those who learn to live with some:

irremediable loss, such as the permanent frustration of the hope of marriage and parenthood, and make a career and a character in spite of it, are likely to have little recognition other than the inner

voice of conscience; yet some who have no idea of the price that has been paid may be aware of some special strength or sweetness of character, for which they can find no ready explanation.[70]

Here lies the interpretative key to Neill's experience of "purgation" and his ability to grow through his suffering. Partial healing appears to have come from acceptance of his circumstance. This has been added to by his belief that there is a positive value in suffering. In other words, the way in which he copes with his pain is to rationalize, externalize and ultimately see that he was going through a "vale of soul-making", which had the potential to turn the suffering he went through into a creative force.

Where for Neill was the dynamic which could transform the "bitter rind" or deep "frustration"? His answer to this question and also questions of theodicy, which are particularly thrown up by the incompleteness of the human personality, is found in the life of the one man who lived A Genuinely Human Existence.

He once again offers an explicit Christo-centric answer and, therefore, points his readers to participate in the struggles of this man in the garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus:

rises above his sufferings so completely as to show more concern for others, for his mother, for the dying thief, for the

soldiers who crucified him - than for himself. More important still, he is convinced that suffering itself is something that can be turned to creative purpose in this strangely confused and troubled universe.[71]

On one level this is the example of silent suffering and of "self-forgetfulness and self-denial" that Neill himself attempted to follow.[72] On another level Neill believes that Christ's suffering can have a positive transforming impact.

This Christo-centric model is the underlying theme of the book. Whilst Neill does not acknowledge it, he is trying to integrate his own painful experiences with this powerful exemplar. If one bears Neill's own personal context into account this book becomes an especially moving attempt to bring together Christianity with psychology and his own experience.

The reason why he attempted to make such integrations is rooted not only in his own personal experiences, but also his location of Jesus Christ at the centre of history:

The life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth are not simply events among other events - they are the Event, the central happening of human history, from which all other events can be measured forwards and backwards in unending series to the end and the beginning of time.[73]

It was this belief that enabled him to make such positive

assertions about his own experience and suffering, as well as its historical purpose. It was this central historical event which ultimately forced him out to work as an apologist and evangelist.

Section c) Apologist and Evangelist

Neill devotes over sixty pages in the Autobiography to his work amongst students.[74] He led missions in a staggering number of universities. They included Oxford, Toronto, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Colorado, New Brunswick, and McMaster. He worked at three different levels.

First, he did some teaching missions aimed particularly at Christians. Secondly, he took part in further didactic work aimed at those from a "Christian background" or who were "spoiled Christians". Thirdly, he spoke to those working from a "totally secular framework", for whom Christian presuppositions were no longer taken seriously.[75] Neill was sensitive to the needs of different audiences, and so altered the focus of his many presentations appropriately.

i) The Apologist's Goals

In the Christian Faith Today he argues that "the apologist desires to produce conviction, but it is his aim to produce it under strictly observed conditions of academic integrity." [76] Later he argues that the "apologist is an evangelist in chains". [77] These are impressive and persuasive words, but does Neill fully attempt to follow such an apologetic method or is he merely using the disguise of the apologist to aid his work as an evangelist?

In another work, Twentieth Century Christianity (1961), which he both edited and wrote for, he further defends the cause of the apologist. Characteristically, he turns to the past masters to promote his case. He cites not only the "philosophers who went down into the arena" such as James Ward (The Gifford lectures on Naturalism and Agnosticism 1899), but also William Temple's mission to the University of Oxford in 1931 as evidence to support his case for the value of the apologist.

The point he ~~is~~ makes is that the apologist has had an important role in recent history and can therefore be useful in the continuing defence and promotion of Christianity. Thus he is, with great dexterity and subtlety, justifying his own taking on of the apologist's guise through the use of past precedent.

But his first aim, stated at its simplest level in Christ, His Church and His World (1948), was not to justify himself, but rather to make the "Gospel....intelligible to the hearer of the present age." [78] Beyond that, he wished to bring "conviction" that following Christ was the only way to a Genuinely Human Existence. It is illuminating to examine some of the techniques he employed to carry out this task.

ii) The Apologist's Technique.

It was the secular student audience which he particularly enjoyed facing, probably because they particularly stretched him. Rather condescendingly, he asks "how does one speak of religion to an audience whose minds have been reduced to a

condition in which nothing of imagination, of illumination, or of intellectual adventure can grow?[79]

His approach can be seen most clearly in Christian Faith Today (1955). This is an apologetic book, produced by a publisher specialising in mass distribution, which primarily developed out of his lectures and mission addresses around the world. It was in Cambridge, in a series of open lectures, that the main part of the material was first delivered. At the end of the last in the series there was, according to Neill, a stunned silence.

He does not explain this in terms of rhetorical excellence, though this is subtly implied, but rather on the basis that his audience realised that there ultimately is no room for neutrality, as any statement of the Christian Gospel involves a challenge.[80] The Christian Faith Today builds up to a similar crescendo. In the last lecture the recurring question of "What think ye of Christ?" is suddenly and unexpectedly turned around to ask effectively "What does Christ think of you?"[81]

Here Neill the rational apologist for the Christian faith is to be found at his most impressive. In many ways his fourth chapter on "Jesus" is the central pivot of this rigorous argument. It lacks explicit emotional appeal and instead relies upon short simple affirmations of faith, such as "the life of Jesus is of universal significance". Neill justifies this extraordinary claim on the relatively weak assertion that Jesus demonstrated "perfect adaptation to the circumstances" he

found himself thrust into.[82]

He is relatively successful with this argument partly because of the cumulative weight of his assertions; but more significantly, because of his sensitive treatment of suffering, followed by his highlighting the way in which "Jesus brings a new attitude into the world towards suffering." [83] This discussion of the nature and impact of suffering contains an honest incisiveness which leaves this reader, at least, convinced he was drawing on his own experience.[84] Here is clear evidence that his work as an apologist was shaped, and even improved, by his ten years of "darkness."

By contrast his sixth chapter on "Christ the Reconciler" begins with a more empirical approach. He makes a wide-ranging literary and practical analysis of disjointed human relationships. He then describes both the need for and reality of reconciliation and forgiveness. On the basis of this human analogy he skilfully moves his audience to consider the question of divine forgiveness:

If men sometimes forgive one another, and if forgiveness is seen to be an admirable thing, we might hesitatingly infer that in the relation of God to man also forgiveness might be a possibility.[85]

Notice first the movement of the argument from the known to the unknown. Secondly, watch carefully as Neill makes use of hypothetical language such as "if", "hesitatingly" and "possibility". The effect of such terms is to allow his audience to

follow his argument without being alienated from his assertions. By implication, such an approach, which recurs throughout the book, illustrates that "the faith of Jesus Christ is a faith for reasonable men." [86]

As an apologist within the University context he therefore sought to make a rational defence of Christianity through both the logical manner of his argument and the setting out of a framework in which Jesus Christ was at the centre. In his lectures aimed at American pastors, and later published as On the Ministry, he emphasized the importance of boldness, structure, imagination, intellectual fibre, clarity and accessibility when preaching the "word of God". [87] These were lessons Neill himself also bore in mind as an apologist, as he attempted to make the "Gospel... intelligible to the hearer of the present age." [88]

Nevertheless, his approach was marked by flexibility. He would not always construct academically based arguments to demonstrate the reasonableness of Christianity. For instance, books such as Who is Jesus Christ? (1956) and What is Man? (1960), which were part of the World Christian Book series, are written in a far more simple style. He had a non-student and less well-educated international market in mind. Nevertheless, he also maintains a highly Christo-centric message in both books. [89] Perhaps, it is this common theme which lies behind his varied work as an apologist?

iii) The Apologist's Motivation

If I were today thirty years younger than I am, would I make the same decision that I made in 1924? [i.e. take up missionary service]..... Between 1924 and 1954 many things have changed. But the command of Christ stands unchanged; his gospel must be preached to the ends of earth and to every creature.[87]

Neill's international work as a travelling apologist should be interpreted in the light of this challenging statement at the end of his book on missionary work Under Three Flags (1954). The preaching of the Gospel across the globe was quite simply, for Neill, an act of obedience. Thus, he saw himself as following the command of his master, by working as an apologist or "evangelist in chains". Furthermore, the energy he expended as an apologist during this time would suggest he perceived this work as one form of "preaching the gospel."

Moreover, it was not the technique of being an effective apologist or preacher with which Neill was primarily concerned, rather it was the content of the message which remained fundamental to him. This can be seen most clearly in On the Ministry (1952). There he argues that "how you preach is important, but what you preach is much more important still." [91] He may have enjoyed, and even needed the attention of an audience, the feelings of power, and the affirmation of read-

ers, but these were but secondary reasons for writing and speaking as an apologist.

His aim is reflected in his ultimate advice to his American audience "try to preach faithfully this Gospel both of judgment and of mercy" both in "truth" and yet never aiming to wound.[92] Behind such a message is the simple belief that "what they need is to see Jesus".[93] This short-hand illustrates both how the reason for and the core of his communication has remained unchanged from his time in India.[94]

If that is the perceived "need", then the task of the preacher is a vital one. The implication is that the way in which people "will see Jesus" is through the agency of the minister. Such an understanding of the role of the preacher may further explain why there was so "much ado" as an apologist both in and outside Geneva.

iv) An Exception

There is one book written in 1956 (and published in 1958) which stands out amongst his work as an apologist during this period. In this text he does not attempt to combine the roles of evangelist with apologist. Instead, he draws together the three different primary roles outlined in this chapter. Thus in his best-selling study of Anglicanism (now in its fourth edition) he combines his skills as a historian, writer and ecumenist to make a careful and comprehensive:

"explanation, in the light of history and theology, of the nature and working of the Anglican Communion, its relationship with

other Christian groups, and its part in the movement for Christian Union." [95]

In order to understand the present, as well as plan for the future, he turns to the past roots of Anglicanism. This book should also be seen not simply as an attempt at self-identification, but also as a subtle apology, even justification, for the existence of the Anglican communion. He does not, however, defend its permanent continuance, since he still maintains an ecumenical vision. [96]

In both the original Preface and Autobiography he is keen to underline this is not a "history book" nor a "book about theology". [97] His stated purpose was simply "to show how Anglicans had thought and lived and prayed through the years". [98] Once again he does this partially by using the historical and descriptive devices outlined earlier in this chapter. [99]

He is involved in a far more extensive task than simply informing and educating his audience. For instance, his full and sensitive treatment of Cranmer, in complete contrast to scholars such as Gregory Dix in The Shape of the Liturgy, encourages his readers to value the Archbishop's varied contributions to the life of the Church: "We have as our chief reformer the man who had greater genius for liturgical worship than any other of whom we have record in the whole history of the Church." [100] This strong assertion reflects Neill's own delight in the Cranmerian contribution to liturgy, and his desire to persuade others to participate more fully in such an

appreciation.

A parallel example can be seen in the way in which his ecumenical efforts are applauded: "If Cranmer had had his way, the World Council of Churches would have come into being in 1548, and not in 1948." [101] This comment can be read on one level as a further example of Neill encouraging his readers to recognise and value Cranmer's work. But on another it has the potential to act as an implicit persuasive device to draw his readers into the ecumenical movement. In both cases Neill moves the reader from information via appreciation to persuasion.

This book is far more than a series of historical vignettes designed to inform and persuade his readers to value and even participate within the Anglican Communion. It is an apologetic narrative born out of both lectures on the continent in French or German and the lively discussions which followed them. Neill attempted such a defence through definition, occasional hyperbole, historical explanation, contextualisation and analysis of the present day. [102]

Part of the reason for such a work is to be found most succinctly in his Preface to the fourth edition written in 1976, some twenty years after its original publication:

The Anglican Communion has obvious weaknesses.... Other Communion have their obvious excellencies, theological and liturgical. Yet this is a fellowship in which it is possible for me to proclaim all that I

believe to be true, and in which I am not required to teach anything which I believe to be untrue. Why then should I wish to exchange it for any other? In this part of the fellowship of the people of Christ I am content to live and to die.[103]

This affirmation of Anglicanism is far stronger than his comments in 1956. There his attachment to Anglican churches is explained in terms of their potential.[104] Twenty years of extensive travel and ministry in almost two hundred Anglican dioceses further heightened his loyalty to this Communion. His initial and continuing apologetic work for Anglicanism was ultimately but a secondary consideration.

In order to understand fully his reason for being an apologist for Anglicanism it is worth noticing the key reasons he cites for his continued attachment. First, he highlights the freedom it gave him to "proclaim" and "teach". As has been demonstrated earlier his proclamation and teaching was founded upon a single underlying theological theme. It is clear that for Neill membership of the Anglican Church facilitated the proclamation of that Christo-centric theme. Thus it is not surprising that he defended the framework which allowed him to teach such a message.

Secondly, Neill points to the fact that it was a fellowship of people united around Christ. Whilst he admits it was merely a part of a wider international community, Neill still perceived that at the heart of this venture was the figure of

Christ. Thus, it is not entirely surprising that Anglicanism begins with a reference to the "preaching" of the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" and closes with a definition of the Church as "the body" of God's "son".[105] This book may lack the explicit defence of Christological belief found in other apologetic works, nevertheless, this Christo-centric bracketing further points to the fact that Neill sees God at work behind the dynamic development of the Anglican movement.

This lengthy chapter has attempted to demonstrate how his three roles in Geneva as ecumenist, writer and apologist are unified by a central Christo-centric theme. In order to promote and fully develop this central belief he employed a number of techniques with varying degrees of success in numerous different contexts. Whilst, the central focus of his faith does not seem to have radically altered through leaving India, this painful departure and subsequent depression did heighten the sharpness of this message.

In other words he found some comfort through continuing to work and to serve the world-wide church. Moreover, in the light of the seriousness of his condition alongside his prolific work-load it is not unfair to suggest that this suffering had a far from solely negative impact upon him. Like J.B.Phillips or L.P.Hartley it was both from and through the point of greatest weakness he was able to reach to new heights. The following chapter will turn from Neill's darkness to new glimpses of light.

Notes on Chapter Six

- 1: Auto. Section.6. p.70.
- 2: Proceedings. p.606.
- 3: Unpublished interview with Lesslie Newbiggin in Dec.88. He went on to describe how Neill had problems with his temper, insomnia as well as very severe depression.
- 4: L.Brown. Sermon at Thanksgiving Service. (October. 1984)
- 5: Proceedings. p.607-8.
- 6: Proceedings. p.608.
- 7: Fisher Papers, (Lambeth Library: Unpublished, 1945-59), In this letter Archbishop Fisher recommends that Neill should not be appointed Headmaster of Haileybury and Imperial Service College, partly on grounds of health and also on the basis he could be more use to the world wide Church outside a school. (1947. no.[32] p. 157-60.) Neill clearly did not have as much respect for Fisher as for his predecessor William Temple.
- 8: Auto. Section 6. p.8.
- 9: Auto. Section 6. p.9.
- 10: Auto. Section 6. p.4.
- 11: Auto. Section 7. p.311.
- 12: Auto. Section 6. p.92. *Interestingly, he was a key figure in the shaping of the W.C.C. General Assembly in Amsterdam, 1948.*
- 13: Auto. Section 7. p.2.
- 14: Auto. Section 7. p.46.
- 15: Auto. Section 7. p.2.
- 16: Auto. Section 7. p.23.

- 17: ed. S.C.Neill and R.Rouse A History of the Ecumenical Movement. 1517-1948. (London: S.P.C.K. 1954.) p.8. (Written especially with the W.C.C. council at Evanston, 1954, in mind.)
[Hereafter referred to as H.E.M.]
- 18: H.E.M. p.18.
- 19: H.E.M. p.71.
- 20: Auto. Section 7. p.69.
- 21: Auto. Section 7. P.74.
- 22: H.E.M. Epilogue.
- 23: S.C.Neill, Christian Society. (London: Nisbet, 1952), p.164. [Hereafter referred to as C.S.]
- 24: C.S. p.164.
- 25: C.S. p.39-40.
- 26: S.C.Neill, Christ His Church and His World, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948), [Hereafter referred to as C.C.W.] p.96.
- 27: C.S. p.55.
- 28: C.S. p.115.
- 29: C.S. p.153-4.
- 30: C.S. p.325.
- 31: S.C.Neill, Men of Unity (London: S.C.M. 1930), p.36.
[Hereafter referred to as M.U.]
- 32: M.U. p.36.
- 33: M.U. p.64.
- 34: M.U. p.6.
- 35: C.S. p.163.
- 36: S.C.Neill, "Co-operation and Unity" I.R.M. Vol. XLIV -1955.
p.439-446.

- 37: C.S. p.322.38: Auto. Section 6. p.26-7. He was critical of Visser't Hooft in terms of his inability to form a team and for being an intellectual and not an administrator.
- 39: Auto. Section 6. p.8.f. The late 1940's saw Neill working in the phrase of this chapter title as an "Apprentice Ecumenist". He mentions conferences in Lambeth (Anglican), Amsterdam (W.C.C), Whitby (I.M.C.), Oslo (Christian Youth), and Manila (Asian Churches). Other international contacts would have been built up by his travel through China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India and Pakistan for the International Missionary Committee.
- 40: ed. S.C.Neill, Twentieth Century Christianity. (London: Collins, 1961), [Hereafter referred to as T.C.C.] p.340f.
- 41: C.S. p.268.
- 42: M.U. p.9.
- 43: Auto. Section 7. p. 23f
- 44: Fisher Papers. (Unpublished: Lambeth Library, 1945-59), His extensive thirteen part travel diary was sent section by section to Fisher in 1950. [ref no. 76: 383-448.]
- 45: S.C.Neill, "African Theological Survey", Int. R. Miss. pp.207-211.
- 46: Auto. Section 7. p.23.f.
- 47: Auto. Section 7. p.33.f.
- 48: Auto. Section 7. p.33.f.
- 49: Auto. p.127. He wrote of the "unhappy division" between I.V.F. and S.C.M. he saw whilst in Cambridge.
- 50: Auto. p.220. His experience on the "mission field" con-

vinced him that faction is a great curse of the Indian Church.

51: M.U. p.191.

52: M.U. p.191. The Unfinished Task is also the title of a book which challenges the Church to face its responsibility to be a "dynamic witness" in a "changing society". (London: Lutterworth, 1981), Ch.4 and Ch.7.

53: C.S. p.132.

54: Auto. Ch.1. p.92.f.

55: S.C.Neill. "The Evangelicals in the Church of England. (part 1)" London Institute for Contemporary Christianity Lectures on Tape[now known as "Christian Impact"]. (First lecture, 1976.) These extracts follow immediately after each other in Neill's fast-moving survey of the roots of Evangelicalism.

56: S.C.Neill, God's Apprentice (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), ed. E.M.Jackson. pp.205-6.

57: Unpublished interview with Lesslie Newbigin in Dec.1988.

58: Auto. Ch.1. p.92.f.

59: Auto. Ch.1. p.92.f.

60: Auto. Ch.1. p.100.

61: Auto. Ch.1. p.101.

62: Auto. Section 6. p.14. He describes his lectures on "Forgiveness". He builds up to the reality of Divine Forgiveness, only introducing in the fifth of six lectures. Once again Neill tackles this familiar subject from a original angle, by attempting to demonstrate first that the worlds of law and grace are separate and should be seen as such.

63: G.H.E. p.115.f. 64: Auto. Ch.1. p.95.

65: G.A. p.62-63.

66: G.H.E. p.81. Neill's breadth of knowledge may further be illustrated by the variety of example he cites. From D.H.Lawrence via William Blake to Vincent Van Gogh. The creative use of such allusions to support his case suggests not only that he was an imaginative thinker, but also that his artistic sensitivity appears was heightened by his feelings at this time.

67: G.H.E. p.82.

68: a) Work of Psychology: He makes only five references to Sigmund Freud in G.H.E. and in each case it is either to extend his own argument or challenge Freud's assertions. p.31, p.72, p.76, p.106, and p.235.

69: G.H.E. p.65f. Provocative Theories: See especially his discussion on suffering. p.65.f.

70: G.H.E. p.207.

71: G.H.E. p.66.

72: G.H.E. p.286.

73: G.H.E. p.306.

74: Auto. Section 7. iv) "Among the Students." p.133-195.

75: Auto. p.193.

76: S.C.Neill. Christian Faith Today. [C.F.T.] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955) p.11.

77: C.F.T. p.12.

78: C.C.W. p.148.

79: Auto. p.193.f.80: C.F.T. p.12.

81: C.F.T. p.265.

- 82: C.F.T. p.104.
- 83: C.F.T. p.111.
- 84: C.F.T. p.111. "Those who have not suffered themselves greatly indulge in a great deal of foolish talk about suffering. It is supposed to have a naturally purifying and elevating effect on the human spirit." Jesus Christ is held up as the model of how to cope with suffering.
- 85: C.F.T. p.155.
- 86: C.F.T. p.7.
- 87: S.C.Neill. On the Ministry. [O.M.](London: S.C.M. 1952.) Ch.3."The Minister and his Message." p.63.f.
- 88: O.M. Ch.3.(Passim)
- 89: S.C.Neill. What is Man? (London: Lutterworth, 1960) W.C.B. no. 36. on p.72 "It is only through Jesus Christ that clear and confident hope has entered into the world." Who is Jesus Christ? (London: Lutterworth, 1956) W.C.B. no.14. (passim).
- 90: S.C.Neill. Under Three Flags (New York: Friendship Press, 1954) pp.169-70.
- 91: O.M. p.82.
- 92: O.M. p.85.
- 93: O.M. p.66.
- 94: See Chapter 4 and 5 of this thesis.
- 95: S.C.Neill. Anglicanism. [Ang.] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), On the front cover of the first edition.
- 96: Ang. p.404. (Epilogue)
- 97: Auto. Section 7. (ii) p.25.
- 98: Auto. Section 7. (ii) p.25f.

99: See Section One: (i) "Historical Method" and (ii) "Descriptive Method".

100: Anq. p.52. (4th. Edition.)

101: Anq. p.86-7. (4th. Edition.)

102: This can be seen by the four questions he outlines in the introduction of his first edition of this book.

103: Anq. p.7. (4th. Edition.)

104: Anq. preface. (1st Edition.)

105: Anq. p.9. and p.406.

Chapter 7: Far From Quiet on the Hamburg Front (1962-68)

In Cambridge I had lived in college rooms. In India I had had a succession of furnished mission bungalows. In Geneva never knowing how long I should be staying there, I had made do with a number of furnished flats. In Hamburg I had four bare walls, a floor and a ceiling.[1]

After several months in furnished lodgings Neill ^{bought} his own flat, which he described as the "first real home" he had ever had. He also gained an impressive title. He was "Professor of Missions and Ecumenical Theology" at the University of Hamburg for nearly six years. This was a post he had been invited to fill whilst at Geneva.

The University authorities had clearly valued his contribution in 1956-7 when he had also spent a year in Hamburg as visiting Professor of Missions. Thus at the age of 62 Neill came into his first full-time professorship. His predecessor was the impressive missiologist Walter Freytag. It was a "prestigious" chair which Neill, who was fluent in German, was well-suited to fill.

As this short period in Hamburg was one of his most productive in terms of writing, this Chapter will focus primarily upon his publications. Whilst there he produced five signifi-

cant books of his own, and edited two further texts. Any assessment of the quality of this series of publications should take into account the fact he was elected within seven years to the British Academy. Perhaps part of the reason for this impressive productivity was that for the first time since Cambridge he had continuous access to an extensive University library.

Neill was, therefore, well equipped to tackle a variety of strands of theology in considerable depth. Some scholars, however, narrow the content of Neill's work at this time and suggest he was primarily concerned with communicating a new theme.

Owen Chadwick, for example, argues with typical persuasiveness that Neill had found a new subject to study and concentrate on at this time:

Europe was falling, the world of colonialists was over. The expansion of Christianity into Latin America, India, Africa, or China had often been seen as a facet of colonial power. What were the consequences for Christianity in the Third World of the decline of Europe? To this problem and the related problem of the past, to what extent Christian missions depended on political power from the West, he devoted most of the rest of his life.[2]

But do these assertions do full justice to the variety of themes which Neill tackled whilst in Hamburg? Were his reflec-

tions based on wider subjects than the decline of colonialism and the implications for mission work? Did the questions he asked relate to more than merely the dependence of Christian missions "on political power from the West"? Were there a number of other "problems" which Neill was equally, if not more, devoted to, than the consequences of European decline for third world Christianity. In short, was Neill more comprehensive in his approach to history than Owen Chadwick suggests?

The aim of this chapter is partly to demonstrate Neill was struggling with a much wider set of problems than Chadwick identifies. This can be immediately seen by the number of different guises he took on whilst at Hamburg. They included Neill as a (a) Historian, (b) New Testament Scholar, (c) Ecumenist. This chapter will examine, through his writings, each of these different roles in turn.

He was clearly a master of more than one discipline, a student of more than one theme and a teacher of more than one subject. Given such diversity, is it possible to discern a "single thread" running through his work as an historian, New Testament scholar and ecumenist?

In order both to answer this foundational question and attempt to explain why he took on these three roles it is necessary to carefully study the three major works he produced while in Hamburg. They were A History of Christian Missions, New Testament Interpretation (1861-1961) and The Church and Christian Union. His other less significant works will also

be referred to.

Various questions will be posed of each of these major texts in order to demonstrate further the weakness of Chadwick's case. It will not only be asked, what are the primary themes that Neill is attempting to highlight, but also, how and why he expresses them. The wider implications for an explanation of Neill's life and work will also be studied. Inevitably these questions are inter-related, as content often determines methodology, which may in turn hint at an explanation of Neill's work at this time.

This chapter will, therefore, ultimately attempt to assess whether Neill wished to communicate on a solely academic level as a professor of Missiology and Ecumenism who had a passion for history, or whether there were other motives for his prolific expression in Hamburg?

Is Owen Chadwick correct, for example, when he argues that Neill had a "non-academic motive - to explain the world-wide Church to itself and get it to see the truth or the truths about itself"![3] Or is this too narrow an explanation for this persuasive scholar who had such pronounced Christo-centric foundations? Is one, therefore, faced ultimately by a man who was far more than simply an educator?

a) Historian and Missiologist

Once again both Newbigin's comment that Neill was "primarily a Historian" [4] and Chadwick's belief that he "loved history more than theology proper"[5] are further born out by the weight of historical material he produced at this time.

From his editing of The Layman in Christian History (1963) via his Pelican History of Missions (1964) to his work on Colonialism and Christian Missions (1966) it is clear that here is a historian hard at work. Likewise, lectures on subjects such as "Rome and the Ecumenical Movement"[6] or articles such as "Theology 1939-64"[7] reflect how Neill approached a variety of topics through a historical door. Section (b) and (c) will also demonstrate that both the content and methodology of his other books were often heavily influenced by his work as a historian.

Arguably his most significant work at this time was the Pelican History of Missions (1964), part of which was quoted at his memorial service.[8] This is a wide-ranging and comprehensive description of the expansion of Christianity, from its humble Middle Eastern origins to a worldwide religion. It reads like the product of many years of research in more than one language. The Bibliography may be select, but its twenty pages points to a life-time of continuous reading.

A more careful reading of the complete four hundred and seventy eight pages suggests that Chadwick is probably correct when he argues that it could have been written "by no one else of his generation".[9] A number of major themes recur throughout this book. They include the expansion of the Church, the importance of evangelism, the significance of individuals, and a distinctive view of history. As he tackles each of these topics Neill seeks both implicitly and explicitly to persuade his readers to new understandings and new actions. His tool

can be summed up in two words: persuasive history.

Theme 1: The Expansion of the Church

For instance, he identifies a variety of reasons for the extraordinary development of the early Church. They included points such as that the first Christians displayed an infectious burning conviction which was inspired by the nature of their message. This led to a purity of lifestyle and charitable service which was magnetic to outsiders dissatisfied by their own situation. Combined with these factors was the impressive way in which they faced persecution.

In many ways this portrayal acts not only as careful historical reflection, but also like a spotlight on the Church today, highlighting its inadequacies by graphically describing the positive elements within the early Church. This is but one of many hidden rhetorical devices within this text.

In order to discern the themes peculiar to Neill it is interesting to compare the reasons he selects for early Church expansion with the causes identified by other church historians such as Henry Chadwick or W.Frend. Likewise, a similar comparison may be made focussing on the way in which he chronicles these events.

Henry Chadwick, for example, puts more emphasis upon the mixed motives of the first Christians, the Church structures, the conservative attitude towards the State and the economic environment within which they lived.[10] These factors Neill does not entirely ignore, but he does give more attention to the individual, such as King Agbar or St. Patrick.[11]

Both the significance of the role of the individual and Neill's reason for recording the expansion of the Church will be explored more fully later. At this stage it is worth underlining the overall similarity of historical style, as both historians are attempting to make clear the causes which led to the growth of the Church. Their methodology may be similar, but the various emphases are different. One reason for this may be found in a second key theme.

Theme 2: Evangelism

Henry Chadwick, like Neill was no Marxist historian, but his account does read like a less euphoric description of the early Church. He lacks the emphasis upon the inward motivation which Neill also describes with such apparent empathy. This difference perhaps hints at the contrasting convictions of both historians. Thus Neill writes that part of the reason for "the Conquest of the Roman World" by the Church was the "burning conviction" that "in the face of every obstacle men can be won and must be won for Christ, which was the mainspring of the whole exercise." [12]

He does not explicitly define what he means by the comment that "people must be won for Christ". The context does, however, provide some clues. He makes his conclusion having cited Eusebius's description of early second century missionaries who sold everything in order to "preach the word of faith to those as yet who had heard nothing of it", [13] and then appointed "pastors" to help these new converts grow in the

faith.

It would, therefore, be fair to interpret "won for Christ" in a wider sense than merely conversion. The inference is that the responsible evangelist not only brings people to a decision, but also ensures they are built up in the faith. In this section Neill, by highlighting effective methods of fully communicating the gospel about Christ, implicitly encourages his audience to question their own goals and methods of communication.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to W.Frend who argues in The Rise of Christianity that "the classic writings of the Sub Apostolic Period do not suggest collective enthusiasm as the hallmark of Christianity," such writings also "show small concern for mission." [14]

Both Frend and Chadwick, unlike Neill, make little of the early Christians' internal motivation or preoccupation with mission. His emphasis upon these factors set him apart from other Historians. So do statements such as "the Church of the first Christian generation was a genuinely missionary Church." [15]

Here, as throughout, history is implicitly used as a challenge to today's Church. This kind of style is far less easily recognisable in the work of Chadwick or Frend. In order to support his various subtle challenges to today's Church he cites large numbers of individual Christians throughout the thirteen chapters which make up part 1 and 2 of A History of Christian Missions.

Theme 3: The Importance of the Individual

The implication is that Neill, when interpreting the growth of the Church, put more emphasis upon the work of the individual than the underlying socio-economic trends within society. Thus, statements such as "what is clear is that every Christian is a witness,"[16] could leave the reader with the feeling of inadequacy or, more positively, with the belief that the committed individual can have a positive impact upon the expansion of the Church.

But he does not solely concentrate upon the ordinary individual Christian. He also makes use of "the notable event and the outstanding career as illustrations"[17] of his overriding theme: the expansion of Christianity. This historical technique can be seen throughout the book. In his third chapter on the Dark Ages, for example, he both highlights the lives of individuals such as St. Columba and Boniface as well as the eighth century Iconoclastic controversies in the East.

This comprehensive approach can be seen even more clearly in the fourth chapter on "Early European Expansion, 1000-1500" which even includes references to Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic and Swedish kings and the impact they had upon the expansion of Christianity. The overall implication here, and throughout A History of Missions, is this as a global movement which primarily relies on the efforts of individuals.

This theme of the importance of the individual runs through many of his other books. For example, in The Layman in Christian History he sought to demonstrate "that in every age

the ingenuity of the laymen have been exercised in countless ways in the service of the Church." [18] This text appears to be delivering a "no" against clericalism and too much emphasis upon hierarchies, by refocussing the reader's attention on the key role the lay person has played in church history.

In his article on Britain 1600-1780, he cites five outstanding figures, including Mr Secretary Milton (1608-74) author of Paradise Lost, Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), "most lovable and godly of physicians" [19], John Evelyn (1620-1706) "a Christian of yet another type - learned without brilliance, pious without excess, thoughtful, dignified and courteous" [20] and "the sublime genius" [21] of Isaac Newton.

Explicitly in the Preface he claims "it is time that some kind of memorial was raised to these forgotten saints". [22] Outstanding individuals deserved to be rendered their due. The implicit argument is also clear "if lay people have worked for Christ in the past, then the same must surely be true for today."

Or in Neill's own words "the layman must be alert, aware of his surroundings, and able to communicate with them as a Christian." The method he recommends is not isolationism or withdrawal, but rather learning to be "fired by imaginative sympathy with his world, wholly identified with its needs, though wholly independent of it in its mistaken desires." [23] The thrust of the Preface sets the tone of this book which clearly is far more than an academic or historical record of the part lay people have played in the Church.

The theological foundations and implications of this theme are not rigorously worked out or explicitly expressed. Nevertheless, it is clear through his emphasis in both A History of Christian Missions and The Layman in Christian History that Neill believed in "the Whole people of God" working as servants in a variety of roles in different spheres.[24]

This is but one of the foundations for his distinctive view of History.

Theme 4: A Distinctive View of History

Moreover, he implicitly points his readers to a distinctive understanding of history, initially perceived by the author of Luke. In Neill's eyes "Luke" was the first person to see "that the new Israel, like the old, was destined to have its history, and recognised that sacred history must be related to the history of the world." [25] To support this assertion he cites as a footnote the scene setting political comment of Luke 3 v1-2 which firmly fixes both the ministry of John the Baptist, and more significantly Jesus, to a specific historical context.

Neill follows such a methodology in his own book, frequently citing the political context, in order to make fuller sense of the "sacred story". [26] It is important, however, to emphasize that Neill is neither attempting, like the papal historian Walter Ullman, to draw a sharp dichotomy between the two stories, nor is he trying to communicate a Lutheran view of the two Kingdoms.

In Hamburg one can clearly see Neill struggling with the complex issue of the relationship between secular and sacred history. For example, in his introduction to The Layman in Christian History he asks:

Have we drawn too sharp a distinction between Church and world? The two spheres are not the same; each has its independence, and methods of operation appropriate to that purpose for which it exists. Yet is it possible to make any rigid separation between them? Is it not inevitable that, where the Church exists at all, its relationship with the world should be that of interpenetration rather than of mutual exclusion, let alone complete hostility?[27]

These questions are explored in both this book and his History of Christian Missions. It is clear from both works that he believes it is impossible "to make any rigid separation between" the two spheres. He does not, however, totally reject a dichotomous view of history, which recognises a secular and sacred element involved in creative relationship.

His chronicling of missionary history is an attempt to analyse how the Church and world interpenetrated each other. Thus, by choosing to write on "a Faith for the World" Neill attempts to portray how neither story can be told in isolation of the other.

Furthermore, Neill's interpretation of Luke's distinctive

view of History also implicitly sheds light on his own belief. For Neill, it is the delay of the Parousia which led to the portrayal of the "sacred" story by Luke. This new situation, where history was no longer imminently about to end, made a new method of expression necessary:

The life of the Church is to be not a frenzied proclamation because the time is short, but a steady programme of extension throughout the world, yet with an unflinching sense of urgency because for each man any and every moment may prove to be the crucial time of decision.[28]

It is significant that Neill should view Lukan eschatology in this manner. As can be seen from this extract Neill's interpretation is centred upon the need for an existential decision based not on a universal and imminent Parousia, but rather upon the temporal nature of individuals.

There is a sense in which Neill also reflects this "urgency" through his own chronicling and perception of history. He did not involve himself in or rather applaud a "frenzied proclamation" but rather described with great accuracy the "steady programme of extension throughout the world." What lies behind this historical movement?

As has been shown Neill answers this on one level that emphasizes the underlying causes of this growth. On another level he describes the expansion of the Church as the "great miracle of history".[29] Thus his interpretation of history

appears to balance a progressive view, which puts more emphasis upon causes within history, with a providential view, which underlines the hand of God working both behind the scenes and in the midst of the action.

He is, therefore, able to conclude on the final page that in spite of the "weakness of human endeavour" and the numerous fallacies of the Church he is able to state optimistically: "And yet the Church is there today, the Body of Christ in every land, the great miracle of history, in which the living God himself through his Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell." [30] His ultimate explanation of the historical development of the Church is to be found in his understanding of God and the way in which he locates Himself in the Church.

As "the living God himself" is operating within and therefore through the Church, he is able to communicate such an optimistic teleological view of church history. His belief in a God who is involved in the history of the Church leads him to persuade others to a positive view which has certain similarities with a Hegelian understanding and points to a telos.

Theme 5: Persuasive History

The four themes highlighted each show Neill to be an historian who is attempting to persuade his readers. In his analysis of the expansion of the early Church (Theme 1), for example, it could be argued that such selection represents more than a projection of his own feelings but rather an attempt to

encourage his readers also to be filled with a similar "burning conviction" to win people for Christ. Suffering and persecution may follow, but the unstated assumption is that as the early Christians suffered much worse, then so too should the Church of today be prepared to follow in their footsteps. Here is a subtle rhetorical use of history as a catalyst for mission.

This is, however, no hagiographic or whitewashed account. Both forced baptisms on the point of a sword and the ultimately "disastrous" crusades are graphically described. The History of Missions is full of the "blind selfishness of the Churches the mistakes that have been made, the treacheries, the catastrophes, the crimes by which the record is sullied." [31] He stands, for example, with Stephen Runciman's harsh description of the Crusading Movement as a "vast fiasco". [32]

Neill is clearly not a presuppositionless chronicler of history, for at times he even slips into hyperbole and even exaggeration to make his case; but he is a historian of integrity who allows the evidence to dictate the main thrust of his account. For Neill, the various failures of the Church are not to be hidden away or glossed over, but are rather to be learnt from. Thus he attempts to tell the story "warts and all". The implication of this is that the Church may grow, but is in itself imperfect.

Nevertheless, the overall impact of such an honest approach is far from negative. He hoped to convey to the reader "a sense of movement, not always in a single direction but

always exciting and to the Christian both challenging and exciting." [33] This charting of success and failure has a cumulative impact.

This mixed story of progression is used as a rhetorical tool, both to challenge the comfortable reader to action and to encourage the disenchanted follower to go on. Thus, by outlining the expansion of the Church in the way that he does, it is as if Neill is saying that "Christians have acted in the past like this and the results have been.... therefore we should be either warned by their failures or inspired by their successes." In this sense this book is also a pastoral rhetorical device, in that he is encouraging others to participate in the history of the Church.

Even on a second or third reading the book leaves the reader with a feeling of optimism. The Church has grown, despite numerous set-backs, the Church will therefore continue to grow. In the Conclusion, for example, he cites the apparently less than favourable conditions for growth in the "unbroken darkness of the tenth century in Western Europe" and the "cool and rational eighteenth century" but at both times the Church experienced renewal and development. [34] The implication is that this can also happen today.

The twist in the tale of this section is the point that "such renewals do not come automatically; they come only as the fruit of deliberate penitence, self-dedication, and hope. And the starting point of all these is ruthless realism as to the situation in which the church finds itself." [35] Thus History

is used not only to encourage but also as a didactic tool to challenge his readers to a realistic self-appraisal.

So far it has been demonstrated how Neill's outlining of the expansion of the Church, the importance of Evangelism, the significance of the Individual, and the development of History serve more than merely descriptive functions. There is impressive and significant analysis, but throughout each theme this rigorously academic and informative approach towards mission history is used by Neill as a rhetorical tool to persuade his readers to reassess their own methods of and attitudes towards mission.

It is not, however, rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. The reason for writing such persuasive History finds its final explanation at the heart of Neill's message. In the face of African syncretism he writes:

In every form of Christianity Jesus of Nazareth is the central figure. Any form of religion in which he has been extruded from that central place is no longer Christianity but something else.[36]

Jesus was not simply the "central figure" who set the parameters for Neill's understanding of Christianity, but also the person who conditioned his understanding of history.

Earlier, he specifically argues that "the death of Jesus, and the resurrection which followed it, determined the whole future destiny of the people of God." [37] Thus Jesus is portrayed as both the central point of Christianity and also a

fundamentally new starting point in the history of "the people of God".

Neill is ultimately , therefore, working as a Christo-centric historian. He is attempting, first, to persuade his readers also to acknowledge such a distinctive Christo-centric understanding of history. Secondly, he aims to encourage them to become participants within the story by, thirdly, both living and expressing it themselves.

In order to understand further how and why he sought to pass on this Christo-centric view of history it is necessary to turn to his work as a New Testament Scholar and Theologian.

b) New Testament Scholar

In the The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961 he once again demonstrates his ability at understanding, summarising and expressing complicated theories in a simple and easily accessible manner. In the Preface he sets out both his goals and methods for this work:

I have tried to provide a narrative that can be read without too much trouble by the non-theologian who is anxious to know and is prepared to devote some time and thought to the subject.....I have tried to feel the movement of thought over a century, to concentrate on a small number of writers rather than expatiate over many, and at the risk of over-simplification to draw attention to what seems to me to be of permanent significance. [31]

Once again he uses history as a point of access to a highly complex field. Once again certain key themes echo through his work. Once again he introduces the reader to a wide range of theological giants, such as David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74), Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). [39] One is left with the feeling that Neill not only knew them all, but also was their great-uncle. He clearly enjoys the self-appointed role of commentator, interpreter and critic.

The breadth of his reading is staggering, especially as many of the books he cites were not yet translated into English.[40] He brings order over his own range of knowledge by using a highly structured approach to this vast subject.

First, he identifies a major theme or trend within New Testament study, such as "The New Testament and History". Secondly, he highlights the central figures within such a movement. Then, thirdly, he highlights and summarises the key elements either within their work or the appropriate movement. Finally, he offers a critique of their methodology and subsequent conclusions.

It is this final device which sets this book apart from more comprehensive works such as The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems. The author, Werner. G. Kummel, offers less explicit criticism and puts far more emphasis upon allowing the scholars to speak for themselves. The result is an accurate but somewhat dry account of New Testament Scholarship.

By contrast, Neill leads his readers through an exhilarating, if selective, exploration of the "state of the art". There is a definite sense of movement in New Testament Interpretation. 1861-1961. He introduces his readers in an original way to specific personalities as well as more general themes.

Topic One: Bultmann

It is interesting, for example, to examine his handling of Rudolf Bultmann, especially as he admits in his Autobiography at this time that "Bultmann would become one of my major preoccupations for many years." [41] The reason for this will become clearer as it is shown how he attempts not simply to describe Bultmann's thought, but he also tries to explain and then even assess it.

Thus, Neill highlights both Bultmann's pastoral concern, expressed most clearly in his lucid preaching [42], and his drawing on Heidegger's philosophy, reflected in his emphasis upon the necessity of making an existential decision now [43], not only to help the reader understand more fully Bultmann's methodology, but also to illustrate the positive contributions he had made to New Testament interpretation. Neill particularly approves of Bultmann's emphasis upon remembering "the message of the Gospel is always - 'Kerygma' - it is always contemporary, and it is always a challenge." [44]

These emphasises of pastoral concern, effective contemporary preaching and immediate decision also reflect a number of Neill's own priorities. Perhaps it is not only Bultmann's international reputation and influential works which attracted

Neill, but also these parallel interests which partially explain his own fascination with Bultmann. Both theologians were also concerned with a similar fundamental issue.

Neill believed that at the heart of Bultmann's endeavour lay the question: "How can the New Testament be preached to modern man?"[45] He extends this question in an article on "Theology 1939-1964" to "How can the New Testament be preached to modern man to whom our theological concepts are unknown and our ancient myths meaningless?"[46] This primary concern, with communicating the message of a composite first century document to a twentieth century audience, was also Neill's. It may further explain why Neill was so fascinated by Bultmann.

As with almost every New Testament Scholar cited in the book, praise and fascination is qualified by rigorous critique. He is clearly unhappy with Bultmann's use of the word "myth", his distinction between "historisch" and "geschichtlich", and his extreme historical scepticism. Neill was attracted to Bultmann not simply because he identified with his motives or projected his own motives on to Neill, but also because he radically disagreed with many of his methods and conclusions.

Topic Two: The Significance of History

Once again it is Neill's passionate belief in the historical basis of the Christian faith which sets him apart from Bultmann and the school he represents:

I still think that it is possible to gravely underestimate the significance of the historical in Christian faith.

Theologically, history is important. If we believe that in Jesus Christ God did finally and definitively intervene in the world of men, we are committed to the view that history is the chosen sphere of his working, and that therefore history, all history, including the history of you and me today, is related to the process of revelation.[47]

He, therefore, distances himself from those who argue that faith need not rely on historical facts. On the basis of his firmly held belief that God "definitively" broke into history at one moment through Jesus of Nazareth, he is able to go on and argue that God is involved in the entire historical process, whether it be on the macro or micro scale.

It as if God has cut into history at one vertical point, and is able to spread out horizontally because of the revelation through Jesus. It is interesting to notice how his argument turns around the belief held by Manson that "the quest of the historical Jesus is still a great and hopeful enterprise"[48], as it further highlights the contrast between Neill's and Bultmann's approach.

Whilst Neill admits there is still much further to travel down this road, he ultimately points his audience to "one single historical figure." [49] It is this figure who was the historical catalyst for both the early Christian communities and its first writers. In a later chapter Neill goes on to argue that it is the "towering originality and spiritual force

of Jesus of Nazareth"[50] which is the unifying force of the many strands of the New Testament.

In both cases Neill is encouraging his readers to a realistic, questioning but unashamedly Christo-centric reading of not only the New Testament but also history itself, the validity of which is confirmed first by historical investigation and then in personal encounter. By studying the way in which he seeks to persuade his readers in The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961 the seeds of a "theology of history" can be uncovered.

For Neill this is a field of study which demands further work:

Christianity is a historical religion in every sense in which this expression can be interpreted. But there is no subject on which the theologians are less agreed than "the meaning of history"..... Ought we not now to be asking the question as to the theology of history?... A true theological understanding of history would not of itself solve any New Testament problems, but it would, so to speak, hold the ring within which a solution can be found.[51]

Such redefinition would in Neill's eyes facilitate "notable progress in that historical reconstruction of the story of Jesus, which has hardly yet begun." [52] This Christo-centric foundation and investigation, is the ultimate starting

point for Neill's theology of history. It partially explains why he was so involved in the study and expression of this aspect of New Testament Interpretation. But Neill was far more than an academic keeping abreast of the developments within a field which interested him.

Topic Three: The Challenge of History

For instance, he concludes his highly positive account of the work of Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort (The "Trinity Trio") with an outlining of the "gravest failure" of the Cambridge School of which they were a part: "the neglect of the problems of the Synoptic Gospels and the life of Christ." [53]

The reason he cites for this being such an error is because it evades "the central question which cannot be evaded, and which faith attempts to evade only at great peril to itself... "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" [54] This question recurs through many of his works and is implicit throughout this survey.

This book, which originated in November 1962 as the Firth Lectures in Nottingham, reads, therefore, not simply as the work of a New Testament Scholar, but also as the product of a lecturer who often slipped subtly into using the lectern as a pulpit. The reason for such an approach is made most explicit on the last two pages of this book of three hundred and forty eight pages. Here Neill emphasizes the importance of the "proclamation" of the "Evangelion, the Good News".

He continues by provocatively arguing that "when the New Testament scholar has done his utmost in his sphere, his work

remains lifeless, until it is transformed into the living voice of proclamation." [55] He explicitly argues there must be a link between study and pulpit. One of the things which particularly attracted him to the theology faculty in Hamburg was that all his "colleagues were pastors and preachers" as well as academics. [56] Neill clearly had little time for armchair historians or theologians.

This work reflects that belief and is summed up in the direct final three words of the book: "Follow thou me". [57] What has been bubbling beneath the surface through the entire survey has at last burst forth and revealed the evangelist at work.

In the conclusion one is swept forwards to this challenge via a highly positive summary of the progress which New Testament study has made. There is a certain sense of forward movement which is also to be found in his chronicling of the expansion of the Christian Church in A History of Christian Missions.

The reason for this challenge, which is heightened by this cumulative descriptive technique, is found in Neill's high Christo-centric beliefs. These ultimately explain why he communicates his distinctive understanding of the challenge and forward movement of history.

Topic Four: The Shape of History

This is seen most clearly towards the end of his article on "Theology 1939-64". Here he argues that we have learnt, with the help of Teilhard de Chardin's Phenomenon of Man, to

see the whole course of the history of the Universe as an upward striving". At certain key moments such as the appearance of life or the resurrection of Jesus Christ the "hidden and potential becomes actual". It is in the light of this he is able to argue, against Bultmann, that "we live in a Universe which through the resurrection of Jesus Christ has become wholly new." [58]

As Neill perceives this will be the major theological question of the next thirty years, he goes on to argue that it is "time that we learn to think historically; the historian, unlike most philosophers, is prepared to believe in the exceptional; he is much less certain of the line that is to be drawn between the possible and the impossible." [59] It would seem that Neill's entire view of the universe and the shape of history was determined by the "exceptional" historical event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If that was the case then it is not entirely surprising that he was so deeply engaged in the study and expression of the historical basis of the Christian faith. It is in the light of the resurrection that Neill appears to hold on to a highly optimistic teleology of history. This explains why he puts so much significance upon the challenge and shape of history. This can be seen more clearly in his work as an ecumenist in Hamburg.

c) Ecumenist

The Church and Christian Union (1968) represents Neill's

most rigorous work on ecclesiology. Neill originally delivered this work in the shape of the Bampton lectures in 1968. In many ways it reflects not simply his work in Hamburg as professor of Ecumenics, but also his considered reflection on forty years of active involvement within the ecumenical movement.

It had begun properly in 1924 when he was one of the youngest members of the Conference on Politics, Economics, and Citizenship in Birmingham. Forty years later as the Bampton lecturer in Oxford he attempted to follow on from Headlam's Bampton lectures of 1920 on The Doctrine of the Church and Reunion which he described as "the first great work by an English theologian in modern times." [60] Neill thought it would be interesting "to consider all that had happened between 1920 and 1960, and to estimate the differences between the theological climate of that epoch and of our own." [61]

Once again his approach is primarily historical, though at times it reads, uncharacteristically, like a systematic theology. This can be seen most clearly by his selection of subjects such as "The Rediscovery of the Church" (Lecture 1), "The Missionary Dimension" (Lecture 2) or "The Royal Priesthood" (Lecture 6). Nevertheless these themes appeared to be determined primarily either by recent debates in Church History or his own specialist concerns.

It is interesting that in one of his least explicitly historical works he most explicitly develops a theology of history. It is less surprising when one considers that his predecessor as the Bampton lecturer was Dr. Alan Richardson.

His lectures appeared the following year under the title of History, Sacred and Profane. (1964) Interestingly they use different methods, but both arrive at a similar conclusion.[62]

Neill's approach is to pose the provocative question of whether the history of the life of mankind on this planet is significant or "is it merely a tale told by an idiot?"[63] In order to answer this question he gives brief summaries and analysis of the reflections of thinkers such as Hegel, B.Croce, J.Huxley, E.H.Carr, R.G.Collingwood and inevitably R.Bultmann. Thus he uses the history of thought as a method by which to ultimately encourage a sense of missionary endeavour within the ecumenical movement.

He persuasively points to the logical possibility that, first, human history is "related to a single plan". He goes on to argue, secondly, that it is conceivable that there is a "central point" which could "provide the key to the understanding of history both backwards and forwards." [64] In short, Neill is attempting to set the philosophical groundwork for the theological position he is about to espouse.

It is clear from the way in which he cites Dr.H.Berkhof's Der Sinn der Geschichte: Jesus Christus. (1962) [Christ the Meaning of History, E.T. 1966] that he agrees with the view argued there that history has meaning, but "that this meaning can be discerned only in relation to the centrality of Jesus Christ." [65]

Once again the resurrection is pivotal to such a provocative view. As with Teilhard de Chardin, Neill uses Berkhof to

affirm in the light of the resurrection that the "world has become a different place." [66] The image that Neill uses to drive this home is that of an hour-glass. The Christ event is the centre-point through which the sands of history fall towards, pass through, and emerge changed.

As the "world has become a different place" through the historical event of the resurrection Neill rejects any attempt to set out a separate Salvation History (Heilsgeschichte). Instead he explores the idea of Christian mission as the "great creative force in human history". Such a positive view is based primarily not on human agency but rather in "providence being at work". [67]

The reason for this ultimately confident reading of history may be more complex than a simple belief in the resurrection. It is important to remember Neill was a missionary historian who would soon also write Colonialism and Christian Missions (1965-6), whose stated aim was to see how "missionaries and colonialists had to learn to live together". [68] But, beneath the surface of ecumenism he seems to be implicitly affirming and encouraging participation in mission.

This theme is both explicitly and implicitly stated in this section. It is as if he is arguing that "the resurrection has not only changed everything, but also implies that belief in the providence of God is rational. If, therefore, God has ensured such progress to date he will continue to do so. This does not mean inactivity should follow, but rather reflection

leading to vision and then involvement, which should ultimately be manifested in mission."

Once again his theology of history is used as a persuasive device to encourage ecumenism and mission, which in any case are inextricably linked. This is summed up by the repetition of those three simple words, which also finish The Interpretation of the New Testament, at the end of this book: "Follow thou me." [69]

Here is the clue as to what lies at the heart of his expression, as well as his persuasive use of and theology of history. These three words could legitimately be used as an interpretative key to Neill's work not only as an "Ecumenist", but also as an "Historian" and as a "New Testament Scholar". Neill wants both himself and others simply to "follow Christ".

The endless variety of ways of following Christ is illustrated by his ceaseless reference to individual followers. His extraordinary productivity, academic rigour and hectic teaching schedule whilst in Hamburg should finally be seen as the expression of his simple faith in the ultimate significance of the historical figure of Jesus Christ:

In the Christian World the controlling principle is not an abstract formula; it is a person, Jesus Christ himself. Honest wrestling with the meaning of Jesus Christ in terms of the needs of one particular age is Christian theology; a theology controlled by the Christo-centric principle is not likely

to go very far astray. [70]

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that it was ultimately this "Christo-centric principle" which provided both the control and the motivation for Neill's work during his six years in Hamburg.

Notes on Chapter Seven

- 1: Auto. Section 9. p.73. Notice this text slightly differs from the edited text by E.M.Jackson in God's Apprentice(London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p.258. (From m.s.) but the meaning is unchanged.
- 2: O.Chadwick, Proceedings. p.610.
- 3: Proceedings. p.610.
- 4: L.Newbigin, private interview with in Dec, 1988.
- 5: Proceedings. p.607.
- 6: S.C.Neill, "Rome and the Ecumenical Movement". This was the eighteenth Peter Ainslie Memorial Lecture delivered at Rhodes University, Grahamstown on September 5th, 1967. (Lesotho: Morija Printing Works, 1967), Neill uses a simple historical method in this lecture. He describes how the Roman Catholic Church has recently been moving forward into more positive ecumenical endeavours. Thus he uses past precedent to encourage further ecumenical practice and movement.
- 7: S.C.Neill, "Theology 1939-64" Expos. T.76. Oct. 1964 p.21-5.
- 8: Order of Service for "A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life and Work of Stephen Charles Neill. 1900-84." (31st Oct. 1984) p.5. ".....in his good time, the end will come, and the Son of Man will appear a second time.....In the meantime, for all their unfaithfulness and imperfection, God is willing to use his people and do great things through them." This extract the editor, Owen Chadwick, found "too much" so he edited it out of the most recent edition of the History of Missions.

- 9: Proceedings. p.610.
- 10: H.Chadwick, The Early Church (London: Harmondsworth, 1988), First published in 1967. p.54.ff.
- 11: S.C.Neill, A History of Christian Missions. (London: Harmondsworth, 1964), 1986 edition cited - (King Abgar) p.43. & (St.Patrick) pp.49-50. [Hereafter referred to as H.C.M.]
- 12: H.C.M. p.35.
- 13: H.C.M. p.35.
- 14: W.Frend, The Rise of Christianity (London: D.L.T., 1984), p.128.
- 15: H.C.M. p.21.
- 16: H.C.M. p.22.
- 17: H.C.M. preface. p.9.
- 18: S.C.Neill, The Layman in Christian History. [Hereafter referred to as L.C.H.] (London: S.C.M., 1963), p.14.
- 19: L.C.H. p.198.
- 20: L.C.H. p.199.
- 21: L.C.H. p.199.
- 22: L.C.H. p.12.
- 23: L.C.H. p.26.
- 24: L.C.H. This is a key strand within the "Introduction"pp.15-27, which includes in the opening paragraph: "The whole Body of the Church is priestly."
- 25: L.C.H. p.20.
- 26: H.C.M. p.272. For example, he begins his chapter on "The Heyday of Colonialism, 1858-1914" with a series of ages of key

secular figures: "In 1858 Queen Victoria was thirty-nine years old. Gladstone was forty-nine; Lord Macaulay fifty-eight; Abraham Lincoln forty-five....." All told he cites some thirteen names in order to support his point that "the Day of Europe had come."

27: L.C.H. p.25.

28: H.C.M. p.20.

29: H.C.M. p.478.

30: H.C.M. p.478.

31: H.C.M. p.478.

32: S.Runciman, A History of the Crusades. Vol.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p.469, also cited by Neill in H.C.M. p.98.

33: H.C.M. preface. p.9.

34: H.C.M. p.477.

35: H.C.M. p.477.

36: H.C.M. p.456.

37: H.C.M. p.19.

38: S.C.Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961. (Oxford: O.U.P., 1964), originally delivered as the Firth Lectures, at the University of Nottingham in 1962.[Hereafter referred to as I.N.T.]

39: I.N.T. a) (Strauss) p.15.ff. b) (Barth) p.201.ff
c) (Bultmann) p.222.ff.

40: I.N.T. a) (French) Jean Paul Audet, La Didache: Instruction des Apôtres p.60. b) (German) M.Dibelius, Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums. (3rd edition, 1959) p.250.41: I.N.T. p.290.

- 42: I.N.T. p.290.
- 43: I.N.T. p.291.
- 44: I.N.T. p.326.
- 45: I.N.T. p.342.
- 46: I.N.T. p.343.
- 47: Auto. Section 9. p.10.
- 48: I.N.T. p.224.
- 49: I.N.T. p.229.
- 50: I.N.T. p.235.
- 51: I.N.T. p.225.
- 52: S.C.Neill, "Theology 1939-1964", Expos. T.76. Oct. 1964 p.21.
- 53: I.N.T. p.33.ff. and specifically p.96.
- 54: I.N.T. p.96.
- 55: I.N.T. p.347.
- 56: S.C.Neill, "God's Apprentice" (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), ed. by E.M.Jackson. p.257.
- 57: I.N.T. p.348.
- 58: S.C.Neill, "Theology 1939-1964" Expos. T.76. Oct. 1964 p.25. (See also this thesis Ch.3 for fuller discussion on origins of Neill's developed understanding of the resurrection whilst at Cambridge.)
- 59: S.C.Neill, "Theology 1939-1964" Expos. T.76 Oct.1964 p.25.
- 60: S.C.Neill, The Church and Christian Union, (London: O.U.P. 1968), Preface p.vii. [Hereafter referred to as C.C.U.]
- 61: C.C.U. Preface p.vii.62: Neill agrees believing that from "what follows it will be apparent that, by independent methods,

we had reached substantially similar conclusions." C.C.U. p.84.

63: C.C.U. p.86.

64: C.C.U. p.91.

65: C.C.U. p.92.

66: C.C.U. p:92.ff.

67: C.C.U. a) (Future): p.94. "The Biblical and Christian View of history, on the contrary, is always directed to the future."

b) (Providence): p.110. "If we are Christians and believe that nothing in the Universe can fall out of the care and control of God, we are committed in advance to the doctrine of Providence."

68: S.C.Neill, Colonialism and Christian Missions (London: Lutterworth, 1976), p.8.

69: C.C.U. p.403.

70: C.C.U. p.148.

Chapter 8: Out of Africa (1969-73)

Just when I was wondering, in considerable perplexity, where I should go next.... there arrived a letter from Nairobi to the effect: "We are thinking of starting a Department of Religious Studies in the University College here. Could you come for three months as visiting professor of religions.... to draw up the feasibility study which the University requires...?[1]

Neill encountered considerable opposition towards the creation of such a department. Makerere University in Uganda were far from happy at the creation of a second Department of Religion in East Africa, whilst the Kenyan Churches, which were mostly extremely conservative, were "darkly suspicious" of this potential "fountainhead of every kind of heresy".[2]

It is clear from his Autobiography, much of which was written in Nairobi, that Neill was involved not only in a "feasibility study", but also a strenuous public relations exercise to "dissipate this atmosphere of distrust".[3] He delivered three short courses of six lectures each on "the great religions of the world, the history of the scientific study of religion and the use and meaning of theological and religious terms".[4] This attracted unexpectedly large audiences and demonstrated, to Neill at least, definite interest in

the study of religion in Nairobi.

Neill clearly did not need persuading of the value of such a department. He had been committed to the idea of promoting theological education in developing countries since his time in India.[5] His comprehensive survey of African theological education in 1950 for the International Missionary Council had left him a "little depressed", particularly because much of the work he saw was "unimaginatively Western".[6] The reason why theological education remained such a high priority for Neill will be explored later.

In the meantime it is worth noting that his proposal for a Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies was accepted in 1968. The bringing together of these two disciplines was more of a pragmatic step to facilitate acceptance of this new department, rather than a statement of support for interdisciplinary study or even a sign of Neill's sudden growth of interest in philosophy.

Neill did not apply for the post of professor, but let his friends know he would keep himself as free as possible from other commitments. He was left waiting for over a year, only to receive a telegram notifying him of his appointment from a Nairobi Mennonite bishop. This was followed up by a letter from the same man warning him that the runner-up was a Muslim candidate. According to Neill this left him no "liberty of choice" as such an appointment would undermine the churches' uncertain confidence in a department which they had financed.[7] One wonders whether Neill also felt the desire to

keep the Christian flag flying.

He was belatedly notified in mid August 1969 that teaching would begin on 22 September of the same year. Such short notice undermined his plans to have nine months of consolidation in Nairobi, before embarking on teaching. He was, therefore, forced to cancel lecturing engagements in the United States in order to depart hurriedly for Kenya.

Well, I arrived in Nairobi on 10th September, to find no office, no secretary, no colleague, no plan, no books in the library, no books for the students in the bookshop, no official permission to start teaching, and, to top it all off, no money.[8]

With such "foundations" it is not surprising that with only twelve days to set up a Department Neill was a little busy. But by the time Neill had spent four hard-working years as the first Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at what became the University of Nairobi this summary looked extremely out of date. His fourteen newsletters give the clearest insight of how in Neill's eyes, through strenuous and varied hard work, this situation changed, and a thriving department was set up.

The other main source for this time is the tenth chapter of his Autobiography. Here he echoes the Newsletter's sense of steady improvement in spite of considerable difficulties. Almost nonchalantly he mentions in this section that when he

left there were over one hundred students in the department and more significantly for Neill, a student engaged in higher research.[9]

This part of his Autobiography is titled "East Africa - The Last Phase", which illustrates his incorrect belief that Nairobi would be the final episode in his life. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that he continued to work as if these were the last few years of active service left to him.

This chapter will continue by first answering questions about his work as a University professor. What areas was he involved in and in what ways did his context influence both his teaching and the setting up of a new department? Secondly, what sort of work was he involved in as a bishop without a diocese of his own? And were there any tensions between his role as a professor and his work as a bishop?

Thirdly, in the light of this new African context, his work as a writer will be focused on. In particular his attempts to relate and express an old theological message in a new culture will be analysed. Fourthly, his reflections as a theologian will be studied. In greater detail one key underlying theological assumption, which continued to influence both the method and content of his expression in this new context, will be concentrated on.

In short this chapter is an attempt to explore both Neill's practical work as a professor and a bishop as well as his underlying reflections as a writer and theologian.

a) University Professor.

Neill had "retired" from his Hamburg professorship on a wave of good will, with a pension that ensured he had enough to live in "modest comfort to the end of his days".[10] The lack of provision, therefore, for both his department and himself as Nairobi's first Professor of Philosophy and Religion would have brought him back to the harsh realities of theological education in a developing country.

On his arrival he was working for University College, Nairobi, which was one of three "constituent colleges of the University of East Africa".[11] In 1970 this union dissolved and University College became the University of Nairobi. Its new status encouraged growth, and by the end of Neill's stay in 1973 there were some 4,800 students.

This expansion accentuated a number of difficulties, about which Neill made numerous critical remarks within various Newsletters. For example, he referred a number of times to the "inefficiency of the University administration," which he believed got "worse rather than better".[12] This is added to by his complaints about the quality of junior members of staff as well as the calibre of his first colleague. One is struck by the extremely high standards that Neill both expected from others and himself.[13]

Interestingly these were minor difficulties compared to what Neill perceived as a more fundamental malaise. The most significant danger for Neill was that of cultural exclusivity within the world of the University. In his eyes, if the

University of Nairobi attempted to be "an African University for an African country", [14] it could easily fall into the trap of becoming insular in its outlook.

The reason why such an outcome was anathema to Neill was because in his eyes a "university by its very nature should be international, part of a world-wide culture". His twin focused aims were to recognise fully his African context and African students, and yet also to aid his students to become "citizens of the world of thought and literature". [15]

This tension between national and international ties led Neill to a number of crucial questions concerning the appropriate teaching method within an African context:

Are we teaching the kind of thing that needs to be taught to African students? What kind of philosophy ought they to be learning? Is not our western logic and western metaphysics too far from their thought world that, though they can learn and reproduce the words, it is almost impossible for them really to grasp our categories and to think in the way that we think? Does our western theology, based on a long and to them alien history, really make contact with their needs and hopes in the situation of a rapidly developing country? [16]

This incisive, and some would argue slightly arrogant, set of questions illustrates how Neill was continually self-critical

both of his own and his department's teaching style within this East-African arena.

As he did in India he was again grappling with questions concerning both the method and content of teaching in a new cultural context. Once more he was made aware of the difficulty of making real contact with his students. It was far more than a question of using the correct words, it was rather how to find the form which would convey the true meaning, and so perhaps even touch the hearts of his students. The posing of such questions illustrates both the searching theologian as well as the perennial insecurity of the missionary working in a land far from home.

One question underlying this extract appears to be "Are we doing anything of lasting value? Or do our cultural suppositions inevitably invalidate our work?" The presupposition assumed in this piece is that the Kenyan way of thinking and arguing has a useful, even constructive, impact upon the formation of relevant theological reflection and teaching methods.

Nevertheless, he did not entirely reject the Western missionary effort in Kenya. For instance, in his course on "Christianity in Africa", he attempted to destroy myths about missionaries which suggested Colonialism and Missionaries were inextricably linked and were an evil force which "could do nothing but do harm to the life and soul of Africa." [17] Interestingly, he claims he does not attempt to force this revision of negative views upon his students, but rather hopes they will discover it for themselves.

This educational technique suggests his aim of teaching was not simply to pass on information. His stated aim, to be found in his belated inaugural lecture was to "produce students who will be well-informed, critical, and adventurous in their thinking." [18]

In the Newsletter he also argued that the best way to serve the students was if they followed the principle laid down by Dante, who believed the aim of education should be an "encounter with greatness and stimulation of the spirit of curiosity." [19] His emphasis in Nairobi was, therefore, to equip his students for a lifetime of learning rather than parrot style repetition.

These laudable goals may partially explain why he spent so long teaching in Nairobi. For example he complained of spending over 18 hours each week in the classroom. [20] It seems from both Newsletter and Autobiography that this work load was due more to shortage of staff rather than educational ideals.

Pragmatic necessity also played a major part in determining the courses they offered to their first intake of eighteen students. Apart from the expected biblical studies and philosophy of religion courses, Neill ensured even in these pressured early days that there was a course on African tradition. [21] This underlines his desire for the teaching of theology to be rooted into this African context.

A further factor that determined Neill's teaching and general shaping of the department was his desire to underline

that this was not a centre for "Christian propaganda".[22] To this end he organised the first set of public lectures on "A Profile of Persian Islam" by the former head of Princeton's Middle Eastern Department, Cuyler Young.

Neill himself covered a whole variety of subjects in the lecture room, from "Philosophy of Religion" via "Methods of Religious Education" to "Religion in the Modern World". [23] At first sight it is surprising that there is no apparently Christo-centric emphasis to any of these courses; but this should not be understood in terms of a shift in Neill's beliefs, rather as a response to certain external pressures and self-appointed goals.

First, he needed to establish his fledgling department in a city where many were yet to be persuaded of its usefulness.[24] Secondly, financial and staffing pressures ensured Neill had to teach not only religion, but also philosophy. Thirdly, he had the impressively comprehensive goal of making "Religion and Philosophy felt in the life of the College as a whole." [25] Fourthly, it could be inferred from such newsletters that he also attempted to allow the perceived needs of his Kenyan pupils to shape the syllabuses he set out.

Given Neill's own delight in history, it is also interesting that the department he began had no rigorous Church History course. Perhaps this reflects how he took seriously his self-imposed charge of forcing too much Western theology and history down the throats of his students. Thus, he sought to encourage research in Kenyan church history.[26]

Nevertheless, such discipline in avoiding teaching his favourite subjects and thereby attempting to fulfil his educational goals did not prevent his almost insatiable desire for the verbal expression of his faith.

b) Bishop at Large

Neill was attempting to walk another "tightrope" in Nairobi. On the one side he maintained a "rigidly academic attitude" in the classroom because of the "watchful suspicion of some of our African colleagues", whilst on the other he had no intention of compromising his "position as a Christian bishop".[27] Thus he was a regular and popular preacher at student services,[28] as well as an occasional visitor to the Christian Union. This balancing act between being an "impartial" professor and partisan "bishop" may partly explain why his Autobiography reflects a good deal of frustration at this time.[29]

Another cause of tension was probably simply over work. Outside the University, he may not have had a diocese or a formal role in the Anglican Province of Kenya but he was certainly not without invitations to help in numerous Church matters.

First, he threw himself into work as Chairman of the Commission on Training for the Ministry which investigated the state of ordained and lay theological education in the Anglican province of Kenya.[30] Secondly, he also helped in drawing up a constitution for the Church of the Province, liberating it from a number of ties to Canterbury.[31]

A third area of considerable responsibility was his help in setting up the Council on Higher Studies in Religion which established a new Certificate in Religious Studies.[32] He was less successful, however, with organising building extension work and the development of a Chaplaincy Centre.[33]

All this activity needs to be set alongside his criticisms of both the political and ecclesiastical context within which he found himself.[34] Neill was no detached observer passing judgements from a safe distance. His were the criticisms of both a professor and a bishop trying to influence, change and improve two parallel systems from the inside.

c) Writer at Work

Apart from his work as a professor and bishop he invested his "spare" academic energy into researching The History of the Church in India. Consequently, he produced comparatively little as a writer. His work included a "mere" article, a devotional book Bible Words and Christian Meanings, as well as some reprints from the World Christian Book series, which after sixteen years he closed down whilst in Kenya.[35]

His most significant work at this time was as the organising editor of the Concise Dictionary in Christian World Mission. [36] He drew together over two hundred contributors to produce this comprehensive resource book, whose "multitudinous fragments" he hoped if ever read as a whole "would coalesce into a picture of the movement of the spirit of God in History." [37] He himself wrote nearly 100 articles. Thus his

work as a writer and editor continued even during this hectic time in Kenya.

The international nature of this written work, combined with lecturing or research trips to Malawi, the United States, Canada, Asia, India and England, ensured that Neill maintained a wide global knowledge of and interest in the state of the worldwide Church.

This continual extension of horizons may well partially explain why he had little time for insularity within the University or exclusivity within the Kenyan Church. The school of travel appears to have been a constant reminder to Neill of the international nature of the Gospel.[38]

Travel away from and work within the Kenyan situation appears to have forced Neill to ask questions such as "How far should the gospel necessarily come to a non-Christian people as foreign?"[39] One answer to this can be found in the Concise Dictionary of Christian World Missions in his article on "Accommodation".[40]

According to Neill the "value of ancient cultures has been underestimated", so he goes on to argue that "attempts to make the Gospel at home in the world of other cultures are to be commended."[41] The self-questioning of his own teaching method highlighted earlier demonstrates how Neill at least attempted to "accommodate" the Gospel within the new cultural context of Kenya.

Nevertheless, he was also well aware of the dangers of what he perceived as "syncretism and a deformation of the

Gospel".[42] Three points were, therefore, to be borne in mind. First, he emphasized the importance of recognising the "foreign nature of the Gospel". Secondly, he defined the Gospel as the: interpretation of the mighty acts of God in history, from which it cannot be detached; it is not a system of timeless truths, which can be accepted without relation to that history in which they are expressed.[43]

This is a highly significant point as it illustrates that for Neill the historical event is inextricably linked with its interpretation and original context. Implicit in this argument is the belief that God has in some way restricted himself to a specific moment and culture.

Nevertheless, he qualifies this statement by highlighting both the unique relationship between the believer and Christ, as well as the transient nature of cultures. On the basis of their temporality he argues against the Church "adapting its message too closely to any existing culture" otherwise the Church "might eventually find itself tied to the past rather than free to listen to what at any given time the Spirit is saying to the Churches." [43]

At first sight there is an apparent inconsistency here. On the one hand, as God acts in fixed specific moments in history, there is no room for cultural relativism. On the other hand, God acts through the Spirit to guide the Church

now, which would suggest there is the possibility, at least, for adaptation within a new cultural context. Neill does not allow for the possibility of such a radical revision of the Gospel.

The reason for such an approach lies with the fact that he ultimately perceives the Gospel as a fixed, distinctive series of acts of God set in history within a specific cultural context. Unlike cultures which change, these historical givens are objective points which cannot be simply adapted to fit in with a new cultural setting. Thus it is the belief in God who acts in history which prevents Neill from allowing extensive flexibility in the face of modes of thinking or expression which are, in his eyes, in opposition to the Bible.

For instance, in Bible Words and Christian Meanings (1970) his Kenyan context appears to have had little impact upon the centre of his proclamation. In his section on "Reconciliation" he asks:

How is the one who has offended to be brought to desire reconciliation, to see his need of it, and to make it his own when it is offered to him? This is the central task of the preaching of the gospel. We do not bring home to men their sinfulness by preaching about sin, but by making known to them the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ.[44]

There is a positive "task" to be completed, or a job to be

done. Neill's aim was clearly not to inspire guilt but rather agape based on true reconciliation. This may involve listening to and learning from new cultures, but ultimately it means "making known" some specific facts about God which can be demonstrated by reference to Jesus Christ.

Neill attempts to give a clearer definition of the "Aim of Mission" later on in the Concise Dictionary of Christian Mission. He attempts to synthesize the Catholic emphasis upon the Church, the Protestant concern for proclaiming the Gospel to all nations and those, as found in William Carey, who ^(according to Neill) laid stress upon the extension of God's Kingdom. [45]

He summarises such an approach in those oft-quoted words : "The whole Church bringing the whole Gospel to the whole World." In short, he sees each of the three strands: the Church, the Coming, and the Kingdom, if appropriately defined, as central elements behind the expressing of the Gospel.

These goals of conversion of individuals, entry into groups and subsequent further proselytizing are, for Neill, clearly cross-cultural activities. One is left wondering where God fits into the equation and what part He plays in the expression of the Gospel within a non-Christian cultural context. To explore Neill's views further it is worth turning to an article written whilst he held his Professorship in Nairobi.

d) Theologian of the Spirit?

One of the criticisms which is sometimes levelled at Neill is

that he has an incomplete pneumatology.[46] The Holy Spirit in the Non-Christian World is the title of a little-known, but highly significant article. It is useful both for assessing the validity of such criticisms and for understanding Neill's perception of the part which the Holy Spirit played in the communication of the Gospel. In order to fully appreciate the importance of this piece the argument will first be summarised and analysed. Then the wider significance of these beliefs will be assessed.

Neill introduces this article with a brief portrayal of the common "ambivalence" amongst Christians when they attempt to discern the relationship between God and the world outside the sphere of Christian revelation. He notes as a historian how the bias has usually been strongly against the non-Christian world, the group which Augustine called the "massa perditionis". Typically Neill uses a historical door as a point of access into this important debate.

He also concludes the Introduction by turning to history, though he becomes more contemporary in his comments:

Only in modern times have Christian Theologians taken seriously the possibility that God might be directly at work in all the great movements of history, including those movements which have produced the great religions.....this is a comparatively new view of history and of revelation.[47]

The immediate question which springs to mind is: How far did

Neill at this time accept such a wide view of God's work in the world?

In a characteristically scholarly fashion he avoids prematurely answering this question. Instead, for the sake of clarity he attempts to define in what context the words "Spirit" and "Christ" should be used. Interestingly, the stated foundation for his interpretation of these words is the New Testament. His desire for precision as a linguist and translator combine here with his ultimate authority base: the Christian Scriptures. This article, however, is not a careful exegetical work upon these texts, it is rather an attempt to counter what Neill sees as theological imprecision.

His reading of the New Testament leads him to conclude that the "Spirit now means the Spirit of the risen Jesus". As the Spirit is located primarily within the Christian community, then writers should avoid using "Spirit" in a wider more inclusive and universalistic context.[48]

At the outset, therefore, he makes the contentious identification of Jesus with Spirit and appears to confine the work of the Holy Spirit to a narrow context. He justifies such an approach with a brief summary of the New Testament material.[49] Such selective use of the evidence enables him to make the link between Jesus and the Spirit with greater authority.

He also has little time for those who make "undiscriminating use of the term Christ" and who say that "we do not go to take Christ with us; we go to find him where he has already gone before." [50] As a firm counter to such a claim he high-

lights the historical foundation of this title:

Christianity was not the triumph of an idea; it was the affirmation of faith that the final revelation of God to man had taken place at a particular time and place, and that it was expressed in one historical person and no other. Any attempt to separate Christian faith from this historic past robs it of its intrinsic character.

[51]

As the Christ event was the ultimate and conclusive revelation for Neill it is not surprising that he gives little room for the ongoing clear revelation of the Spirit either within or without the Church. Once again it is in one sense the specific historical nature of his faith rather than the continued manifestations of the Spirit which shaped the content of his message.

This can further be seen by his belief that the task of the Christian Church is determined by this specific action of God. Thus the mission of the Church is to "proclaim", "bring", "pronounce" and "exalt" Jesus Christ within the non-Christian World. The surprise in this section is that he does not see these attempted definitions, fundamental beliefs and recommended actions as incompatible with the view that "God may operate far beyond the limits of the spoken testimony of the Christian Church." [52] Thus such a belief in specific historical revelation does not necessarily exclude a parallel understanding of

God working either through the wider "movements" of history or outside the lives of individual believers.

For example, he then describes with typical clarity Justin Martyr's picture of "logos spermatikos".[53] He admits that for many Christians today, the concept of "the Word in the character of the Sower" secretly "sowing here and there seeds of divine truth" is attractive. Nevertheless, he underlines that the difficulty is to find the "appropriate expression, in modern terms, for such divine activity." [54] Once again he is attempting to translate technical and ancient words into more contemporary and accessible terms, whilst still holding onto their original meaning.

For such a title, which both avoids confusion and aids understanding, he suggests the word "Wisdom". Whilst he does cite Proverbs 8 he ultimately turns to the Apocrypha to support his case. Specifically, he quotes the Wisdom of Solomon where Wisdom is described as "the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of his goodness." (Wisdom 7.26,27; 8.1) It is debatable whether such imagery would be successful in the "modern world" of Nairobi, but it is an imaginative wider use of a title that became personified and eventually closely identified with the Holy Spirit. It also illustrates that he was not bound by the protestant canon of scripture when it came to either explaining or restating biblical or even patristic imagery.

This breadth of vision can be seen more clearly when he identifies "what God has Given" outside the Christian communi-

ty. He notes the Godward movement of simple man, the perception of a distant God, the distinction between right and wrong and a general belief in immortality as potential points of contact. In short, such beliefs ensure that there is not a "vacuum" when it comes to conversation between Christian or Moslem proselytisers and their potential converts.[55]

Neill here shows once again the priority he puts upon mission. He appears to place little significance upon the creative power of God, and instead, by focussing on mission, he implicitly emphasizes the importance of redemption. In other-words, Neill implicitly identifies the Spirit's work more closely with Jesus the Saviour than God the Creator.

Furthermore, he points the spotlight primarily upon beliefs rather than actions. It could be inferred from this article that he saw the Spirit mostly shaping ideas. For some Neill admits that these basic beliefs have the potential to aid the reception of the Christian message.

He does not argue that such a possible aid to expression necessarily points to the Spirit's work:

It does not follow, however, that it can be concluded from this possibility of communication that these elements of religion can at once be taken as evidence of the Holy Wisdom of God at work preparing the way for the coming of the fuller light of Christ.[56]

Interestingly, he turns to empirical observation to question

the belief in such "preparatio evangelica" presuppositions.

He argues that, as the vast majority of converts radically reject their old ways when they become Christians, such a belief in the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit must be further questioned. He avoids giving a conclusive answer to the "delicate theological question" of "how far the Holy Spirit is preparing the minds of men for the reception of the Christian message?"

Once again the terms of Neill's argument rest upon the assumption that conversion is the ultimate goal of the Holy Spirit. The weakness here is that ethical qualities or creative abilities are not mentioned, and probably not perceived by Neill as examples of the "Holy Spirit in the Non-Christian World".

Instead, he places more importance upon the "immense travail and reconstruction that is evident among the non-Christian peoples of the World." [57] He recognizes the impact of communication and travel developments upon the ferment of ideas, but ultimately, and some would say arrogantly, he points to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as the cause of the "process of quiet inner confrontation" going on within "religions, pseudo-religions and counter religions". [58] Thus whilst Neill again narrows the work of the Holy Spirit to a questioning, almost interrogating, role within non-Christian faiths, he does at least recognise His presence.

Neill does attempt to balance this almost iconoclastic, even destructive, role of the Spirit with an emphasis upon the

work of the Spirit through humble and expectant "dialogue". This statement attempts to point his readers to a more positive recognition of the "operation of the Holy Spirit far beyond the limits of the existing Christian churches." [59]

Nevertheless, his Conclusion makes it clear where he believes the Holy Spirit primarily works. On the basis of past activity he argues that it has "almost always been through the presence of the Church, through an uncompromising witness to Jesus Christ, through humility and service..." that the Holy Spirit has been able to break through the hardness of the human heart. [60]

Neill's argument ultimately demonstrates that he was continuing to work with a Christo-centric model, even when he was discussing the "Holy Spirit in the Non-Christian World". Both the starting point and centre point of the new work of the Spirit was located not in the "wider movements of history", but rather in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the catalyst for this new work and ensuing communication. It is as if the stone of Christ drops into the pool of history and ripples out by the Spirit through the Church to the non-Christian world.

This model, which places much emphasis upon the redemptive activity of the Spirit, casts a shadow over the contrasting model, which underlines the creative power of Spirit. It seems, therefore, that whilst Neill puts much emphasis upon "dialogue" and humble listening, he locates the primary work of the Spirit within the Christian world.

The Spirit is, in the eyes of Neill, working outside the

walls of Christendom, but to discern the nature and whereabouts of this activity is a highly complex task. This difficulty of discernment may further explain why he continued to put so much emphasis upon both the teaching and the study of the historical foundations of the Christian faith. The fact, however, that the Spirit was working universally may also partly explain why Neill included the study of African traditions in his syllabuses in Nairobi.

In short, this article feels like the product of a missionary attempting to see whether and how the Holy Spirit interacts with the non-Christian world. Unlike many contemporary theologians Neill did not cite numerous ethical or political trends as signs of this activity. Instead his major thrust was to illustrate how, borrowing John Taylor's title, The Go between God was not simply an inspiration for the expression of a Christo-centric faith, but also the force by which it could be effectively communicated.

This chapter has demonstrated how, on one level, Neill worked primarily as a professor. He was a successful, popular and hard-working academic who laid the foundations for a respected department.

On another level, however, his work as a bishop, his cultural questionings as a writer, his reflections as a theologian combined with his typical frenetic activism hint at a man passionately committed to help bring more than just a theological department to life.

At first sight it may be hard to discern a clear rela-

tionship between his four roles in Nairobi. Nevertheless, the focus of his writings on the relationship between Gospel and Culture, as well as the Holy Spirit and the Non-Christian world point towards a surprisingly simple interpretation of Neill's life and work in Nairobi. Here was a Christo-centric missionary, who also wore a well deserved professorial hat.

Footnotes on Chapter Eight

- 1: S.C.Neill, God's Apprentice. ed.E.M.Jackson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), All ref. to ms. [Hereafter G.A.] p.273.
- 2: G.A. p.279.
- 3: G.A. p.279.
- 4: G.A. p.281.
- 5: G.A. p.275.
- 6: G.A. p.275.
- 7: G.A. p.283.
- 8: S.C.Neill, "Newsletter" (Nairobi: Unpublished series, 1969), Dec. no.2. p.1. [Hereafter News.] [News. 1973. Sept. no.14. This is the most useful letter to refer to whilst Neill was in Nairobi in that it usefully summarises his time there.]
- 9: G.A. p.312.
- 10: G.A. p.273.
- 11: G.A. p.286.
- 12: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.2.
- 13: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.2. He claimed much for his department. "We enjoy considerable respect in the country and the University. Word has got round that we treat our students with respect and consideration, that members of staff turn up on time, and with lectures well prepared."
- 14: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.2.
- 15: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.2.
- 16: News. 1972. July. no.10. p.1.
- 17: News. 1972. July. no.10. p.4.18: News. 1971. Nov. no.8.

p.2.

19: News. 1971. Nov. no.8. p.2.

20: News. 1970. July. no.4. p.1. "This meant that for those weeks I was eighteen hours a week in the class, far more, of course than can be efficiently dealt with on the University level of teaching." This shows an increase of over four hours from the Spring, as in News. 1970. Mar. no.3. p.2. where he complains of being in the classroom for some 14 hours. By March 1972 he writes "I am still absurdly over-worked."

21: G.A. p.290.

22: G.A. p.291.

23: News. 1970. Mar. no.3. p.2. He appears to have chosen these neutral subjects in order to draw in more than simply the Christian students. His course on Religious Education was determined by a request from the Department of Education who asked him "whether he would take over a group to study the methods of religious education in secondary schools," a subject of which he "knew exactly nothing, so of course this was an invitation that could not be refused."

Neill clearly delighted in the adventure of teaching a subject he had little knowledge of. His comment, however, is not entirely correct as he had much experience in this field in India. Perhaps, he sought to persuade his readers that he was more daring and flexible than he really was.

24: G.A. p.288. The Hindu community, according to Neill, were incensed by the appointment of a former missionary from India.

25: News. 1969. Dec. no.2. p.2. 26: News. 1973. Feb. no.12.

p.3. He writes of his hope to set up a Church History Society of Kenya and specific research projects.

27: G.A. p.295.

28: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.3."I am honoured that they have asked me to preach every term, and that I am the only person that they asked to preach more than once in a term." As usual he preached from short notes or no notes at all.

29: G.A. p.317.

30: G.A. p.296.

31: G.A. p.297. In News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.2. his concern for and criticism of the Kenyan Church is demonstrated by more than simple involvement in constitutional revision. For example he wrote in News. 1973. (Sept. no.14. p.2.) at a "critical" period that he was depressed by the fact there was an apparent "lack of any strategic outlook or planning in the churches."

32: G.A. p.301.

33: News. 1973. Sept. no.14. p.4.

34: G.A. p.285.

35: News. 1970. July. no.4. p.4. "I have been connected for sixteen years with the enterprise called World Christian Books, which has now produced sixty volumes, intended specially for pastors and teachers in the developing churches." On the grounds that the market had been flooded they believed that "the time has come that we should close down our enterprise." (see also "World Christian Books; a venture of faith." Int R Miss 60 1971. Oct. p.478-89.

36: S.C.Neill, Concise Dictionary in Christian World Mission. (London: Lutterworth, 1970), "Here for the first time an attempt has been made to provide in dictionary form somewhat comprehensive information as to the entire process through which in the last five centuries Christianity has grown from a Western to a universal religion." Preface: p.v. [Hereafter C.D.C.W.M.]

37: C.D.C.W.M. Preface p.vi.

38: News. 1970. Nov. no.5. p.1.f (Asian Trip) and News. 1971. March. p.1.f (Indian Trip).

39: C.D.C.W.M. p.4, on "Accommodation."

40: C.D.C.W.M. p.4.

41: C.D.C.W.M. p.4.

42: C.D.C.W.M. p.4.

43: C.D.C.W.M. p.4.

44: S.C.Neill, Bible Words and Christian Meanings (London: S.P.C.K. 1970), p.78.

45: C.D.C.W.M. p.12. on "The Aim of Mission." [Neill's analysis here is open to debate - especially re W. Grey's aims + motivation.]

46: O.Scallan, "The Supremacy of Christ..." (Dublin: Unpublished, 1987), p.127, " I found Neill's forgetfulness of the Spirit rather strange. In the baggage which he advised Christians to bring with them to Dialogue, the Spirit is not mentioned." Scallan's criticism is mainly correct, but should be qualified this article cited in note 47.

47: S.C.Neill, "The Holy Spirit in the non-Christian World" in Ch. Q. R. (1971) p.301. [Hereafter H.S.N.C.W.]

48: H.S.N.C.W. p.302.

- 49: H.S.N.C.W. p.302.
50: H.S.N.C.W. p.302.
51: H.S.N.C.W. p.302.
52: H.S.N.C.W. p.303.
53: H.S.N.C.W. p.303.
54: H.S.N.C.W. p.303.
55: H.S.N.C.W. p.304.
56: H.S.N.C.W. p.305.
57: H.S.N.C.W. p.307.
58: H.S.N.C.W. p.307.
59: H.S.N.C.W. p.308.
60: H.S.N.C.W. p.310.

Chapter 9: Oxford Days, The Last Lap (1973-84)

This chapter will begin by briefly outlining Neill's activities during his belated "retirement". Secondly, it will describe a number of recurring themes found within his work at this time. Thirdly, a unifying topic will be identified and then analysed. Fourthly, and in more detail, the methodology of Neill as an historian and apologist will be once again be individually assessed. Finally and briefly, the primary explanation of both "What?" and "How?" he expressed himself will again be highlighted. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is not simply to examine and describe his work in Oxford, but also to discern his primary motivation.

On leaving Nairobi in 1973 he embarked on a period of travel. He spent six months teaching in the Asian University at Westville, near Durban in Natal, covering for a friend who was completing a book. Afterwards he even allowed himself a period of travel, exploring various Pacific islands.

He finally settled at Wycliffe Hall, seen by some as the bastion of intellectual evangelicalism in Oxford, where the then Principal invited him to stay. This was Neill's base for the last decade of his life. Whilst there he was mentor or father-figure to many of the students, who speak of his hospitality and warm pastoral interest in their lives. He continued to be prolific in his writing, producing half-a-dozen books and over twice the number of articles.

His magnum opus came to shape in the form of The History of the Church in India. Part One. (1984) Part Two was published posthumously in 1986. Part Three was unfortunately never completed; he told the tale only up to the Great Mutiny in the 1850's. At his death on 20th July 1984 an earlier part of the manuscript was found at his side in Wycliffe Hall. Nevertheless, Part 1 and 2 remain as the definitive work in this area, and in the eyes of this reader the most impressive piece of scholarly research by Neill.

As a traveller he continued to cover thousands of miles. He made regular trips to the United States, especially Yale Divinity School where he was appointed a Visiting Fellow, as well as occasional sortees to Southern Africa, India, Egypt, the Continent and even Bermuda. There is a feeling of continuous, frenetic activity running through his regular newsletter.[1]

The reason for such trips varied: research demands, preaching engagements, and most frequently teaching or lecturing. These factors combined to encourage this man, who needed little encouragement, to travel overseas. As a Canon of Jerusalem for the Episcopal Church he also frequently made trips to the Middle East.[2] Even in his seventies he still displayed that ceaseless energy which characterised his work as a Bishop in India.

a) Man of Many Themes

Far from hampering his range of academic knowledge, his travels appear to have further widened his horizons. As at

Tinnevely, the range of topics he attempted to communicate is staggering. There are, however, a number of recurring themes in both his lectures and writing. The title of one article written in 1982 contains the key elements. "A Historical understanding of the evangelical/ecumenical dialogue in World Missions".[3] The study of history, the bringing of understanding, the advancement of ecumenism, the furtherance of genuine dialogue, and the development of World Mission were the key strands within Neill's work at this time. This can be illustrated by a brief survey of his efforts during this final decade.

First, his passion for history can be seen both explicitly in his work on India cited earlier, as well as numerous lectures on Church history, and implicitly in the conclusion of his own self-history in the shape of his Autobiography.

Secondly, that was a desire to bring "understanding", which can be seen once again in his continued goal of improving higher theological education,[4] as well as his own continued "eager desire to know - about a whole lot of different things".[5] His thirst for knowledge was expressed in his own research, in this reading and in his encounters with others. Throughout his life he remained a historian with a continuous drive to explore, and a teacher with a parallel yearning to teach.

Thirdly, his "ecumenical" hopes, which were born amidst his experiences of S.C.M., nurtured through his work in both India and with the W.C.C. in Geneva, and now had grown to

realistic maturity in the face of "Ecumenical Illusion".[6]
This is made most explicit in his work Salvation Tomorrow.

Fourthly, his commitment to "dialogue" with other faiths [7] which is demonstrated in his radically reworked book Christian Faith and Other Faiths renamed as Crises of Belief, and his typically rounded argument for The Supremacy of Jesus.

Fifthly, his continued interest in World Mission, which is highlighted not simply by his involvement in a mission at Yale and sermons whose obvious purpose was to stimulate evangelism,[8] but also by books or articles such as "Mission in the Eighties".[9]

b) His Central Theme

This final strand contains a clue to the central theme which underlies all his work, whether as a historian, teacher, ecumenist, apologist or missionary. Neill argued in "Mission in the Eighties" that during his life-time there had been two major shifts in the Christian World. First, an increase in numbers of Christian churches and secondly a shift in the centre of control to third-world churches. African Churches, for example, were not only growing at a staggering rate, but were also now governed primarily by indigenous leaders. This optimistic opening is then qualified by a rigorous critique of the dangers of Westernisation. Once again he emphasizes the importance of both effective Third World education and dialogue with other religions.

The climax of this argument, characterised by these familiar themes, is significantly not to focus upon the changing

world, but rather a single fixed point:

Many things change. Essentially the task for all the churches remains the same. As a great missionary expressed it in India two generations ago: "The aim of all your preaching must be that your hearers get a clear picture of Jesus Christ."..... The vital thing is that we should recover our center in Christ, however little of him we may actually know.[10]

The "great missionary" is in all probability Neill's early mentor in India, Stanley Jones. For Neill the context within which the church is communicating is always changing, but at the heart of the message a Christo-centric reality must remain.

It seems, however, that there is a real tension here. On the one hand, there is the presentation of a message rooted in the first century, and on the other, a knowledge of Christ in an ever-changing pluralistic world. The precise nature of this tension can be seen more clearly seen by the way in which Neill entered the "Myth of God" Debate.

His most persuasive contribution to this debate comes not in his two chapters in The Truth of God (1977), but rather in his article on Myth and Truth. Here in his typically judicious and conciliatory fashion he rigorously rejects, subtly qualifies and even humbly accepts some aspects of the arguments found within The Myth of God Incarnate.

First, he recognises the variety of Christologies found

within the New Testament. He uses this, however, as positive evidence of "the enormous creative ability" which even in its diversity converged towards the view that "the eternal became one of us and lived our life." [11] In Neill's eyes the selection and formation of the canon was determined by the experience of the first generation of believers. He is not specific as to the exact nature of this experience, but it is fair to assume from the context that he is referring to their reflection upon the "saying and doing of this obscure Galilean carpenter" who "abolished death and brought life". [12]

Secondly, he defends the "achievement of the Fathers" in setting out the parameters within which theological investigation should take place. He is not, however, without criticism of some of their beliefs. Once again he questions the Stoic ideal of Apatheia. Neill uses a sophisticated linguistic argument, based upon the variety of meanings of this word, to demonstrate that God could "choose" to create something outside himself with the potential to suffer. On the basis of human experience "that wherever there is love there is also suffering" [13] and as "God is love", Neill believed, like William Temple, that "the heart of God did break". In short God can suffer. If that is the case, such anthropomorphic language also suggests that Neill proclaims belief in a God who can, through the actions of his Son, change.

He also avoids answering, what he sees as, Dr Frances Young's "artificial" question of whether God = Jesus. Instead, in a rather condescending fashion, he draws upon

Moltmann's insight in The Crucified God that whatever "the Father does the Son also does, and whatever the Son does the Father is also doing".[14] He argues that the actions of Father and Son are parallel in order to support further his case that God can suffer. The nature of God's love is made concrete by his involvement in that suffering. Thus "God loved us enough to become one of us, and to live without honour, without privilege or protection, to share with us the lowest degradation possible." [15]

It is central to his position that, in contrast to Hick and company, this statement is not viewed as poetic metaphor or mythology. From his reading of history their belief is seen to have many similarities with the Unitarians of the nineteenth century and various Pelagians through the ages. Part of Neill's technique is thus to demonstrate that there is nothing radically new in their argument. Nevertheless, he accepts "these writers are perfectly correct in stating that the Church has always been so much in danger of exaggerating the divine Jesus as to lose sight of his true humanity." [16]

He is, however, unable to accept this as an adequate Christology, for it is clear, though not explicitly stated, that Neill works within a framework which perceives revelation as "the descent of God upon man." [17] In many ways this Christological discussion sheds more light on Neill's doctrine of God than his doctrine of Jesus Christ.

He thus stands by those who see, in the incarnation, God moving from above, downwards, though not in a literalistic

sense. This "traditionalist" viewpoint is also to be found in a work produced over forty years earlier, Foundation Beliefs. It appears, therefore, that whilst his theology of the incarnation may have expanded and developed, his underlying belief that God was ultimately and supremely involved in the world through the incarnation remains unchanged.

Nevertheless, he was well aware of the changes within the scientific world. Advances, for example, within the field of psychology underlined another weakness within patristic theology. Here the lack of Greek vocabulary which adequately expresses the idea of "personality" leads to the conclusion that "we have a tremendous task to carry out in rethinking all our Theology in the knowledge of ourselves that has come to us over the last century." [18] Thus Neill appears like a theologian who waves the banner of orthodoxy in one hand, and yet blows the trumpet of advance in the other.

This is most explicitly found in the final section of the article where he makes a clear distinction between two types of believer: Pelagian and Augustinian. Neill sees himself as a rarity "Pelagian by nature and Augustinian by grace". [19] He argues that both have much to offer and much to learn from each other, but it is clear that his underlying sympathy is with the Augustinian camp. Nevertheless, both here and in The Truth of God Incarnate his hope is that both sides "may all in the end safe within the harbours meet." [19] These ecumenical words reflect an overriding desire to bring unity, though not if it means the surrender of his understanding of Christ. The nature

and centrality of this belief, which echoes throughout his writing, can be further ascertained by a careful study of his methods and motivation as an historian and apologist.

c) Historian in Oxford

In the same way that Neill's Christology sheds light on his doctrine of God, so also does his theology of history cast further light upon his understanding of both the Father and the Son. It is significant, as it highlights the area he felt fundamental to the discussion, that he primarily debated with Hick and company not on the relationship between Christianity and the great faiths but rather on the nature of history and of how God acts in history.

In his chapter on "Jesus and History" in Truth of God Incarnate he argues that:

The death of Christ is the central point of History; here all the roads of the past converge; hence all the roads of the future diverge.[20]

This seminal event, therefore, acts like a funnel in any interpretation of history. Or to change the metaphor, the Passion is the pivot of history. It is not immediately obvious upon what basis he makes such an extraordinary claim, or how "all the roads of the past converge" and "future diverge". Nonetheless, the implicit assumption, throughout this chapter is that at the centre of history is the Incarnation and at the centre of the Incarnation is the death of Christ.

Combine these beliefs with Neill's view of history as "unique, unpredictable, unalterable and irreversible"[21], and it is not surprising he put so much emphasis upon this one event since it is in the "unalterable and irreversible" past. His argument is not simply a rhetorical device to persuade his readers to believe in the "Truth of God Incarnate", it is also an attempt to show how the experience of Christ today is rooted in the Jesus of History. As he viewed history as literally Christo-centric, then it should be asked whether this belief was the overriding reason for his work as a historian.

In History of the Church in India (Part 1), for example, he begins by outlining with apparent balance and fairness the variety of religious heritages of India. He then puts them within their geographical, political and historical contexts. Furthermore, he encourages his readers to recognise the scantiness of evidence for a variety of well-loved traditions, such as the story of Thomas. He also delights throughout both Part 1 and Part 2 in introducing a series of unknowns, from the forgotten Franciscan named John to Jordanus, "a sober and unemotional chronicler." [22]

The main thrust of the book, however, is to plot the course of the Church in India. On first reading it comes across as a well-researched, beautifully-written and persuasively argued historical account of this subject. For example, he argues that the historian who deals with the Roman Catholic Church in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "is faced at outset by a grave difficulty". There

does not exist "an orderly and systematic account of History".[23] In this instance, as so often, he is clearly attempting to make a contribution to historical study. In short, here is a highly scholarly piece of academic work, which appears to owe little of its origin to Neill's Christo-centric view of history.

A closer examination of Neill's methodology suggests that he was neither motivated by a scholarly thirst for knowledge nor the hope of academic recognition. First, his emphasis upon individuals illustrates not simply his passionate belief that history is "about people" and "what they believe"[24], but also how he once again uses the lives of saints (and sinners) to teach the Church today.

For example, Neill's graphic descriptions of Francis Xavier and his companions as "true servants of Christ in their ceaseless care for the sick and for the dying"[25] reads like an encouragement to care. Or his portrayal of Robert de Nobili whose flexibility with Western custom, his studying and production of the Gospel in Indian terms appears to be recorded as a subtle encouragement to his readers to act similarly in their own context.

Secondly, this didactic element extends to his analysis of of the varying types of missionary methods. Both successes and failures are plotted. Another recurring theme is the degree of sensitivity and flexibility towards the indigenous culture and recipients of the message. Thus, on the one hand, the Portugese Catholics are implicitly applauded for the way in

which they worked with a "primarily illiterate population." They made use of images, pictures, processions and splendour of liturgical ceremonial.[26]

On the other hand, however, they were explicitly criticised for their inability to surmount one of "the principal obstacles" to successful evangelism; this was "the total or almost total ignorance of Hinduism in which the Portuguese had lived for sixty years." [27] Neill is aiming at, and often achieves objectivity in his accounts. Nevertheless, what he selects to write about, which further demonstrates the importance he places upon mission and the growth of the church, highlights his hope that the "darkness of centuries would be brought to an end by the penetration of the light of Christ." [28]

Once again Neill not only uses history to try both to change and to teach the Church today, but also to explain its present situation. This third rhetorical use of history can be seen, for example, in his handling of the Synod of Diamper. The question debated was whether there was any validity in Canon Law. This seventeenth-century debate "sowed the seeds of dissensions and divisions - divisions which up to the time of writing have not been healed." [29] If such lessons of history were taken seriously, then the study of history could be a cohesive force rather than simply an interpretative device.

Neill did not solely confine his use of history as a hermeneutic tool to understanding the Indian Church. In a series of modern Church history lectures he began his third

session, on "The Oxford Movement", by stressing how "important it was for Anglicans to understand" how:

History is not simply Antiquarian, looking back to the past. It is more interesting if we see the past in relation to today. Why we are where we are? and to some extent how we got here?[30]

Add these comments to his treatment of the Synod of Diamper and it is clear this method of interpreting past events in order to understand and explain present situations was another objective upon Neill's writing of history. In the same way in which he worked in Anglicanism (1958), he attempted to rationalise the present by looking to the past.[31]

To change, to teach, to explain and fourthly, to record for the purpose of encouragement, reflect some of the ways in which Neill used history. This fourth goal can be seen by his frequent retelling of the story of less well-known Christians. In his eyes it is they who keep the church going:

In history the doings of prelates and of the great ones of the earth tend to be recorded at inordinate length..... but it is the ignorant, untutored and yet faithful who hold the church together.[32]

This is reflected through both Part 1 and 2 as he preserves or revives the memory of unnoticed or forgotten lives.

In Part 2, published posthumously, this is skilfully accentuated by his description of the movement "towards an

Indian Church", (Chapter 17). His belief is that "the story of Christianity in India must primarily be the story of Indians becoming Christians." [33] Whilst his ecclesiology was founded in the missionary purpose of the Church, his recording of history also looked forward to the future: specifically the further growth and fuller integration of the Indian Church.

Thus he also wrote history in the belief that if one understands what has been, and what is, then one can perhaps also see more clearly what ought to be.

These four interlocking uses of history shed light on Neill's own understanding and pragmatic use of history. This pragmatism may have influenced his selectivity, but it does not appear to have led to historical compromise. For Neill "one of the major tasks of historical science is the patient replacement of mythology by scientifically-established fact." [34] This impressive statement can be seen being put into practice in both the intricate footnotes of his Indian history and his endless travels to numerous libraries to verify references.

He was also, therefore, in the business of demythologization. In his Autobiography, for example, Neill argued that "History is the great destroyer of Myths.... for if they discovered the bones (of Jesus).... I would cease to be a worshipping Christian." [35] Thus the historical fact of the Resurrection appears to vindicate the death of Christ. It is on this basis, returning to an earlier argument, that Neill is able to argue that the death of Christ is at the centre of history. It is for this reason that the historical foundations

of Christianity are far more significant for Neill's faith than for Bultmann and his disciples. Even though he admits "history cannot produce faith, it can serve to undermine it,"[36] he continued to see his own process of demythologizing in a far more positive and edifying light than the work of Bultmann.[37]

Nevertheless, it is overstretching the evidence available to make too tight a link between Neill's highlighting of God's specific intervention in history and his more general and pragmatic approach which uses history as a tool to persuade, teach, explain or encourage. Or in the words of Lightfoot, cited by Neill in an interview in the United States, he was prepared to use history as a "cordial for dropping Saints." [38] As both forty years earlier in India and twenty years before in Germany, behind this method appears to be a wider view of God's working and intervention in and through history.

The fact that he expends so much effort in understanding and teaching church history would suggest he believed the primary location of God's action is within the Christian community. But this needs to be qualified by the fact he frequently widens the picture and describes the broader context within which the Church is set. This suggests Neill, as with the Holy Spirit in our last chapter, did not operate with a ghetto-like view of history. For him history was :

the sphere within which God is at a work.

This does not mean that he interferes cataclysmically at certain given moments; the

whole of history is the loom of his
weaving.[39]

This explicit statement illustrates how he had widened his perception of God's working within history since studying in Cambridge. It also further explains why he exerted so much effort in the study and teaching of history.

At the start of his lecture on "The Oxford Movement" he argues "one cannot separate history from the general history of a country and a civilisation." Such a narrow approach to history is "boring", but to see the Church in relation to "the shifting currents of national affairs" is both "fascinating" and "interesting", for one is thus able to see the "great plan of God" working "out through the centuries." [40]

His work as a historian and his reason for studying history sheds further light on the sort of God Neill believed in. He was not a God confined to working through the Church, nor a God limited to specific supernatural interventions in the past. He also was a God who worked through the wider fluxes of history.

In order to further clarify Neill's belief in both the nature of and the distinction between God's specific revelation in Jesus and His wider action through the world, it is worth focussing on Neill as an Apologist at this time.

d) Christo-centric Apologist

In this final decade, Neill employed a variety of techniques as an apologist for the Christian Faith. He continued

his prolific work as a lecturer, preacher, and writer.[41] The precise handling and articulation of words continued to be his major work. These were the tools whereby he sought to promote his personal conviction that in Christ "the total structure, the inmost reality, of the universe was for the first time and forever disclosed." [42] This ambitious and universalistic Christo-centric claim is made clear and extended through a number of different works.

From Salvation Tomorrow (1976), where he defined "Salvation" in the light of the discussions at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Nairobi 1975 and then asserted Salvation is ultimately only found in Christ, for he is not a saviour, but the Saviour[43]; via the Crises of Belief (1984) [44], where he attempted to objectively consider and compare the great religions; to the Supremacy of Jesus (1984)[45], where he contrasted Christ with other central religious leaders.

A Christo-centric theme echoes throughout each of these works. This is the foundation of his expression. Such content is balanced by a methodology which implicitly and explicitly makes much of the importance of dialogue.[46]

This section will attempt briefly to analyse both this one common theme and overriding approach. There is clearly a tension between such Christo-centric claims and his parallel emphasis upon dialogue. The influence of these factors can be seen most clearly in Crises of Belief. As mentioned earlier this book was a radically reworked version of Christian Faith and Other Faiths (1961), [47] As the product of cumulative

research and reflection, this stands, excluding The History of Church in India, as the most significant book of his final decade. For these reasons it therefore repays more careful study than many of his lesser works produced at this time.

His approach in this book could be summed up in three words: Openness without compromise. Both in theory and practice he reiterates the appeal to committed "self-exposure"[48] to other religious systems. He is less interested in academic sparring and more concerned to promote "engagement, and personal involvement"[49] with those of other faiths. "We must expose ourselves, honestly and without protection, to the questions that they may ask of us." [50] This empathic methodology is seen put into practice throughout the book.[51]

Nevertheless, this openness and descent "into the arena" leads initially to an apparently rigorous questioning, but ultimately it does not appear to provoke a serious interrogation of the foundations of Christianity. It could be argued, along with Julius Lipner in a subsequent book review, that he does not approach Christianity with a similar rigour as with other faiths.

Thus, for example, he highlights a number of "perils"[52] which the Christian faith inevitably passes through "by the mere fact of living in the world". First, faith in a person becomes merely communication of doctrinal formulations.[53] Secondly, experience becomes "frozen in an institution".[54] Thirdly, Church life becomes determined by convention and conformity, and finally Christianity becomes identified with a

particular culture.[55] For Neill, however, these four spheres of possible developments - dogma, institution, convention and culture are inevitable and can be perceived within every religion. In short, he qualifies these four potential areas of weakness within Christendom by the point that such Achilles heels are to be found elsewhere as well.

Even when he develops the argument and highlights these four spheres as examples of self-imposed criticisms upon Christendom, they are used positively to support his ultimate point that the Christian faith is able to stand the tensions imposed by question and dialogue. He can, for example, argue that "it has to be noticed that this Christian tendency towards self-criticism and consequent liberation from the past runs directly counter to what is happening in many other areas." [55] Once again the charm of dialogue covers a rhetorical device which seeks to advance a realistic, but far from over-negative view.

Nevertheless, what is more impressive is the comprehensive nature of questions he fires at Christendom. Through these questions and in line with the other sections he focuses upon Universality, Community, Self-Criticism, New-Light from other sources and restatement of the Faith. It is the final two areas which are the most significant for this discussion of the content of Neill's beliefs.

First, in a genuinely open and humble piece he admits that even though "all truth is present in Christ"[56], critics and enemies can teach and have taught some "vital truth" that all the time was unnoticed but "implicit in the life and teaching

of Christ".[57] Most surprisingly, he illustrates this point with a qualified acceptance of what the secular feminist has taught the nation as to woman's abilities.[58] The implication here, however, is that new light casts light upon old truths already buried in Christ.

This openness extends, secondly, to the recasting and re-statement of Christian truth "in the light of new knowledge". Earlier he had admitted that in "1983 we cannot present the Christian Faith as our predecessors presented it in 1883, or theirs in 1783,"[59] but he qualifies this with a word of caution. For Neill there were certain basic convictions which must be maintained.

i) There is only one God and Creator, from whom all things take their origin.

ii) This God is a self-revealing God, and he himself is active in the knowledge that we have of him.

iii) In Jesus the full meaning of the life of man, and of the purpose of the universe, has been made known. In him the alienated world has been reconciled to God.

iv) In Jesus Christians see the way in which they ought to live; his life is the norm to which they are unconditionally bound.

v) The Cross of Jesus shows that to follow his way will inevitably result in suffering; this is neither to be resented nor to be evaded.

vi) The Christian faith may learn much from other faiths; but it is universal in its claims, in the end Christ must be

acknowledged Lord of all.

vii) The death of the body is not the end. Christ has revealed the eternal dimension as the true home of man's spirit. [60]

Each of these statements deserves at least a page, but for the purpose of this discussion it is worth first noticing that this does not attempt to be a comprehensive list. Any interpretation of these seven basic convictions must bear in mind what it is: Neill's fundamental non-negotiables in the arena of dialogue.

Secondly, this is highly Christo-centric, as opposed to a theo-centric creed. Thus Jesus Christ brings meaning, purpose, reconciliation, example, submission and ultimately hope. Critics could argue what he lacks in pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology he makes up for in his Christology. Here in a tightly packed nutshell is the heart of Neill's faith. Its uncompromising definitive statements stand in sharp contrast with a more liberal approach which puts emphasis upon the mystery and diversity of God's revelation. There is certainly no room for Hick's "Copernican revolution", which "demands a paradigm shift from a Christianity-centred or Jesus-centred to a God-centred model of the universe of faiths." [61]

Thirdly, there appears to have been little major shift from his central beliefs in the thirties and forties. This can be seen most clearly by a comparison between Foundation Beliefs (1939), Beliefs (1942) and these statements. Interestingly, in this later list he focuses upon the cross rather than the

Resurrection and also omits any reference to the Holy Spirit, though admittedly the Holy Spirit receives a brief treatment in both earlier books. One must be careful not to read too much into these omissions, except that Neill's spotlight upon Christ often outshone his belief in the other members of the Trinity. It is almost as if for Neill Jesus was "Supreme" within the Trinity.

Thus, fourthly, even though he describes God as a "self-revealing God" (ii) who is active in our knowledge of him, it is clear from (iii) forwards that the nature of this revelation primarily takes the shape of the life and death of Jesus. This emphasis upon objective historical event further explains why he put so much weight upon the historical basis of Christianity and comparatively so little upon subjective human experience. If God supremely revealed himself through the life, death and vindication of Jesus Christ, then it was highly logical for Neill to spend so much time in attempting to preach, teach, and write about Christ in a huge variety of contexts.

This given, therefore, radically shaped his methodology. The immovable foundation stone, in each of the three books cited earlier and in his newsletter, is Jesus Christ:

At the end of the journey we find that all roads lead to Jesus of Nazareth. Mohammad, the Prophets, the Sages of Greece and Rome, all had something important to say, but to each one we are all compelled to say "You are not he". Each points to one beyond

himself, in whom the best that he has to offer is transcended, fulfilled, perfected. Jesus is supreme, because it is precisely in the person of Christ, that God and man meet.[62]

In the book The Supremacy of Jesus he appears to listen, to compare, and to enter into dialogue, but the ultimate message remains static, that "Jesus is supreme above other religious leaders or teachers".

The reasoning behind this claim here is to be found in the nature of who Jesus was. His teaching may have had parallels, but the authority of His revelation was ultimately rooted in the combination of being both God and man. Both this book and Crises of Belief take the shape of a skilfully - shaped argument, but the cumulative impact is a rhetorical and passionate appeal to follow the Man from Galilee.

Nevertheless, Neill's passion did not lead to religious fundamentalism or dogmatism but rather to a flexible and an often highly-persuasive writing and speaking style. His technique appears to have been shaped ultimately, though not solely, by the methods of Christ.

In A History of the Church in India, for example, he cites the great nephew of Francis Xavier, Jerome Xavier. His missionary technique is subtly applauded. For Neill he falls into the succession of the great Christian Apologists of the late Middle Ages. One key quotation sheds light not simply upon the younger Xavier's work, but also the base for Neill's

own methodology:

The sword is never the key giving admission to the heart, never, never! It is reasons, instruction, good example, tenderness and benefits that open well-locked hearts. The key was used by Jesus Christ our Lord, where-as Muhammad wielded the sword.[63]

The methodology of Jesus was an example which Neill himself attempted to follow, especially his use of "reasons, instruction", and "good example". Once again the manner of Neill's method finds primary explanation in his foundational beliefs.

In conclusion, when focussing on Neill as both a historian and apologist, one must not attempt to separate too sharply the content, method and motivation behind his ceaseless communication. His beliefs were closely intermingled with his actions. Through his work in history and apologetics as a teacher he employed a variety of pedagogical methods to achieve a number of specific goals.

On one level he was a traditional educator. He believed that "Christian education" ought to enable students to discriminate within what he perceived as five key areas in the curriculum:

Fantasy and Reality	(Science)
Mythology and Event	(History)
Ugly and Beautiful	(Aesthetics)
Worst and Better	(Ethics)
Transitory and Lasting	(Metaphysics) [64]

These objectives reflect both Neill's own classical background and the apparently dialectic and comprehensive manner in which he perceived the world. More importantly it illustrates his conviction that education was concerned not merely with imparting knowledge, but also giving students powers of discernment and judgement. There appears to have been some expansion of his theory of education since his time in India and Africa where he put emphasis primarily upon the ability to think independently.

Much of his energy, however, in these final years was concerned with expressing his perception of reality and his own interpretation of events. He was primarily a didactic teacher. For example, even at the age of eighty three he delivered thirty six wide-ranging lectures on Twentieth-Century Church History in the United States.

The reason for this consuming desire to communicate was rooted primarily not in confidence of his own knowledge or abstract educational theory, but rather in a deeper level of belief. It ultimately springs from his firmly held Christocentric beliefs, rooted in his own experience. Thus, it is only this which can make full sense of both his methods and motivation.

As the "Christ Event" was for Neill a "unique" and "unrepeatable" moment in history with universal significance he continued to try to demonstrate the total relevance of this event in today's complex world. Thus he attempted to bring together past event with present reality. On this level he

tried to verify logically his theology by a scientific historical approach. Using this Christo-centric foundation he tried to formulate appropriate approaches to Aesthetics, Ethics and Metaphysics.

Ultimately, however, it was more than cerebral knowledge which Neill wished to pass on; it was rather a dynamic relationship he wished others to enter into. This manifested itself in knowledge of and by the living Christ.

In a sermon at St.Ebbes, in Oxford for example, he tearfully described his feelings as he watched people on the streets. "My heart is sore. So nice, so friendly: couples wheeling prams.... I long with all my heart that they should know Him, find him." [65] It was this passionate belief which underlay his mature life and work of communication.

Notes for Chapter 9

- 1: S.C.Neill, Newsletter. 38 issues. (Unpublished. September 1969 - July 1984.) They appeared sporadically, but provide a useful insight into the general chronology of his life and movements.[Made available by kindness of Charles Neill.]
- 2: He normally attended meetings at the House of Bishops as "Consultant to the Church in the Middle East". From O.Scallan's thesis on The Supremacy of Christ.(Dublin: Unpublished, 1984).
- 3: S.C.Neill, "A Historical Understanding of the Evangelical /Ecumenical Dialogue in World Missions." Form. 25 9-21 (Jan - March. 1982)
- 4: S.C.Neill, "Mission in the Eighties", Ocu Bul Miss R 3. 27-8 (Jan. 1979) On p.28, he argues that "higher theological teaching in the third world needs most urgent attention," and that the "Western pattern of training is no longer acceptable."
- 5: S.C.Neill, "Some Realism in the Ecumenical Illusion." Chmn. 89. 235-240 (July. 1975.)
- 6: S.C.Neill, "Some Realism in the Ecumenical Illusion." Chmn. 89. 235-240 (July. 1975.)
- 7: The theme of dialogue is most comprehensively dealt with by O.Scallan in his theses cited in note 2. It is a study which focuses upon "Inter Religious Dialogue in the writings of Bishop Stephen Neill".
- 8: Neill frequently preached on this subject. For example in 1976 he preached at St.Ebbes, Oxford, on "Is Jesus the Only Saviour?" This simple, clear, and relatively short sermon is

available on Tape B8322 from St.Ebbes tape Library.

- 9: S.C.Neill, "Mission in the 1980's" Ocu Bul Miss R 3. (Jan.1979) p.27-8.
- 10: idem. p.28.
- 11: S.C.Neill, "Myth and Truth" - (Comments in Response to the The Myth of God Incarnate.) Chmn 91 (Oct. 1977) p.309.
- 12: idem. p.309.
- 13: idem. p.311.
- 14: idem. p.312.
- 15: idem. p.314.
- 16: idem. p.313.
- 17: idem. p.313.
- 18: idem. p.312.
- 19: idem. p.317.
- 20: M.Green, (ed.) The Truth of God Incarnate. (London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1977) Neill wrote chapters 2 and 3 on "Jesus and Myth" and "Jesus and History".
- 21: idem. p.71.
- 22: H.C.I. p.1-86.
- 23: idem. p.333.
- 24: S.C.Neill, Newsletter no.33. (Oxford: Unpublished. 1981)
- 25: H.C.I. p.137.
- 26: idem. p.300.
- 27: idem. p.237.
- 28: idem. p.252.
- 29: idem. p.219.
- 30: S.C.Neill, "The Oxford Movement." This was the third ses-

sion of eight Church History Lectures, delivered at The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 1977. (On tape A4, and, available at St. Peter's Vere Street, Christian Impact).

31: S.C. Neill, "Problems of Church Today and Relation to History." (Same series as note 30. Lecture no. 7) Here he attempts to explain various present problems of Church, such as secularisation or clergy pay, in the light of Historical analysis.

32: H.C.I. (I) p.331.

33: H.C.I. (II) p.386.

34: Auto. Ch7. ii. p.54. (After Chapter 5 new page numbering.)

still wonders how much Neill created his own mythology + reading of the facts about himself.]

35: Auto. p.168.

36: S.J. p.14.

37: This is implicit throughout his discussion and definition of "Myth" in lectures such as no.7 cited in note 31. Nevertheless, as pastors, both Bultmann and Neill aimed to distinguish between "mythology and event" to assist their respective audiences to discern historical certainties. The key distinction appears to be the different presuppositions they held. (See chapter 6 for further discussion on this subject.)

38: S.C. Neill interviewed by anonymous interviewer. (Unpublished, 1970's, available by kindness of Charles Neill.)

39: S.C. Neill, Crises of Belief (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p.18f. [Hereafter referred to as C.B.].

40: S.C. Neill. "The Oxford Movement" (L.I.C.C. lecture No.7)

41: i) The speaker: Newsletters a) no.23: Impressed with his own performance as a speaker, (Oxford: Unpublished, 1977).

b) no.28: In forty days he spoke, preached or lectured some 26

times. (Oxford: Unpublished, 1978). c) no.32: At 81 he spent six months in the States where he reckoned to have preached, lectured, and spoken some seventy times. (Oxford: Unpublished, 1981) ii) The listener: see also Leslie Brown's memorial sermon in 1984 which quoted a number of anecdotes confirming his skill in this area. iii) The writer: passim this thesis.

42: C.B. p.32.

43: S.C.Neill, Salvation Tomorrow (London: Lutterworth, 1976), [Hereafter referred to as S.T.] Neill concludes this book with five typically Christo-centric areas which he believed might be rediscovered by the Church. i) The immense originality of Christ. ii) The inexorableness of Christ. iii) The creative power of Christ. iv) The uniting power of Christ. iv) The hope brought by Christ.

44: C.B. [see note 39 for full details].

45: S.C.Neill, Supremacy of Jesus (London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1984), [Hereafter referred to as S.J.].

46: O.Scallan, The Supremacy of Christ "Inter Religious Dialogue in the writings of Bishop Stephen Neill" (Dublin: Unpublished M.Litt, 1987) correctly highlights and helpfully elucidates this methodology.

47: S.C.Neill, Christian Faith and Other Faiths. The Christian Dialogue with other Religions. Delivered as Moorhouse Lectures, Melbourne, 1960. (London: Lutterworth, 1960).

48: C.B. p.17.

49: C.B. p.17.

50: C.B. p.19.51: C.B. p.32/33. "The music of each (faith) has

to be felt and appreciated in terms of itself and of nothing else." He is at his most impressive when handling Hinduism (Ch.4). Here, he skilfully distinguishes between the complex variety of theoretical religious systems and their practical outworkings within the village context.

52: C.B. p.258.

53: C.B. p.259.

54: C.B. p.259.

55: C.B. p.272.

56: C.B. p.272.

57: C.B. p.282.

58: C.B. p.283.

59: C.B. p.281.

60: C.B. p.285.

61: J.Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths. (New York: St.Martin's Press. 1973). p.131. Also cited by O.Scallan in his thesis on Neill ("The Supremacy of Christ") p.112.

62: S.J. p.103.

63: H.C.I. (I) p.183.

64: S.C.Neill. "Problems of Church Today and Relation to History" Lecture no.7. delivered at The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 1977. (Available on Tape A4, Christian Impact, St. Peter's Vere Street, London.)

65: S.C.Neill. "Is Jesus the Only Saviour?" Preached at St.Ebbes, Oxford, 1976. (Available on Tape B8322, but unpublished.)

Chapter 10: Enigma Uncovered

His death removes one of the most striking and gifted figures from the world church scene, the variety of whose gifts at one time seemed certain to ensure him one of the highest offices in the Church. The award of honorary doctorates from no fewer than six universities that spanned the world, and a Fellowship of the British Academy given in 1969, were a recognition of his intellectual powers and achievements.[1]

Neill's obituary in The Times merely hints at the scope of his talents and the breadth of his achievements. This thesis has attempted to build an extensive biographical portrait and so tell a story that has often been ignored. The aim, however, has been more than simply to outline the life and works of this "most striking and gifted" figure "from the World Church scene"; it has also been to explain why Neill was the way that he was, and more specifically why he expressed himself in the way that he did.

For this reason, specific questions of explanation have been tackled: "Why did such a gifted man never reach one of the highest offices in the Church?" or "Why did he invest so much energy in written and verbal communication?" or "Why was he driven to achieve so much that he received applause from around

the globe?" But as such questions have only been dealt with in passing, an overall explanation will now be attempted.

This is the most delicate and complex part of the whole thesis. In colloquial terms "What made Neill tick?" is perhaps the hardest question to answer. Four heuristic approaches that could be used for understanding Neill's life will be briefly evaluated. First, an auto-biographical explanation will be discussed. This would focus on Neill's own self-critical assessment, and is a development from the biographical approach outlined in the introduction and used throughout the thesis. Secondly, a psychological explanation will be considered. This analysis would centre upon his development and inner turmoils. Thirdly, an expressive-based explanation will be assessed. This approach would highlight his passion for words and persuasion. Fourthly and finally, a specifically theological explanation of Neill's life will be put forward.

This final attempt to understand Neill provokes a further set of questions. First, can his deepest theological beliefs be seen to underlie his autobiography, psychology and communication? Secondly, and more specifically, was it his highly Christo-centric approach which held his beliefs together? Or did his theological convictions lead to great instability? Thirdly, whether his faith was a cohesive force or destabilising influence, is a clear understanding of his beliefs a key interpretative tool for explaining both the general movement and specific activities of his life? In other words, is the theological approach not simply a heuristic device, but more significantly a synthesis of the other three methods of expla-

nation? Fourthly and finally, did he live these convictions out with integrity and thus demonstrate by his own life the validity and reality of such beliefs?

a) An Autobiographical Explanation

It could be argued that Neill's vast Autobiography, unpublished at the time of writing, provides the fullest and most conclusive explanation of Neill's life and works. Eleven chapters of detailed narrative do provide an invaluable source for going behind the eulogies of The Times obituary to his own self-understanding and self-explanation. In short, it could be inferred from his Autobiography that he has opened the door to his house and invited the audience to see the foundation stones for themselves.

The inherent danger of such an approach is that it does not recognise the complex nature, the repetition of details, the unfinished state and the wider purpose of Neill's Autobiography. On one level, it should be read as an attempt to grow in self-understanding. What C.S.Lewis writes in Surprised by Joy, could also roughly be applied to Neill's first two chapters:

In the earlier chapters the net has to be spread pretty wide in order that, when the explicitly spiritual crisis arrives, the reader may understand what sort of person my childhood and adolescence has made me.[2]

Whilst Neill does not build up to a spiritual turning point in an identical fashion to Lewis, he initially concerns himself

with understanding the adult-self in the light of childhood experiences. Secondly, the very fact that he produces such a lengthy document suggests he is attempting to bring order and meaning to a varied life that often appeared to lack purpose and direction.

Thus it is an act of creation and recreation, creation in that Neill brings to consciousness the nature of his own life, and recreation in that "he transforms the mere fact of existence into a realized quality and a possible meaning".[3] Both these concerns should be kept in mind when approaching his Autobiography.

On another level, this document should also be read as an attempt at self-justification: he is trying to put his own side of the story. This can be seen most clearly in his lengthy, but selective outlining of the events which led to his premature departure from India.[4] The picture that emerges is that of an isolated leader who is under pressure from the War, his work, his enemies and his health. He presents to his readers both a man caught in a "sea of troubles",[5] as well as a slightly heroic figure who "kept his own feelings and wishes in the background".[6] Thus, if one was to rely entirely on Neill's own euphemistic explanation, a one-sided picture would emerge of a popular bishop hard done by, unjustly treated, and ultimately "forced" to resign.[7]

The necessity of drawing from other sources for a full explanation leads to a number of conclusions. First, even though Neill himself claims this is merely "a book of events"[8], it must also be recognised as a selectively con-

nected narrative and therefore an interpretation of his own life. Secondly, as such it has further limitations as a full explanation, for here is a definition of his past self, written from the context of Nairobi and Oxford. His autobiographical explanation should be handled with care, in much the same way as dealing with Luther's or Lewis's autobiographical writings.

For Neill there is often also a wide gulf between the present moment of writing and the context of his action in the past. Subsequent experiences and hardened belief may have led Neill to impose meaning and significance on certain events rather than discerning it in them. Compare, for instance, the importance Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Lewis and Neill put upon their conversion or paradigm shift which took place in a North-African garden, in a German tower, on a London street corner and in an Oxford bus.[9] Each writer uses his experience both as the climax of preceding events and also a pivotal moment or a key which unlocks much of his later life.

The highlighting, by Neill, of his conversion, his resignation, his healing, or his lectures, plus frequent underlining of his other major concerns and interests as a student in Cambridge, a missionary in India, an ecumenist in Geneva, a historian in Hamburg, a professor in Nairobi and an apologist in Oxford may reflect more his priorities when he was writing this text, than those of the time he was actually describing.

Moreover, given that he intended, after some revision, to have this document published,[10] Neill's self-explanation and self-justification can at times also become a subtle self-promotion. For instance, his reference to his outstanding exam

results, his ability to draw and hold an audience, or his prolific writing is recorded in numerous places.[11] The cumulative impact of recording so many impressive details is the construction of an intimidating life-story. But this impression is qualified by the sheer quantity of detail included. One also feels that here is a slightly pompous man who believes that others would be interested in such details.[12]

In the light of corroboratory secondary material the subject of the "Autobiography" should not, however, be regarded as a "literary fiction",[13] or a product of biased reporting, but rather through a consecutive narrative an attempt to bring explanation, justification, meaning and significance to his own self.

But this should not be seen as an entirely selfish or egotistical exercise, as there is a sense in which these hundreds of pages are, to borrow TeSelle's phrase, a "vocational autobiography".[14] In other words, he does not explicitly tell the reader what to do or how to live, but by describing his own life Neill implicitly commends a particular way of living. It is as if he is saying that it is possible to live this way "because I have!" Whilst he does not go so far as to hold his life up as a paradigm, he offers his own adventures, encounters, discoveries, mistakes and successes for others to learn from.

In short, Neill's autobiographical explanation of his own life also offers his audience an authentic and possible way in which to live. Obviously this applies, not to specific details, such as going to Trinity, working in Geneva or setting

up a Religious Studies department in Nairobi, but rather operates through more general principles, such as working as a missionary, an evangelist, an apologist, an ecumenist or a historian.

Thus, it is appropriate to read Neill's autobiographical story as an indirect piece of communication which points beyond a descriptive narrative to a way of life and set of presuppositions by which Neill himself tried to live. Here is a theologian using a relatively unfamiliar literary genre to fit his own needs and goals. Unlike C.S. Lewis's almost evangelistic Surprised by Joy, Neill wrote his own life-story in a far more comprehensive and implicitly didactic style.

Neill, like Lewis, was a sensitive performer and writer. He may have been confident, some would say over-confident, of his own abilities, but he was not a man with an unrealistic ego. It is inconceivable to believe that he expected his epic of over a thousand pages, even when abridged, to have the same popular appeal as Lewis's one hundred and ninety page "spiritual thriller" Surprised by Joy. Given the narrow range of Neill's potential audience it is fair to assume that he was, perhaps subconsciously, attempting to draw his theologically and/or historically literate readers not simply into his life-story, but also towards his own theological position at the time of writing. Both the specific nature of these beliefs and his motivation for inviting others into this world will be explored later in this chapter.

In the meantime, it is sufficient to recognise the wider nature and variety of purposes behind his autobiographical

explanation. Neill may not have been as explicit as the apostle Paul when he attempts to persuade the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4,v.16f) but he clearly does want his readers to learn from his successes and mistakes. In the light of these discoveries and observations, it is necessary, in order to construct both a comprehensive historical account and a full explanation of Neill, to look for other approaches to add to or qualify his own perspective.

b) A Psychological Explanation

It could also be argued that the key to fully understanding Neill is to be found through a psychological explanation of his life and work which has parallels with Erik Erikson's Young Man Luther. [15] Such an interpretation would emphasize that Neill should be viewed as the product of a depressive and workaholic father, an evangelical school and family (Chapter 1), an elite Oxbridge education (Chapter 2), a stressful move into another culture (Chapter 3) and a heart-breaking loss of something he was deeply attached to (Chapter 4). Thus the first four chapters explain the way in which Neill lived the remainder of his life (Chapter 5-8). In short it manipulates the approach outlined in the Introduction, so that Neill becomes nothing more than a man whose choices were predetermined by a combination of his background, his environment and even his chemistry.

The advantage of such a view is that it takes Neill's recurring psychological difficulties more seriously than does his own autobiographical explanation. There, it is only dealt

with in the first chapter of the "Autobiography" and then almost entirely ignored. His implicit attempts to explain his difficulties in terms of amoebic dysentery which was only diagnosed in 1954, ten years after its contraction, do not seem to explain satisfactorily the extent of this "darkness". This "thorn in the flesh" was a recurring difficulty throughout his life. Whilst his depression was eased through this belated but correct diagnosis in the fifties, it was not fully resolved until some fifteen years later in the late sixties.

Neill appears to display some, but by no means all, of the classic symptoms of depression as identified by writers such as Jack Dominian (Depression) and Robert Romanis (Depression).[16] At various times Neill suffered from both physical (disturbed sleep patterns and headaches) and psychological symptoms (guilt and moods of depression).[17] On the grounds that his "darkness" is not always explicable, it is feasible that his depression was endogenous in origin. His condition was worsened by his tendency to over-work.[18] Specific moments of crisis and loss, such as his departure from India, would have heightened his predicament and led to bouts of reactive depression.[19] Neill was clearly a man who was forced to wear, borrowing John White's title of 1982, many Masks of Melancholy.

Even though he was a man "who felt deeply", Neill clearly found it difficult to discuss his own emotions or remove his "masks".[20] The reason for this was probably a combination of background, where one never talked about one's feelings, and repression due to belief that "Christ uttered not one word of complaint or self-pity".[21] This attempt to hold down his

emotions may explain both his occasional angry outbursts and his frequent tearful moments whilst preaching.[22]

Bishop Leslie Brown identified a further psychological force which helps explain Neill's ceaseless activity. It was as if he was a man possessed by a "daemon" or by "enormous nervous energy". [23] Neill himself wrote that "bewildered human nature experiences difficulty in finding the right method of handling this powerful instinct and guiding it into orderly and creative channels." [24] He later pointed to the link between "sexual tension and artistic production" in the "lives of the greatest writers and artists".

It could legitimately be inferred from these passages that Neill himself both applauded and recognised in himself the tendency towards "sublimation", the movement of creative impulse from one channel to another.[25] In other words, in the light of the fact he never married, this may have been the way in which he attempted to handle "this powerful" sexual "instinct". How far he was successful is for each reader to assess.

The limitations of simply identifying a number of psychological or internalised forces as a complete explanation for the life of Neill is that it does not recognise his own agency or reaction with respect to these pressures. In telling his story, especially in Chapters 4 and 5, it has been seen how his psychological difficulties ensured that he never reached in the words of his obituary "one of the highest offices in the Church".

Nevertheless, as has been argued in Chapter 5, this

recurring turmoil appears also in the long run to have heightened his creativity and pastoral abilities. This, therefore, led to recognition underlined in The Times obituary by academic institutions and church organisations all around the world that Neill was an outstanding scholar, lecturer, preacher and pastor.

In other words, a psychological explanation may help to illuminate some of Neill's internal struggles; but if it leads to a merely determinist explanation of Neill it ignores his resilience in the face of these forces and the choices he made in spite of contingent circumstances.

One must look further than suggestions that argue Neill was compelled to replay his childhood experiences throughout his later life, or that he was rechanneling his libido through speaking in public or offering pastoral care, or even that his constant drive towards achieving successful written or verbal communication reflected a deeply felt need for domination and/or acceptance.

c) An Expressive-Based Explanation

Another attempt at explaining Neill could focus on him as a communicator or, in the literal sense, an expressionist. He was, after all, one of the most prolific communicators of the Church in the twentieth century. It has frequently been shown how he communicated explicitly through a variety of media. As a writer and scholar, he produced over fifty books and almost as many articles, covering a huge variety of subjects. As a lecturer and teacher he worked on every continent in the world frequently making lucid use of one of his eleven languages. As

an evangelist and apologist he spoke in venues as far afield as Indian market-places, African churches, American universities, and Australian lecture-rooms. Thus he delighted in the challenge of being both a popular preacher and a learned speaker to the end of his life.[26]

The Times Obituary correctly also emphasizes his "unusual gift with words" which "made him the draftsman of many documents", and how:

all the time books poured from his pen, all marked by a facility and vividness of style and range of erudition that were rarely found in such a harmonious combination... Neill had the same ease and power as a speaker as he possessed as an author.[27]

This thesis has frequently explored Neill's passion for expression and more specifically his use of words.

Various reasons for his passion for the ordering, writing and speaking of words could include such issues as fascination, manipulation and explanation. First, fascination: as has been cited in a different context, [28] from his "earliest childhood" he appears to have been fascinated "by the sight and sound of words, by the patterns in which they can be arranged and by the subtleties of meaning that they can express." [29] This fascination together with a facility with words may further explain why he was drawn to learn so many foreign languages. As demonstrated in both Chapter One and Two it would also have been heightened by his growing love for the classics, where both literacy and rhetoric were highly valued

tools.

Secondly, manipulation: as has been cited earlier, in the first chapter of his Autobiography he admits that even as a child he "dimly understood the power that lies within the reach of the man who can choose and arrange words exquisitely either in speech or in writing." [30] The need for such power over others reflects more about Neill's own insecurities and need for control, than a simple aesthetic or classical delight in the beauty of written or oral expression.

Thirdly, explanation: Neill's control over words manifested itself most obviously by the ease with which he passed on often complex information. It could be argued that his extraordinary facility with words of explanation and description replaced his inability at expressing his deepest and most profound emotions. His skill with words, therefore, sometimes enabled him to appear to his examiners, his students and even his friends as more authoritative, more knowledgeable and more in control of his emotions than he was in reality. [31]

Thus the ability, to explain or to teach whether in an Indian classroom, a Cambridge lecture theatre or in an American seminary may have brought not only a sense of power, but also a sense of security and by extension value. The logic here could be expressed slightly crudely and cynically as follows: "As people come to listen to me and applaud me then I must have something useful to say and, therefore, I must be of value and significance." This could be surmised from his continued acceptance of speaking engagements even in his eighties. [32]

The major weakness of a such an explanation which focuses

on Neill's own need for power is that it does not fully recognize written or verbal communication as a means of service; more importantly, it does not acknowledge the theological foundations of such a method. Neill was not solely driven by his delight for expressing himself, but he was also motivated by his own understanding of "the Word of God".

In the light of his prolific kerygmatic expression of the "Word of God" one might expect him to stand alongside theologians such as Karl Barth in his definition of this term. It is, therefore, a surprise to read in The Interpretation of the New Testament Neill's critique of Barth. This includes the point that the Swiss theologian fails to define clearly enough the "relationship between the Bible and the Word of God".[33] Neill wishes to widen the definition of "the Word of God". For him it is more than simply "preaching within the assembly of the faithful".[34] This interpretation and critique of Barth may itself be open to debate, but when combined with Neill's belief in the "self-authenticating power of the written word, without the aid of any human intermediary"[35] an old question is raised again in a sharpened tone.

If there is no real need for a "human intermediary", why did Neill then spend so much of his life articulating the Word? His answer, and a further clue to explain his passion for expression, is not to be found until the last two pages of The Interpretation of the New Testament. There he argues that the New Testament is ultimately "concerned with proclamation":

It is a Kerygma, the loud cry of a herald
authorized by a king to proclaim his will

and purpose to his subjects. It is Euangelion, good news, sent to those who are in distress with the promise of deliverance. It is the Word of the Lord - and in the East a word is no mere vibration in the atmosphere, it is a living power sent forth to accomplish that for which it is sent. When the New Testament scholar has done his utmost in his sphere, his work remains lifeless, until it is transformed into the living voice of proclamation.[36]

Much of Neill's life was spent in study and pulpit. Part of the reason for this was because he believed he was continuing in the line of the New Testament as a "herald" and bearer of "good news".

The metaphors used to describe the New Testament can also be applied to his own life. He did not see himself as an independent expressionist, but rather a communicator "authorised by a king". Here was a man under authority. Moreover, his Hebraic perception of the power of the word, which echoes Deutero-Isaiah,[37] further explains why he put so much effort into proclamation. Once again, as with the autobiographical and psychological explanations, one is driven towards his theological beliefs.

d) A Theological Explanation

It would be too easy simply to focus on the techniques of, or secondary reasons for, his communication. For Neill what was far more significant was the content of his expression.

Any explanation of Neill's explicit verbal communication must first attempt to discover and identify the central theme within all his work. Here lies the interpretative key to his life and work.

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that behind almost all his writing, lecturing, preaching and travelling as well as his concern for mission, history and ecumenism lies a simple central belief rooted in a profound personal experience. It was that God had, at one specific point in history, revealed himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Neill spent his life working out the implications of this assertion in the spheres of history (see esp. Chapter 7), ecumenism (see esp. Chapter 6), new cultures (see esp. Chapter 8) and Christological debate (see esp. Chapter 9).

It was on the basis of this fixed conviction that he built his life and work, and this explains why he was able to make such bold and crucial claims as:

The chief object of my life is that Jesus
Christ should be glorified.[38]

Statements such as this explain how at the centre of Neill's life and understanding of the world is a simple Christo-centric belief, which led him as an act of "grateful and adoring service"[39] to communicate in both written and oral forms.

On one level, Neill was merely attempting to follow on from his understanding of how God had communicated. Whilst at times he displayed Charles Raven's awe for natural beauty, John Hick's respect for other faiths, and the Lightfoots' passion for biblical texts,[40] it is clear that from his early teens

he believed that God had supremely revealed himself through a first century Galilean.[41]

On another level, this belief became more focused as he matured intellectually. As it has already been demonstrated in Chapter 8, Neill believed in a "self-revealing God" who made known his purposes for the universe and specifically for human-kind in Jesus. He saw Jesus as the norm to live by and the example to follow.[42] His lifelong expression of these and other subsequent beliefs should partially be interpreted as an act of following or imitating Christ, and therefore, taking part in the process initiated by God.

In his later life his perception of the glimpses or hints of God's revelation may have widened. His manner and approach towards other faiths became more humble and open.[43] Nevertheless, Jesus Christ remained the criterion by which both Christianity and the other faiths were judged.[44] This belief reinforced his struggle to express himself in a wide variety of contexts and to a range of other faiths. It also ensured that he held firmly to his central theological premise of God's specific revelation through Jesus Christ.

This belief also makes fuller sense of an Autobiographical explanation. Early on in the "Autobiography" Neill argues that this is not to be seen like Augustine's Confessions brought up to date, but as a "book of events".[45] As has been shown, this is too simple. There is a definite parallel between Augustine's work which should be read as an attempt to demonstrate, through the telling of his own life-story, the truth of "You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace

until they find rest in you"[46], and Neill's attempt implicitly to persuade his audience that his dominant Christo-centric belief does provide a coherent and consistent way of understanding life.

He does this not by telling his audience to "believe this", but rather by underlining the nature of his own belief and how he lived it out. Some would call this a "witness" or "testimony of faith". In other words, it is more than simply an attempt at self-explanation, self-justification or self-promotion. There is a definite theological purpose behind his writing of the "Autobiography".

It should be approached like Bunyan's Grace Abounding written in order to show how God was at work "that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their souls, by reading his work in me". [47] Neill, in a less neurotic style than Bunyan, is also using his own life implicitly to challenge his readers to reflect on how God has worked in and through their lives. In short, he hopes his audience will look beyond both the narrative of his life and the lucidity of his words to a deeper Christo-centric reality beyond.

It is this perception of reality, rooted in a historical and Christo-centric revelation and heightened by personal experience, which further explains why he ultimately stands apart from Bultmann's radical demythologization [48], Hick's "Copernican" revolution [49] and Freud's anthropomorpho-centric theory of projection [50].

From an external viewpoint, therefore, it is possible to draw on autobiographical, psychological and communication-based

explanations but still not to have the complete picture. It is this theologically-based explanation, which argues that only his deepest conviction, which was in the life and death and resurrection of Christ, can most comprehensively explain his life and works.

Moreover, it is possible to apply this framework to his own psychological life-story. He clearly moved from a "crucifixion experience" in India through to living more fully in the light of the resurrection as he grew older. At one stage it looked as if all was lost and his career and life was in tatters. Nevertheless, the very experience which seemed to break his heart and undermine his confidence appears to have opened his eyes to new horizons and strengthened his resolve to stand more effectively beside the broken-hearted.[51]

Furthermore, Neill's belief that God was working through the history of the world could also be localized in his own life-story. The sense of forward movement which he identifies in works such as A History of Missions, Anglicanism, A History of New Testament Interpretation 1861-1961, and A History of Christianity in India (Part One and Two) could also be applied to his own life. Thus with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to read, with Neill, some purpose into the apparent pointless "darkness" which encompassed so much of his life.

It is not simply that he worked as a tireless teacher, evangelist and apologist, but also the fact that Neill continued through his agony and brokenness which suggests he tried, at least, to live out his deepest Christo-centric convictions with integrity.

One of the key reasons why he was able to do this was rooted in his ability to integrate his hunger for knowledge with his Christo-centric belief. Thus, there was very little that Neill encountered, whether it be music, literature, science, world history, other beliefs or lack of beliefs that could not be integrated within his simple framework.[52] In his own words he had the ability to bring "all things into relationship with Christ." [53]

This was further nourished and revitalised by a disciplined and traditional devotional life. It was a rarity for him to miss the daily office of morning prayer, though he preferred to say it on his own. He would often meditate on the psalms or gospel stories. In his own eyes this slightly individualistic habit brought stability and cohesion to his transient lifestyle. In his Carnham lectures of 1958 he argues that:

Christians will not have an educated conscience and a right judgement, unless they take the trouble to acquire it by patient meditation on the life of Christ and serious study of their own vocation to live again the life of Christ upon the earth.[54]

This emphasis upon meditation upon the life of Christ partially explains why in a later lecture on the New Testament he puts the Gospels foremost in the Canon.[55] Neill's ambition, in a general and culturally appropriate sense, was simply to live "again-the-life of Christ upon the earth".

Neill's Christo-centric faith did run as a "a silver

thread" through his life. In spite of and perhaps because of his weaknesses and foibles, his incomplete pneumatology and his over Christo-centric theology, it is still possible to conclude that overall he was successful in his ambition, as stated earlier:

The chief object of my life is that Jesus Christ should be glorified.[56]

Notes on Tenth and Concluding Chapter.

1. The Times. July 24th, 1984.
2. C.S.Lewis, Surprised by Joy (First published in London by Geoffrey Books, 1955), (Glasgow: Collins, 1959), p.7.
3. J.Olney, Metaphors of Self: - The Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) p.44.
4. Auto. p.563. Here he goes into a detailed discussion of the unfair charges brought against him by an Indian priest with an apparent grudge.
5. Auto. p.560.
6. Auto. p.567. also Auto. p.94. "I was brought up in that austere form of Evangelicalism in which any mention of feelings was regarded as almost an indecency."
7. Auto. Ch. 5 (passim.) cf. p.573. He relates here how he received many letters of support from Indian Christians.
- 8: Auto. p.59-60.
- 9: Auto. p.60.f. Notice how the following "conversions", "paradigm shifts", or "breakthroughs" were used later within an autobiographical context. (a) Augustine: On hearing a child's voice saying "take it and read" he opens a Bible at Romans 13.v.13,4. Augustine writes "In an instantit was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled." Confessions. (ca.397. A.D.) Trans. R.S.Pine-Cofin, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), Book 8. Section 12. p.177-9. (b) M.Luther: Following his new understanding of Romans 1.v.17 he says "I felt myself straightaway born afresh and to have entered through the open gates into

paradise itself". "Autobiographical Fragment", March 1545. [Luther's Works edited by J.Pelikan, American Edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1943f.) Also in E.G.Rupp's Martin Luther (London: Edward Arnold, 1970) p.5-7. (c) J.Wesley: On hearing part of Luther's preface to Romans, at chapel in Aldersgate street, describing "the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ", his own heart was "strangely warmed". The Journal of John Wesley May 24th 1738. (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1903) Vol 1.p.54. (d) C.S.Lewis: "In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected convert in all England." Surprised by Joy (1955), (Glasgow: Collins, 1959), p.182. As with Neill, each experience or "testimony" was interpreted at a later date and in a different context. Neill stands in this tradition of autobiographers, who also partly use a movement towards, and a moment of, spiritual "crisis" to make a theological point.

10. It has now been published by Hodder and Stoughton under the title of God's Apprentice, edited by E.H. Jackson.

11. Auto. p.75.(on Exams) Section 7. iv. p.133-195. ("Among the Students." on audience.) Section 7. ii. p.1-64. ("Of Making Many Books" on writing.)

12. Auto. Chapter 1 goes into exhaustive detail about his family tree, whilst Chapters 6 and 7 records in even more detail his work as an ecumenist. This detail is, however, frequently balanced by a widening of the discussion to include an analysis of the context.

13. T.R.Wright, Theology and Literature (Oxford: Basil Black

well, 1988), p.93.

14. S.TeSelle, Speaking in Parables. A Study in Metaphor and Theology. (London: S.C.M., 1975).

15. E.H.Erikson, Young Man Luther. (London: Faber, 1958).

16. J.Dominian, Depression (London: Fontana,1976) & Robert Romanis Depression (London: Faber & Faber, 1987).

17. Auto. p.90.f. Neill's symptoms are described most fully in this closing part of the first chapter, though they also recur in Section 6. p.1.f.

18. Auto. Ch.2. p.178. "Work pursued me into my dreams." or p.481. He describes how work in India "gravely overtaxed my strength". Or in Section 7 he describes how his "hard-work" on History of Ecumenical Movement made him "ill". This tendency towards overwork was perhaps inherited from his father who "was never one to spare himself, he found it hard to cease from work".(Auto. Ch.1. p.31.) See also this thesis p. 21-2.

19. This is implicit throughout the two chapters of the Auto. which follow on from his Indian experience.

20. S.C.Neill, "The Evangelicals in the Church of England. Part One." (Lecture 1) (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 1976).

21. S.C.Neill, A Genuinely Human Existence (London: Constable and Co, 1959) (Hereafter referred to as G.H.E.) p.66.

22. a) Anger: Auto. p.61. He argues that one of the results of his conversion was that his "fierce temper came under control". It is clear, however, this was a life-long battle as demonstrated by references such as the day "he lost his glasses" and "his temper".(p.578.) He also tackles the theme of anger in

G.H.E. in such a way as it could be inferred that a "sudden burst of uncontrollable anger"(p.99.) was not an entirely foreign experience.

b) Tears: Crying or almost crying whilst preaching was a common occurrence for Neill. This is clear from several interviews with former Wycliffe students and in his sermon "Is Jesus the Only Saviour?" (at St.Ebbe's, Oxford, 1976.) Interestingly this often happened when he was speaking of the Cross. The implication is that picture particularly moved him, perhaps because he identified with, responded to and was thankful for the self-sacrifice of Jesus.

23. Private Interview with Bishop Leslie Brown. Dec.88.

24. G.H.E. p.173.

25. G.H.E. p.176-7.

26. S.C.Neill, "Letter 23" (Unpublished Newsletter, Wycliffe Hall, April, 1977) "I have always taken a rather low view of my own performances as speaker or preacher. In the past, if I managed to get somewhere near the target on one out of four or five efforts, I felt I was doing pretty well. Now on almost every single occasion I seem to get there. I hope that this is not senile self-satisfaction and lack of self-criticism. Perhaps long experience, and the continual discipline of careful preparation, are beginning to bear fruit."

27. The Times. July 24th. 1984.

28. This thesis. Chapter 2.

29. Auto. p.55. This fascination and love for language is echoed in "Liturgical Excogitations" Anglican Theological Review 57. July) p.334-336. At other times he sounds like an

English scholar: "The Assessment of the value of English Words is an art in itself. English prose rhythm is a very delicate thing, only with a sensitive and well trained ear can it be handled successfully." (Auto. p.11.)

30. Auto. p.55.

31. a) Displaying knowledge: Auto. Ch.2. he outlines his key to exam success - the ability to convince the examiner his broad knowledge was also of considerable depth. b) Hiding depression: At a time of depression he was still able to lecture and preach with apparent confidence and control. Auto. Section 7 "Amongst the Students". His speech at the Lambeth conference on Indian Unity he describes with some self-satisfaction as "the highest point of my career as an orator." (Auto. Chapter 6. p.78.)

32. S.C.Neill, "Studies in Church History" Over 30 unpublished lectures on the "Christian World in the Twentieth Century." (1983-4 Various American Seminaries.) This demonstrates his continual desire to express himself.

33. I.N.T. p.211.

34. I.N.T. p.212.

35. I.N.T. p.212. Neill's relation to the Reformed tradition with its emphasis on the Word of God, therefore, seems ambivalent. Whilst, he is certainly not a literalist, nor a worshipper of the bible, he does at times echo theologians such as Thomas Torrance, who wrote: "We are not given the Word in the form of tight delimited and tight propositional ideas but only in verbal forms that always point away from themselves to the Word itself, that is to God speaking in person and communicating rationally to us." T.Torrance Theological Science (London:

Oxford University Press, 1969), p.40.

36. I.N.T. p.347.

37. Isaiah 55v11.

38. Auto. p.473.

39. Auto. p.60.

40. C.E.Raven, A Wanderer's Way (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1929) J.Hick, God and the Universe of Faiths (Glasgow: Collins, 1973) esp. Chapters 9 and 10. Where he persuasively argues for a "Copernican Revolution" which sets out a "New Map of the Universe of Faiths". His Theo-centric position stands in sharp contrast with Neill's Christo-centric approach. J.B.Lightfoot and R.H.Lightfoot's understanding of revelation can be clearly discerned from their respective Pauline and Johannine commentaries.

41. Auto. p.60ff. See also C.B. p.284.

42. C.B. p.284.

43. C.B. He argues in the first chapter that whilst the Christian cannot compromise, his approach to "other forms of human faith must be marked by the deepest humility." p.32.

44. C.B. This is one of the underlying presuppositions of Crises of Belief and is made clear on p.23. "The historical figure of Jesus Christ is the criterion by which every Christian affirmation has to be judged, and in the light of which it stands or falls." By the end of the book one is left in no doubt that he actually means that this is the criterion by which every statement of faith is to be assessed.

45. Auto. p.60.

46. St.Augustine, Confessions. (c.397. A.D.) (Harmondsworth:

Penguin, 1961) Book 1. Section 1. (p.21.) Trans. R.S.Pine-Cofin.

47. J.Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. (1666) Preface. p.5. (London: Everyman, 1928) In the original ending to his Autobiography in Nairobi he significantly, but also playfully wrote: "If I manage to complete in ten years all that I have a mind to do, I may then perhaps sit down to write my autobiography, and that would be a far more difficult and exacting task than the setting down of these somewhat random recollections of grace abounding to the chief of sinners over a period of rather more than seventy years." [my bold] (G.A. p.336.) This should read as an example of Neill the perfectionist aware that his work of over a thousand pages at that stage was both incomplete and therefore in need of revision. This writer believes these "random thoughts" would have made up the main bulk of any reworked Autobiography.

48. I.N.T. p.232-5.

49. Both S.J. and C.B. make this clear by the recurring and central high Christology.

50. G.H.E. p.235.f.

51. His pastoral ministry is easily overlooked, but was correctly emphasized by an addition to the first obituary in The Times (3rd August, 1984) by Prof. G.I.C.Ingram.

52. O.M. In Chapter One he bases his argument on Amos, encouraging his audience to look to the "power of God in nature, the redeeming activity of God in history, the providence of God in the affairs of nature," and "the judgment of God on all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men". p.15. This inclusive

observational principle is worked out more fully in numerous other works. In C.F. he argues for the necessity of personal involvement in other faiths because "it is of deep concern to millions of our fellow human beings". p.32-33.

53. C.H. p.127.

54. C.H. p.126.

55. S.C.Neill, "Jesus Christ - The Centre of All Things." 2nd lecture in series of six. (London: Unpublished and accessible by the kind permission of Charles Neill. Uncertain of precise date, but delivered during 1970's.)

56. Auto. p.473.

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