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Abstract

From April to July of 1950, Bishop Stephen Neill (1900-1984) took a sweeping tour of East and West Africa to assess the state of African theological education. He visited Egypt, Sudan, and the six British territories in tropical Africa: Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), and Sierra Leone. Employed by the World Council of Churches at the time, Neill was appointed by the International Missionary Council to spearhead the project. The overall objective was to shed light on what could be done to improve the quality of theological education and the training of ministry in Africa. Neill produced a considerable amount of material during and after the trip including a 120-page 'travel diary' and a 51-page confidential report.

Arising out of the Whitby World Missionary Conference of 1947 and spearheaded by Bengt Sundkler, Norman Goodall, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Neill's tour of East and West Africa was part of an ambitious attempt to understand the state of the worldwide ecumenical church in the aftermath of war.

This paper has three goals:

- 1) Explain how and why this tour of African theological education came together;
- 2) Provide an overview of Neill's research trip through his diary entries; and
- 3) Reflect on Neill's conclusions and suggestions for what ought to be done.

Key Words

Stephen, Neill, IMC, Survey, Africa, Theological, Education, WCC, CMS, Missions

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INTRODUCTION

From April to July of 1950, Bishop Stephen Neill (1900-1984) embarked on a sweeping tour of East and West Africa to assess the state of African Theological education. He visited Egypt, Sudan, and the six British territories in tropical Africa: Tanganyika,² Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), and Sierra Leone. Employed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the time, Neill was invited by the International Missionary Council (IMC) to head the project as a 'one man team'.³ The overall objective was to shed light on what could be done to improve the quality of theological education and the training of ministry in Africa. Neill produced a considerable amount of material during and after the trip including a 120-page 'travel diary' and a 51-page confidential report.

Arising out of the Whitby (Canada) World Missionary Conference of 1947 and spearheaded by Bengt Sundkler, Norman Goodall, Kenneth Scott Latourette, and other notable figures, Neill's tour of East and West Africa was part of an ambitious attempt to understand the state of the worldwide ecumenical church in the aftermath of war.

This paper aims to accomplish three tasks:

- 1) Explain how and why this research project came together;

² Tanganyika included modern-day Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania (minus Zanzibar).

³ Unpublished manuscript of Neill's autobiography, Section VII, 'Ecumenical Developments,' 25. Henceforth Neill's unpublished autobiography.

- 2) Provide an overview of Neill's research trip through his diary entries;
and
- 3) Reflect on Neill's conclusions and suggestions for what ought to be done.

HOW AND WHY THE RESEARCH PROJECT CAME TOGETHER

Communications for a survey of African theological education began in May 1948 with a letter from Bengt Sundkler, Research Secretary of the IMC, to 'Principals of Theological Colleges and Bible Schools.'⁴ The letter explained that the Whitby conference had called for regional studies 'for the recruitment, training, and maintenance of the indigenous ministry in the younger churches.' Reports on China and India had already been completed and a report on the church in the Pacific was under way.⁵ Africa was the next region of focus and considered 'high priority' because of the explosive growth in the churches. Sundkler attached a survey to the letter and stated that his committee was considering who would be best prepared to investigate the situation on the ground. Stephen Neill served on this committee as the representative of the WCC. Latourette served as chairman. In July 1948

⁴ Dr Sundkler to Principals of Theological Colleges and Bible Schools, 7 May 1948. Located at Yale University Divinity School Library Special Collections: International Missionary Council archives: Research and Study Program: Series 1: Research Department: Subseries 6: Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa: Box 263138 (Files 1-13). Henceforth Yale IMC archives.

⁵ The China report was compiled by Luther Weigle and the India report was completed by C. W. Ranson.

Neill's name was put forward.⁶ By March 1949 it was decided. Latourette wrote, 'I am delighted that you have obtained Stephen Neill to head it.'⁷

Stephen Neill was uniquely qualified for this role. He had recently completed a similar project. In early 1948, he spent fourteen weeks traveling all over Asia to 'take stock of the situation' of the younger churches and to 'restore the links of personal fellowship' in the aftermath of a devastating war.⁸ That project was funded jointly by the IMC and the World Council of Churches since these two organizations did not merge formally until 1961. At the time of his tour of Asia in 1948, Neill was the Associate General Secretary of the WCC working alongside Willem Visser 't Hooft, the first Secretary General.⁹ He was still serving in that capacity when he went to Africa in 1950.¹⁰

Early communications proposed that Neill be joined by an unnamed African American, but Neill rejected it, saying in a letter to E. J. Bingle 'You know the difficulty I feel about having an American Negro.'¹¹ Bingle responded by suggesting that Neill conduct the research trip alone.¹²

The goal of this research project was laid out by Sundkler:

⁶ See 'Report on the Research Work of the IMC for the Period Jan. 1 to July 31, 1948,' by Bengt Sundkler, 31 July 1948. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

⁷ Letter from K.S. Latourette to Dr Sundkler, 14 March 1949. See Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

⁸ See Bishop Stephen Neill, *The Cross Over Asia* (London: The Canterbury Press, 1948), 32, 12.

⁹ Neill also served as 'Co-Director of the Study Department' with Nils Ehrenstrom. See Neill's unpublished autobiography, Section VII, 'Ecumenical Developments,' 1: 'I was Associate-General Secretary responsible for study.' See also Section VI, 'Apprentice Ecumenist,' 29, for further clarification on how Neill came into the co-director position.

¹⁰ See Stephen Neill, *Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa* (London: International Missionary Council, 1950). The full text of the 51-page report is located at University of Birmingham CMS archives, CMS/OSD AFG O27/6.

¹¹ Letter from Stephen Neill to E. J. Bingle, 10 November 1949. Latourette thought it 'wise' to include an American Negro who is not Anglican. See Letter from K.S. Latourette to Dr Sundkler, 14 March 1949. This quotation raises many questions regarding Neill's view of race. However, Neill dodged the issue. In a document entitled 'Notes on Talk with Bishop Stephen Neill at Mansfield College, Oxford, September 8th 1949' Neill is recorded as saying the 'WCC was not greatly interested in this question of Race Relations.' Both documents located at Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

¹² Letter from Bingle to Neill, 15 November 1949. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

It is assumed here that the Whitby Conference when initiating this research project did not primarily envisage a technical survey of ways and means of missionary propaganda but rather, and above all, a fresh interpretation, for our age, of the theological foundation of the Missionary Obligation of the Church.¹³

Latourette was responsible for expanding the project's focus and identifying its rationale.¹⁴ In the final draft of the 'Terms of Reference' which was sent out widely to key people, it was explained that Neill had been commissioned with three tasks:

- 1) To investigate the present situation and prospects of theological education in the African territories concerned.
- 2) To report on trends and tendencies within the areas as they affect the work of recruiting, training, and supporting the ministry of the church.
- 3) To make suggestions to the International Missionary Council, and through it to the various national councils concerned, with regard to the future development of theological education in these African territories.¹⁵

NEILL'S RESEARCH TRIP: APRIL TO JULY, 1950

Initially, the IMC laid out an exhausting itinerary for Neill that would have taken him all over Africa. It was revised several times and became much more manageable. Between early April and late June, 1950, Neill was

¹³ See 'Report on the Research Work of the IMC for the Period Jan. 1 to July 31, 1948,' by Bengt Sundkler, 31 July 1948. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

¹⁴ Letter from K.S. Latourette to Dr Sundkler, 14 March 1949. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

¹⁵ Letter from E. J. Bingle to IMC Secretaries, CBMS, Secretaries of Christian Councils in Africa, Principals of Theological Institutions in Africa, IMC Research Committee, etc., November 1949. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

scheduled to visit a plethora of theological schools and mission societies in Egypt, Sudan, Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone. Neill immediately drew up a ‘most formidable list of books’ to digest in order to comprehend the context of each region he would visit.¹⁶ He understood the great expectations being placed on him. E. J. Bingle, the Acting Research Secretary of the IMC at the time, described this project as being ‘vitally important for the well-being of the Church in Africa.’¹⁷ A flurry of international correspondence demonstrates the anticipation of all parties involved. Several commented that Neill was uniquely poised for this herculean assignment. Several media outlets wrote about the upcoming trip, including *The Church Times*, *The Christian*, *The Guardian*, and the *Ecumenical Press Service*.¹⁸

By early January, Neill was producing long letters and papers displaying an impressive knowledge of history, missions, and theological education within an African context. His previous experience (1930-1939) as Warden of a theological college in Tinnevely, South India, proved useful in preparing for the trip.¹⁹ Neill knew the questions to ask. He understood patterns in missions history. He had a remarkable combination: he was a seasoned missionary, a respected academic, and he comprehended the unique challenges of theological

¹⁶ Letter from Mr Bingle’s Assistant to Bishop Stephen Neill, 6 December 1949. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263139 (Files 1-12).

¹⁷ Letter from Bingle to IMC Secretaries, et al., November 1949. Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263138.

¹⁸ See ‘Future of the Ministry in Africa,’ 27 January 1950, ‘Paragraphs inserted in religious papers.’ See also ‘Durrant’s Press Cuttings’ 27 January 1950. Both located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263139 (Files 1-12).

¹⁹ See Dyron Daugherty, *Bishop Stephen Neill: From Edinburgh to South India* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

education in the younger churches. While Neill was no expert on the African context, all parties involved were confident in his abilities.

Neill kept a travel diary during his journey that ended up being over 120 single-spaced pages.²⁰ The diary entries are classic Stephen Neill: impeccably written, engaging, highly informative, and, above all, opinionated. Neill loved to write and it shows. The first diary entry reads:

‘Travel by air, if you have time.’ This cynical saying was once again proved true, as my aircraft was eighteen hours late, an inauspicious beginning to a long tour.²¹

Neill covered a great deal of ground on the first leg of his journey. He began by paying a visit to the Greek Patriarch in Cairo. They discussed whether Muslims and Christians could join together against communism. Neill cited the ‘specifically Christian basis of the World Council’ which refers to ‘Jesus Christ as God.’²² Thus, while cooperation with Muslims is possible, Christian conviction must not be diluted.

Neill then visited the Coptic Patriarch who, somewhat surprisingly, offered him a Coca-cola. Neill conjectured how this ubiquitous and American staple had become ‘the national drink of Egypt.’²³ Afterward, Neill visited the

²⁰ The diary is organised into thirteen long entries. Partial or complete copies of Bishop Diary entries can be located in various libraries including the Rhodes House manuscripts at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (USPG X1047); Yale IMC archives: Box 263138; World Council of Churches Archives in Geneva: Reference Code: 26.31.38, ‘Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa: Files of Sundkler and Bingle’ (see: <http://archives.oikoumene.org/query/detail.aspx?ID=83345>); and the archives of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh.

²¹ Bishop Neill’s Travel Diary Entry No 1 (31 March 1950), 1. Henceforth Diary.

²² Diary No 1, 1.

²³ Diary No 1, 1.

Coptic Theological Seminary and had little good to say, for example, ‘We looked into the library – a strange collection of junk.’²⁴

Neill provided fascinating insights into the Egyptian church. He discussed the sheep-stealing which led Copts to be very suspicious of Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: ‘Almost all the pastors of the Evangelical Church are of Coptic origin.’²⁵ His assessment of the Seminary of the Evangelical Church in Cairo was pessimistic. He critiqued the teachers for their aloofness and claimed the students were left to their own devices when it came to social life and pastoral care.

Neill described the mood in Egypt as being generally unhappy due to several factors, notably the mass disillusionment within the greater Arab world after surprising defeats by Israel. The majority of Egyptians believed Israel would soon collapse since the terrific level of financial support from outside could not be sustained. Postcolonial hopes in a Koranic Dar al-Islam were fading fast. The inspiration of the early ummah pulled the Muslim world backward into the seventh century instead of ushering them into the modern age. In Neill’s observation, the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer in newly liberated Egypt; what was needed was a true social revolution anchored by the Sermon on the Mount.²⁶

²⁴ Diary No 1, 2.

²⁵ Diary No 1, 4.

²⁶ Diary No 1, 5.

At the end of his Egyptian stop, Neill spent a delightful few hours in Alexandria, or, what he termed ‘the city of Athanasius.’ He described the famous city as standing up ‘like a dream city from its lagoon.’²⁷

From Alexandria, he traveled ‘a thousand miles up the Nile’ to Khartoum, where his narrative begins with a bang:

There are I suppose some fervent opponents of ‘imperialism,’ who hold that the white man should never in any circumstances interfere in the affairs of the black. But one who considers the contrast between the abject misery in which the Sudan lay in the days of slavery and the steady progress and prosperity which it has enjoyed in the last fifty years may be forgiven if he doubts whether the generalization holds in every case.²⁸

Neill noted the growing nationalism in Sudan and his doubts as to whether a united church could ever occur there. I found one section here to be brilliant. Neill discussed the complexity of Bible translations. He pointed out that many Christians supported the use of Arabic in the church, a language he labeled ‘great and glorious.’ He argued the merits of using Arabic, because when the Scriptures are translated into various dialects that are unintelligible to one another, there is an inherent tribalism that develops within the church, stifling unity. Thus Arabic was a language that could potentially unite Christians. However, this posed a dilemma, because by endorsing Arabic as the common language, Christians were more susceptible to an increased Islamic influence. In addition, the Arabic language has ossified in Islam, and there runs the risk of the same thing happening were Christianity to adopt it. He concluded this discussion by asking ‘Do people ever really absorb the Gospel except in their

²⁷ Diary No 1, 6.

²⁸ Diary No 1, 6.

own language, do they ever really pray except in the language that they use at home?’²⁹

Theological education in the Sudan was a close collaboration between the mission agencies and the government, with the government footing nine-tenths of the costs, including missionary salaries.³⁰ At the time of Neill’s writing, half of the clergy were European and half African.³¹ Many Muslims were strongly opposed to the arrangement and had voiced their concerns publicly. With humor, Neill described the fact of the matter—Muslims had little to fear. ‘There is a small Divinity School. ... It has a staff of one, and, as the whole staff is at the moment on leave in England, operations are temporarily suspended.’³²

From Khartoum Neill traveled to Dar-es-Salaam, where he learned that the local theological school had recently collapsed due to a row over teacher salaries. There he also met the famed Frank Laubach who was involved in ‘one of his endless literacy campaigns’ and advised Neill that ‘the only people who were really tackling the problem of literature for the African were the Seventh Day Adventists.’³³

Next Neill visited a Lutheran seminary at Lushoto, Tanganyika, and was pleased to discover that the Lutheran missions in East Africa were finally waking up to the need for indigenous clergy.³⁴

²⁹ Diary No 1, 8.

³⁰ Diary No 1, 9.

³¹ Diary No 1, 10.

³² Diary No 1, 10.

³³ Diary No 2 (8 April 1950), 4.

³⁴ Diary No 2, 5.

In Morogoro, Tanganyika, Neill met with some missionaries who emphasised rural education—for example how to prevent soil erosion and better cultivate the land. His impression was that Africans were generally suspicious of these endeavors, seeing them as ‘a scheme ... to keep [the African] down and to withhold the blessings of western knowledge.’³⁵

Next Neill went to Kongwa, Tanganyika—cite of the famously ill-fated groundnuts scheme where ‘many millions of the British taxpayers’ money have just been poured down the drain.’³⁶ Neill deplored the scheme as ‘a gigantic example of the contemporary worship of mammon and of the denial of God. ... If this is development, let us stay in our primitive savagery,’³⁷ he wrote.

Neill then traveled by road to Kenya, accompanied by an African Pentecostal teacher who viewed Neill’s tobacco pipe as the mark of the beast.³⁸ In Kenya, Neill visited several places, providing illuminating insights into the world of 1950. For example, he began diary entry number four with a discussion on race relations. He discussed what he termed the two extreme views in that country:

At one end are the European settlers, who still dream of a great white dominion stretching from Kenya to the Cape; these people are still living in the world of Cecil Rhodes ... At the other end is the party of Jomo Kenyatta, which would like to see the last European depart from the land.³⁹

Neill went into some detail analyzing the Kenyan political scene, as he saw it critical to the development of theological education in the country. He

³⁵ Diary No 2, 9.

³⁶ Diary No 3 (15 April 1950), 2.

³⁷ Diary No 3, 3.

³⁸ Diary No 3, 4-5.

³⁹ Diary No4 (24 April 1950), 1.

marveled at the Kikuyu people whose first baptism was in 1906 but by 1950 could claim tens of thousands of Christians.⁴⁰ He admired the ‘quasi-military’ ethos of the Salvation Army theological training school in Nairobi which, he claimed, was ‘excellent for Africans at that stage of development.’⁴¹ He praised the Canadian Pentecostal Mission at Nyangore as an ‘admirable organization.’⁴² The Society of Friends mission, Neill was told, had suffered from a lax church organization. True to form, Neill figured the problem could be easily remedied with episcopacy.⁴³

Neill observed that English was fast becoming the Kenyan language for theological training due to the number of tribes that did not speak Swahili. He conjectured that ‘As the African is educated, he is growing away from his tribal background.’⁴⁴ Since Africa was changing so quickly, he argued, it was ‘anachronistic’ for the church to take the tribal background too seriously.

In Neill’s visits to various Kenyan Bible Schools, he remarked that ‘All are in the general sense of the term fundamentalist,’ and many of them were ‘first generation converts,’ or ‘still somewhat primitive.’⁴⁵ He was relieved to learn that female circumcision was being abandoned in the missions, although male circumcision was retained on hygienic grounds and as an initiation rite

⁴⁰ Diary No 4, 2.

⁴¹ Diary No 4, 3.

⁴² Diary No 4, 9.

⁴³ Diary No 4, 9.

⁴⁴ Diary No 4, 5.

⁴⁵ Diary No 4, 7-8.

into Christianity.⁴⁶ Neill was overjoyed to get out of this ‘rarefied’ environment and into a CMS mission where he could freely smoke his pipe.⁴⁷

In Uganda, the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches were growing faster than clergy could be provided. Neill observed that Anglicans had been more effective in raising up indigenous clergy, but it was due to ‘a terrible shortage of missionaries.’ He grumbled that the indigenous Catholic priests were ‘not allowed to do a single thing without consulting their Italian overlords.’⁴⁸ After picnicking at Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile, he traveled to Kampala, where he discovered tensions between locals and the Indian population. He wrote about the ‘Indian menace,’ remarking that Indians had outmaneuvered Africans to the point that they were in control of ‘almost all of the immensely profitable sugar and cotton estates.’ He reasoned that had the British not intervened, Indians might have gained complete control of the place.⁴⁹

The growth of Christianity in Uganda was spectacular. Neill pointed out in his diary that seventy five years prior, there was ‘not a Christian in the area’; however, at the time of Neill’s writing there were over half a million. The local bishop confided to Neill that he was overwhelmed by the success of Christianity; he characterised its growth as ‘simply miraculous.’⁵⁰ There was a downside, however. The work was ‘understaffed’ and ‘Christianisation has been dreadfully superficial.’ Neill critiqued the local kings and chiefs as being

⁴⁶ Diary No 4, 8.

⁴⁷ Diary No 4, 10.

⁴⁸ Diary No 5 (28 April 1950), 3.

⁴⁹ Diary No 5, 5.

⁵⁰ According to Neill, the miraculous success was due mainly to the work of the CMS.

‘frankly polygamous as the German Lutheran princes in the sixteenth century; and the rank and file tend to follow the example of their leaders.’⁵¹

Neill’s visit to Bishop Tucker Theological College in Mukono, Uganda, caused him to reflect on the differences between African and Western thinking. While participating in what he deemed ‘the first conference of theological teachers ever to be held in East Africa,’ he critiqued Western theology for being overly influenced by Greek philosophy. He then questioned

whether we should accept the African mind as it is and work along its natural processes; or whether we should constrain it somewhat unwillingly to accept our ways of thought; or whether the African mind can be stimulated, perhaps more along Hebraic lines, to form its own pattern of thinking and general concepts, which will probably be very different from the European. I don’t think anyone has made very much progress in finding the answer.⁵²

At that conference, an issue that rose up repeatedly was ‘the dreadful dearth of Christian literature’ both in English and in the vernaculars.⁵³ This could be considered a passing observation were it not for Neill’s subsequent work in Geneva after his tour of Africa. He gave the next decade of his life to addressing this problem, a matter discussed later in this article.

After the Mukono conference, Neill visited Martyr’s Cross—where fourteen boys were burned to death in the 1880s. The boys were heard singing praises to Jesus as they courageously died. Neill’s tour guide for this moving experience was Ham Mukasa, who had been a page-boy to King Mwanga at the time of the persecution.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Diary No 6 (6 May 1950), 1.

⁵² Diary No 6, 2-3.

⁵³ Diary No 6, 4.

⁵⁴ Diary No 6, 6.

From Uganda Neill flew back to Nairobi to attend his cousin's wedding, 'Elizabeth Crabbe, the younger daughter of the Bishop of Mombasa.'⁵⁵ His tour of East Africa was done. He was now headed west, stopping at Tripoli for a few days en route to Nigeria.

Neill's first stop in West Africa was Kano, Nigeria. He had a terrible time clearing immigration, leaving him in a state of 'simmering indignation.'⁵⁶ His immediate impression was that West Africa was 'much more African than the East.' He took notice of the Muslim-style long white robes for men, and the nakedness of the women—other than 'a bunch of leaves fore and aft,' and brightly coloured head-cloths tied in 'ingenious shapes.'⁵⁷ He characterised the Muslim influence as being 'everywhere dominant'.⁵⁸

In Kano, missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission took care of Neill. Neill characterised the SIM as naïve and arrogant, yet having 'astonishing success in getting in where everyone else has failed.' In his view, these 'fundamentalist missions ... are doing nine-tenths of the pioneer missionary work in the world.'⁵⁹ While applauding their evangelistic success, he resented their insularity: 'They might have heard that some people called Episcopalians existed and were rather like Roman Catholics, but that would be about all.'⁶⁰

Neill's next destination was the city of Jos, a missionary hub for the SIM and SUM (Sudan United Mission). He lamented the anemic state of the

⁵⁵ Diary No 6, 7.

⁵⁶ Diary No 7 (11 May 1950), 3.

⁵⁷ Diary No 7, 1.

⁵⁸ Diary No 7, 1.

⁵⁹ Diary No 7, 2.

⁶⁰ Diary No 7, 2.

CMS in West Africa as opposed to its ‘gigantic influence’ in East Africa.⁶¹ He traveled north by car and attended a conference where sudden and deafening storms interrupted his lecture:

At one point I had just got out the words ‘Speaking frankly as Christian brethren’ when the heavens opened and it became impossible to speak either frankly or as Christian brethren.⁶²

Neill was deeply moved at that conference: ‘I felt the deep creative movement of Christian fellowship among us, and I have rarely been so conscious of a meeting being wholly under the direction of the Holy Spirit.’⁶³

Neill’s letter from Jos ended on a political note as he discussed the plans for Nigeria’s new constitution, designed to ‘give Africans far greater responsibility for the future of their own country.’⁶⁴ However, Neill had little good to say of it. ‘I do not know who drew up the scheme; it probably represents the strong pro-Moslem influence in British government circles.’⁶⁵

In the ‘damp and steamy’ climate of Enugu, Nigeria, Neill wondered how European missionaries managed to keep their health.⁶⁶ He wrote of ‘bursts of that tropical rain about which you read in books.’⁶⁷ He applauded the Americans for taking much better care of their missionaries than the Europeans. He wrote of the diverse student body at St. Paul’s College in Awka, necessitating instruction exclusively in English. This was a fundamental problem because the boys had to minister in their own languages

⁶¹ Diary No 7, 4.

⁶² Diary No 7, 7.

⁶³ Diary No 7, 7.

⁶⁴ Diary No 7, 8.

⁶⁵ Diary No 7, 8.

⁶⁶ Diary No 8 (19 May 1950), 1.

⁶⁷ Diary No 8, 5.

when they returned to their tribal communities. Complicating matters was that graduates often acquired the ambition to move to the UK or the USA. Then there were the political complexities:

Nigeria does not really exist. It is an entity created entirely by European occupation ... The two main races of the South, the Yoruba in the West and the Ibo in the East, very much dislike one another. Both are intensely disliked by the finer and on the whole more civilised, though educationally less advanced, people of the North. The question of whether Nigeria can hold together at all is one that cannot be readily answered.⁶⁸

After these matters were explained to Neill by Miss Stewart—an Irish SCM missionary there—he began to feel depressed, questioning whether ‘deep character development’ was really taking place in Africa. He was reminded of an African leader who once made the statement, ‘You Europeans are always talking about sin; sin is an idea in which Africans are not very much interested.’⁶⁹

At St. Paul’s College the staff became defensive at Neill’s scathing criticism. He pointed out that they could not produce one graduate capable of serving on staff. He blasted them for being ‘segregated from the life of the Church in their immense mission compound ... not speaking any African language ... largely unaware of the changes taking place in the life of the Church.’⁷⁰ He bemoaned the lack of an agreed standard of admission to the theological college and urged higher academic standards. He noticed the utter

⁶⁸ Diary No 8, 3.

⁶⁹ Diary No 8, 4.

⁷⁰ Diary No 8, 7.

absence of theological books in local languages and suggested a ‘series of short books’ dealing with Christian doctrine should be undertaken.⁷¹

Neill resented the flourishing work of the ‘Rivals in the Field’—the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria—describing their strategy as a ‘gold rush’:

The Roman Catholics are trying to stake out their claim in every village by putting up a church or founding a school; when that is done, it is too late for other people to come in. Almost every ship brings a fresh load of Irish priests and sisters ... I cannot pretend to think that Irish Roman Catholicism, as it presents itself on the West Coast of Africa, is of the highest type of Christianity.⁷²

After Awka, Neill reflected on the many obstacles to Christian unity in West Africa: ‘nonsensical’ political boundaries, tribal affiliations, language differences, and denominational loyalties.⁷³ Neill saw the only possible solution to be membership in the World Council of Churches.⁷⁴

The next stop was Benin City in Nigeria. Neill had a pleasant time looking at art, listening to music, and experiencing the local culture. While touring the public library, a young man remarked, ‘We lack books.’⁷⁵ Neill listened.

While in Benin City, Neill visited an unfinished, but impressive, church building. It had been built by King Oba Akenzua II (1933-1978) as a temple for a new religion he created to merge Christianity, Islam, and paganism. The king, however, converted to Anglicanism and the church was abandoned.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Diary No 8, 8.

⁷² Diary No 8, 9-10.

⁷³ Diary No 9 (28 May 1950), 2.

⁷⁴ Diary No 9, 2.

⁷⁵ Diary No 9, 7.

⁷⁶ Diary No 9, 7. I cannot help but to think that the ‘Chrislam’ phenomenon in Nigeria may somehow be related to King Oba Akenzua’s movement. For more on Chrislam, see PBS ‘Religion & Ethics’: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/february-13-2009/chrislam/2236/>

Neill thought Christianity was in its infancy in Benin: ‘the old paganism has been driven only a very short distance below the surface.’⁷⁷

The church in Benin presented Neill with ‘the head of an Oba carved in wood, and in brass the head of a lady whose task it was to look after the harem of the Oba.’ Neill had them parceled up and posted to the World Council in Geneva. He labeled them ‘idols’ and queried to himself: ‘What the customs duty on idols is in Switzerland I have never had occasion to enquire.’⁷⁸

From Benin City Neill made his way to a centre for the training of fiancées and young wives in Akure. This prompted him to ruminate on family life in Nigeria. In Neill’s mind, polygamy led to a ‘second-class type of Christianity’ and should be rooted out of the church. Nigerians ‘simply do not know what Christian marriage means’ since they have grown up with low moral standards, polygamous surroundings, and young fathers/husbands who might go to England for a three year stretch.⁷⁹ One cannot help but wonder what Neill, a lifelong bachelor, really knew about family life—especially in a culture he was encountering for the first time.

Neill’s next stop was Ogbomosho, ‘the centre of the Southern Baptists.’⁸⁰ He was hosted by Dr Pooh, prompting Neill to remark: ‘We were uncertain whether we should be welcomed by a China-man or a bear. When we finally got there, we discovered Dr Pooh was neither, rather he was a

⁷⁷ Diary No 9, 8.

⁷⁸ Diary No 9, 9.

⁷⁹ Diary No 9, 10.

⁸⁰ Diary No 9, 10.

Texan.’⁸¹ As it turned out, Neill’s instructions were mistaken and the man’s actual name was Dr Pool.

Neill then launched a short history of the Southern Baptists in Nigeria who arrived in 1850 and were celebrating their centenary. They founded an academy in 1925 with connections to a Baptist seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. After critiquing their lax marking standards, he gave rare commendation to this Baptist academy at Ogbomosho with its six full-time faculty: ‘This is the one adequately staffed theological school that I have seen in Africa.’⁸²

Next was Ibadan, ‘the largest purely African city in the world.’⁸³ Neill was fascinated by the city, if a little perturbed when the children kept calling him ‘O-imbo’ which is translated literally as ‘peeled man’ due to his white skin.⁸⁴ Ibadan was around 50 percent Muslim, 30 percent pagan, and 20 percent Christian in Neill’s estimate. He visited the new University of Nigeria and was impressed by its department of religious studies. He preached at the university with 230 in attendance and later met with the students. They were most interested in his views on polygamy.

Once again Neill attended a conference. In contrast to the others, this one was mainly attended by Africans. They discussed how Africans who are trained in English develop two ‘almost unrelated zones’ in their minds.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Diary No 9, 10.

⁸² Diary No 9, 11.

⁸³ Diary No 9, p 12. Ibadan was one of the largest cities in Africa at the time, perhaps after Cairo and Johannesburg. Neill estimated the population at 300,000 to 400,000.

⁸⁴ Diary No 10 (3 June 1950), 1.

⁸⁵ Diary No 10, 4.

Several attendees confessed to having great difficulty preaching in Yoruba because their training was in English. Neill remarked: 'In this meeting ... the Africans were not talking to us; they were allowing us to listen in as they thought aloud, and we were deeply grateful for the privilege.' Neill was moved. 'From my point of view, I felt that my tour had been worthwhile for this experience alone.'⁸⁶

Neill's next visit was to the Gold Coast, where his brother taught for years. He reckoned about half the population was nominally Christian. He spoke at the new University College of the Gold Coast, opened in 1948. In just over a year it had assembled a staff of 60, of whom nine were African.

Neill described the Gold Coast as being educated and prosperous. The excellent education system was developed by missionaries with government aid.⁸⁷ He noted a zeal for self-government that occasionally became violent. He derided the man who would become Ghana's first Prime Minister and President—Kwame Nkrumah—who happened to be in jail at the time. Neill described Nkrumah's emerging self-rule movement as 'extremist,' 'irresponsible,' and yet very popular. Neill questioned one acquaintance, 'When these friends have got self-government, have they any idea of what to do with it?'⁸⁸

Next Neill made his way to Akropong, where the Church of Scotland had inherited the work of the Basel Mission. 'Another great merit of the Basel

⁸⁶ Diary No 10, 4.

⁸⁷ Diary No 11 (10 June 1950), 3.

⁸⁸ Diary No 11, 3.

Mission is that all over the world they have taught their Christians to sing.⁸⁹

He met with Colin Forrester-Paton, a famous Church of Scotland missionary who was later appointed chaplain to Queen Elizabeth.

On his drive to Abetifi Neill ruminated on politics:

Colonialism is a phase of the world's history that is passing away. It is the fashion of today to vilify it in every possible way. But I wonder whether the final verdict of history will be quite the same. It seems to me that the British have remarkably little to be ashamed of in their service to the Gold Coast. Many mistakes have been made. But the country has been opened up ... the people given peace, unity and security of life, property and land tenure, such as they had never known before, contact with the outside world, education and unimaginable wealth ... When the Gold Coast attains self-government, as it very soon will, the country will be handed over to the people in excellent working order.⁹⁰

Next was Kumasi, 'the Klondyke of the Gold Coast.' Money just poured into the city and people became rich. Neill noted the bountiful church work going on by all denominations: 'The citizens ought to be a godly folk. Whether they are or not may be considered a moot point.'⁹¹

Neill found the Anglican service quite formal: 'Apparently here, as in the USA, to become an Episcopalian marks a sense of having taken a step up in the social scale.'⁹² After the service, he was 'a little taken aback' when served whiskey, sherry, and beer, since it was only 11:15 am. 'Apparently, here as in Korea, it is expected that the good Anglican will smoke and drink, to make it quite clear that he is neither a Methodist nor a Presbyterian.'⁹³

⁸⁹ Diary No 11, 5.

⁹⁰ Diary No 11, 6.

⁹¹ Diary No 11, 8.

⁹² Diary No 12 (22 June 1950), 1.

⁹³ Diary No 12, 'confidential extracts,' 1.

At Kumasi Neill visited several theological training schools and a Methodist centre for training women and girls. At nearby Mampong he visited a group of Sisters of the Holy Paraclete who ran a secondary school, a college, and a maternity work. He confided in his diary that they were known troublemakers.

At Kumasi was another conference; yet again the issue of polygamy arose. One of the attendees made a remark considered 'brilliant' by Neill:

The African Christian, even if his marriage is monogamous, lives as though it were polygamous; meaning not that he is immoral, but that the spiritual significance of the permanent union of one man and one woman has not yet begun to dawn on him.⁹⁴

From there Neill traveled to Ho, in British Togoland, and visited a co-ed teacher training college. He frowned upon the experiment of educating boys and girls together, 'I don't regard this as progress, but there are some who think otherwise.'⁹⁵

Next was Accra, where he met with the Executive Committee of the Christian Council of the Gold Coast. A controversy broke out which Neill attributed to 'intense suspicion felt by the African':

What the African wants to learn is Latin and things like that, to show that he is as good as the European, and 'to learn the secret of the Europeans' power.⁹⁶

He continued, in frustration,

I have felt countless times, especially since I came to the Gold Coast, that the curse of British West Africa is that in everything it has followed so closely the English model, even down to tweed suits.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Diary No 12, 6.

⁹⁵ Diary No 12, 8.

⁹⁶ Diary No 12, 10-11.

⁹⁷ Diary No 12, 11.

He then lost restraint in a caustic rant set off by a newspaper article:

If there is any even moderately good daily paper in West Africa, I have not yet discovered it. When I think of the high standard of the best Indian-run papers in India, and compare it with what apparently satisfies the West African public, I am filled with anxiety for the future. The press is a fair indication of the level of intelligence and responsible thinking in a country.⁹⁸

Following the catharsis, Neill pulled himself together, ‘On to Freetown ... the last lap.’⁹⁹

Stephen Neill’s tour ended in Sierra Leone, ‘the Canterbury, the Mother Church, of West Africa.’ He described Freetown as ‘somewhat ramshackle ... one of the most backward areas in Africa.’ He struggled with the language—‘Creole patois ... English words put together according to African idiom.’¹⁰⁰

Neill claimed the policies of the CMS in Sierra Leone should ‘serve as an awful warning as to how missionary work should not be done.’¹⁰¹ However, he commended the work of the United Evangelical Brethren who had grown to become the largest Protestant body there.

Neill was outraged by the racially divided churches. He remarked that this ‘may seem strange to some of my readers but it will be easily intelligible to those who come from the southern States.’¹⁰² He made reference to South Africa, how blacks and whites would eventually have to reach a ‘happy integration.’¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Diary No 12, 11.

⁹⁹ Diary No 12, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Diary No 13 (28 June 1950), 1-2.

¹⁰¹ Diary No 13, ‘confidential extracts,’ 1.

¹⁰² Diary No 13, 5.

¹⁰³ Diary No 13, 3.

At Freetown Neill visited Fourah Bay College and gave glowing praise, ‘I doubt whether any single Christian institution has exercised a wider or more beneficent influence on a great area of the earth’s surface.’¹⁰⁴ He then enjoyed a swim with Cyril Bowles of Cambridge and Rev. Roberts, the Principal at Fourah Bay. They had a candid discussion on mission work in Africa. Neill wrote, ‘We all agreed that the Church in Sierra Leone is much more awful than anything we have met with elsewhere ... Even after a century, Christianity is terribly formal and superficial.’¹⁰⁵ They discussed how fetishism was rampant, even among the clergy. Neill argued that Europeans tended to show little sensitivity to the changing context of African Christianity—a situation he compared to Europe’s Dark Ages:

I suddenly saw a great light. The period of Church history we ought most to teach to the younger churches is the very one we usually most neglect, the Dark Ages. The author who should be put into their hands is Gregory of Tours, with side glances at the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, and Boniface; then they would feel much more closely their kinship with us, and would come to understand something of the way in which the Church worked its way up through those appalling times into the Golden Middle Age. Christian Literature Societies kindly take note.¹⁰⁶

In Sierra Leone, Neill also met with the United Christian Council to discuss missions and theological education. During the meeting, Solomon Caulker, an African, spoke up about what he considered to be a ‘revolutionary situation’ which held great promise for Christianity in the region. However, he confessed, ‘We are compelled to recognise that the small and struggling African churches have not in themselves the strength to take advantage of the

¹⁰⁴ Diary No 13, 7. Fourah Bay College has produced great leaders such as Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Sir Milton Margai—the first Prime Minister of Sierra Leone.

¹⁰⁵ Diary No 13, ‘confidential extracts,’ 2.

¹⁰⁶ Diary No 13, ‘confidential extracts,’ 2.

new opportunities.’ They needed help from the older churches. Neill agreed heartily with this assessment but frankly admitted ‘It would have been difficult for a European to put forward this point of view.’¹⁰⁷ The council decided they should ‘sit down with the map of Sierra Leone, and try to think and plan strategically, along the lines that God seems to be marking out as the lines of advance for His Church.’¹⁰⁸

Neill’s diary ends here. The ‘Finis’ is worth quoting entirely:

And so my Odyssey comes to an end. All being well, tomorrow the Wayfarer will take me from Freetown to Dakar, and on Saturday morning I should be in New York. It has been a long and complicated journey, but it is wonderful how one thing has fitted in with another, and the way has been smoothed before me. I have not had a single day’s illness. I have often been tired, but never worse than I often am in Geneva. I have not missed a single engagement through ill-health or overtiredness. I look back with gratitude on memories of an uncounted host of friends, African, missionary and government, who have made me welcome, taken me into their homes, cared for my needs, shared their problems with me, and showered upon me unmeasured kindness and affection. Their names are written in the book of life. But the deepest gratitude lies elsewhere. ‘I being in the way, the Lord led me.’¹⁰⁹

THE AFTERMATH AND NEILL’S SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Neill condensed his diary to a 51-page report for the IMC entitled ‘Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa.’ It was published in 1950 and read carefully by many. Responses were mixed. Some thought Neill’s report to be very helpful in understanding not only the situation of theological education in Africa, but even larger issues pertaining to the younger churches

¹⁰⁷ Diary No 13, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Diary No 13, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Diary No 13, 12.

in general.¹¹⁰ Others decried it. For example, CMS chief Max Warren critiqued it on several points, particularly Neill's self-assured attitude. He thought some of Neill's views to be 'sheer nonsense' and some of his perspectives 'unrealistic.'¹¹¹

While some cheered and others jeered, it is clear that Neill spent considerable time and energy on this project. He accomplished a tremendous amount of work in a very short period of time, and it took a heavy toll on him. He visited nearly all of the institutions that prepared candidates for ordination along with many Bible Schools. He met with myriad groups in many capacities, although never with a Catholic institution. He participated in several conferences, most which had been organised specifically for his visit. He addressed many different audiences: churches, national Christian councils, and clergy gatherings. He met individually with scores of high ranking church officials and made time for countless students. He walked the compounds of many and diverse mission stations.¹¹²

Neill's health was brittle throughout his life. Quite predictably, after this period of intense work he had a serious breakdown in health. While he was able to finish his findings, reports, and summaries in a punctual manner, the Africa tour left him utterly spent, and his colleagues knew about it. Those

¹¹⁰ See W.V. Stone, 'The Dark Ages and Twentieth Century Africa: A Comparison in Churchmanship,' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8:2 (1955).

¹¹¹ Letter from Max Warren to Rev. N. Goodall, 3 July 1950. Located in the University of Birmingham CMS archives, CMS/OSD AFg O27/6. Other papers related to Neill's tour of Africa are located in the same archive at: CMS/G59/AD 5 1950.

¹¹² See Stephen Neill, *Survey of the Training of the Ministry in Africa* (London: International Missionary council, 1950), 1. The full text of the 51-page report is located at University of Birmingham CMS archives, CMS/OSD AFg O27/6.

who commissioned the tour even apologised to him for the weight of the assignment.¹¹³

Neill prepared several versions of his conclusions for various audiences ranging from the 51-page report to a four page ‘brief summary’ consisting of two sections: General Recommendations and Area Recommendations.¹¹⁴ In the General Recommendations, Neill argued the following points:

- 1) ‘The standards of living of the servants of the Church need to be raised.’
- 2) There should be a greater focus on youth, especially in recruiting ministry candidates. Further development of the Student Christian Movement should receive priority in these matters.
- 3) More conferences should be held dealing with all manner of Christian education: from catechist training to higher education.
- 4) English should be the language of theological education; however, greater attention should be paid to understanding how ‘the African mind actually works.’
- 5) Pedagogy must change. The dictation of notes is insufficient. Teachers must use the tutorial method.

¹¹³ See, for example, a letter from E. J. Bingle to Stephen Neill, dated 17 October 1950. Bingle mentions that Neill is ‘under doctor’s orders’ for ‘some extended form of treatment.’ He apologised to Neill, ‘I should also like to say how deeply sorry I am personally that you should have been reduced to inaction at this time. We of the IMC have placed very great burdens on you during the past year and we can never be grateful enough.’ Located at Yale IMC archives: Box 263139 (Files 1-12). See also letter from M.A.C.W. to T.F.C.B., undated, entitled ‘Christian Literature—Bishop Stephen Neill—and all that.’ The letter states, ‘Bishop Neill, as you may know, has had a very serious breakdown of a form which precludes his being able to exercise a normal ministry.’ In all likelihood the letter dates to late 1952 as plans were coming together for Neill to begin his new job working for the IMC on his World Christian Books project. This letter is located at University of Birmingham CMS archives, CMS/OSD AFg O27/6.

¹¹⁴ See ‘The Training of the Ministry in Africa, brief summary,’ dated 15 November 1950. Located at University of Birmingham CMS archives, CMS/OSD AFg O27/6.

- 6) Theological education will be more effective in community. Provisions and accommodations should be made for the families of students.
- 7) There is a severe dearth of good text books in Africa. This must be addressed immediately.

In the Area Recommendations, Neill provided several suggestions for the regions he visited. For example, his top priority was to see a Christian college in East Africa. In several places he pressed for using the English language since, in his view, 'the time has come when all theological education on the ministerial level should be put into English.' He strongly believed that 'there should be complete separation of teacher training from training for ordination' in Africa since the two tended to get mixed. He argued for specific local endeavors, for example, that Nigeria needed an ecumenical United Church, and the whole of theological training in the Gold Coast should be concentrated around the new University College.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is important to point out that Stephen Neill did much more than give advice after his tour of East and West Africa. He devoted the next chapter of his life to a publishing venture sponsored by the IMC called World Christian Books, with heavy support from Cambridge professor Charles Raven and the backing of the IMC and WCC. During the 1950s and 1960s Neill oversaw the publication of 70 books in 35 languages. The chief goal was

to produce ‘good simple literature’ that would be widely available to younger church leaders.¹¹⁵ Neill wrote seven books for the series and devoted the next fifteen years of his life to taking on the problems he had witnessed firsthand in his African tour. In 1969 he moved to Africa and founded the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi, which exists today as one of the most prestigious religion departments in all of Africa. He worked there for four years before semi-retirement in Oxford.

In some ways, Neill’s survey of African theological education can be easily criticised from the vantage point of over 60 years later. However, his efforts to address the problems he identified are admirable indeed. It is remarkable that many of his observations are as relevant today as they were in 1950. Christianity continues to proliferate in Africa, and the need for theological education is as urgent a problem now as it ever was. There are simply not enough resources, institutions, or trained leaders to handle the explosive growth taking place. Neill foresaw this dilemma, and he warned it would only get worse. However, there are two ways of seeing a river. From one perspective, African theological education is in crisis. From a different angle, this exponential growth is not a problem at all, but an enormous, unpredictable blessing from God. After many decades of selfless commitment, the hard work of preparing soil and sowing seeds is yielding unimaginable harvest. From this more positive perspective, God has turned his face towards

¹¹⁵ See Dyron Daugherty, ‘The Literary Legacy of Stephen Neill,’ in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32:3 (July 2008), 151.

Africa and bid “come.” Not even the gates of Hades can overcome the epochal shift. Africans are rushing towards God through Christ.

Let us fast forward to 2012 in order to gain perspective on what has happened in only a few generations. We will see that, if anything, the problem is more acute than even Neill envisioned in 1950.

Today, Africa has 59 countries and territories. In 31 of those countries/territories, Christianity is the largest religion. In 21 of them, Islam ranks first. In six of them, indigenous religions form the largest group. Mauritius is unique in that Hinduism ranks first there.¹¹⁶

The majority of Africa’s Christians are Protestant/Independent. The Roman Catholic Church claims almost exactly a third of the continent’s Christian population. The ancient Orthodox Christians—based mainly in the Nile Valley—account for one-tenth of the Christian population on the continent.

No longer just a passive recipient of Western missionaries, Africa is today a major player in world Christianity:

- Two of the six General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches were African: Samuel Kobia from Kenya, and Philip Potter from the West Indies but of African descent.
- Two of the nine General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches were held in Africa: in Kenya (1975) and Zimbabwe (1998).

¹¹⁶ The statistics are based on the *World Christian Database* which is produced by Brill in association with the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. For a fuller contextualization of the statistics, see Dyron Daugherty, *The Changing World of Christianity: The Global History of a Borderless Religion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), especially chapter eight, “African Christianity.”

- Africa has half a billion Christians and, within a generation or two, will have more Christians than any other cultural block in the world, surpassing Latin America and the Caribbean. This is partly due to Africa's very high fertility rates.
- The African diaspora is huge, and is changing world Christian demographics. The Primate of England—John Sentamu—is from Uganda. Sunday Adelaja, pastor of Kiev's megachurch Embassy of God, is Nigerian. His church holds 40 services weekly and claims to have planted congregations in 45 countries.¹¹⁷
- International denominations are being significantly impacted by African churches. The Anglican Communion, for example, has witnessed a shift in leverage as Africa takes the reins of leadership in that denomination.

Perhaps the most important aspect of African Christianity is that it represents the turning over of a new leaf in world Christianity. While Christianity in the West declines, Christianity in Africa grows in numbers, strength, and in energy. While Western societies deepen the divide between Christianity and culture, sub-Saharan Africa seems poised to become the new Christendom. While Western youth in the twentieth century broke faith with their ancestors' Christianity, African youth broke faith as well, yet they turned *to* Christianity.

And what does this mean? I believe our children and grandchildren will look back upon these days as a turning point. Christianity is still the largest religion in the world, yet it will not be a Western religion, as it has tended to be

¹¹⁷ See the church's website: <http://www.godembassy.org/en/embassy.php>.

conceived for centuries. It is likely that Christianity will be more identified with Africa than with any other place in the world. And the reverberations are already being felt. For centuries the Christian narrative has been mainly told from a European perspective. But an African narrator is now settling in.

I believe an African narrator has several important implications for telling the story of Christianity.

- Recently I worshiped in a church in Dundee, Scotland. While the congregants were mainly white, the music was led by young men from Africa. They danced, held up their hands, and appeared very comfortable in their unrestrained approach to worship. That is very different from the austere approach to worship that dominated the Church of Scotland for centuries. But the Dundonians were quite open to following these African leaders.
- Gone are the days when Westerners “bring the gospel” to Africa. My students go to Africa to get revived. Africans now regularly bring the gospel to places in Europe where Christianity has disappeared or at least has been muted.
- Africans will deeply impact the way Christians read the Bible. Many of us in the West studied F. C. Bauer, Bultman, Althizer, and Tillich. I suppose the future of biblical interpretation will not necessarily include those names. Africans offer a different set of biblical interpreters, who come to very different conclusions than the commentators of the last 200 years in the West, since the so-called “Enlightenment.”

- African Christians bring confidence. Their context is radically different. Christ represents victory and success in Africa, whereas in the West many of our churches are now residential flats or carpet warehouses, or pubs. In Europe, preachers of the gospel seem sheepish in their presentation of faith. Africans seem not to share that reticence.
- Africans bring momentum to Christianity. Western Europeans can hardly speak of momentum and Christianity in the same sentence. Christianity is in recession, even crisis in many places in the West.

Indeed, the new Christian narrator will be an African one, and this will inevitably bring opportunity. As an American, I think it is a bit like having a new president. We are in anticipation. We do not know how the new president will go about his task. We do not know if he will be able to achieve what he sets out to do. We do not know exactly what his priorities will be. What we do know is that we have all elected a new president, and most of us will cheer him on, hoping he can improve the condition of our country with his policies and decisions.

Similarly, an African-infused Christianity holds many possibilities. World Christianity waits in expectation for what new things will be revealed. None of us know precisely how this will affect our faith, but we do know that changes are coming. We hope the changes will be good and will ultimately improve the condition of our faith. And so we remain excited and eager that the new leadership will prove to be a blessing, both to the individual and to the international state of world Christianity.

What does this mean for the Westerner? I believe Stephen Neill's insights and recommendations are not far off the mark. Westerners have a disproportionate amount of the world's wealth. Thus, Western Christians must find ways to invest in Christianity. This may come from contributing to denominational coffers in the case of international fellowships; it may mean theological institutions offering full fellowships that enable Africans to study at Western schools.

Bringing Africans to the West, however, does not solve the problem of a dearth of theological education *in Africa*. New initiatives must take place that truly invest capital and resources into Africa, separate and apart from Western institutions of higher learning. Additionally, there is a good argument to be made that Westerners should begin to take their tuition money to African institutions, and place themselves under the tutelage of African theologians and preachers. In other words, the answer will not always be to bring Africans to the West. Perhaps a better alternative is to encourage Westerners to adapt to the African context of theological education. This interplay would be dynamic and certainly more authentic for Westerners wanting to know more about how and why African Christianity is growing. It is somewhat common these days for Western seminarians to encounter African Christianity from an African professor who has relocated to the Western world. It would be far more lively and impactful for the Western seminarian to take a degree in Africa. It would also open up countless avenues of contact that would enrich both sides.

Stephen Neill's general recommendations were revolutionary, and will require a complete re-imagination of how we have gone about our tasks in the past. His ideas were ahead of their time in 1950, and—at least I would argue—have yet to be fulfilled: 1. The standard of living of clergy must be raised; 2. More focus should be directed towards youth; 3. More conferences; 4. English medium for teaching; 5. More creative pedagogies; 6. Accommodations must be made for the immediate families of those who choose theological study; 7. Good books are urgently needed. Stephen Neill addressed these problems head on. He moved to Africa. He established a theological department at Nairobi. He wrote many accessible books. He actually attempted to do something about the problems faced in the African church. While many stood on the sidelines in the comfort of Euro-American universities, Neill actually went out. His legacy is debated. Some consider him an imperialist, and in ways they are right. However, his efforts speak for themselves.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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