

Jim's Journal December 2013

Due to pressure of time, instead of producing a hard printed copy of Jim's Journal, I am only producing this one to go on line. If you know someone who does not have access to the internet and would prefer a hard copy, please feel free to print one out for them.

Jim Harries

Council of Reference: Mike Thompson (York), Jean Johnson (Minnesota), Tim Reeves (Norwich), Steve Rennick (Indiana), Colin Morgan (Norwich).

Most of this Jim's Journal is taken up with a report on my recent trip to Central America, North America, UK and Germany. The other reflections are thoughts that I put down while still in Kenya before my trip began.

Costa Rica

A small country sandwiched between the Pacific and the Atlantic, in Central America. In these days in which Latin America, as in many ways the rest of the world, is dominated by North America, can a country develop without using aid? That's the question asked by Tomas Dozier. "Yes it can" he says, and that is what Thomas sets out to do and to show. He is definitely not disconnected from the USA. He was trained there, is a citizen there, and constantly has visitors from there. What Tomas can do, which defeats very many people, is that he can refuse donations. Many in the poor world can easily be bought by generous donors. No way. We're in charge, Tomas (born and raised in Costa Rica) tells potential donors.



Myself and Thomas at crater of dead volcano in Costa Rica

Worldview Center

There was once a man who went to Africa. That man was called Don K Smith. Reading about his experiences (in the 1950s); he seemed to have similar experience as when I went to Africa! Don K Smith struggled to understand. Then he was convicted to believe that what would help Westerners engage with Africans is their INVOLVEMENT with Africans. This has remained core to Don's message every since (this is not the Don K. Smith who was Principal of KIST until a few years ago). He founded a center in Portland, Oregon so as to inform others about this understanding of his. I visited that center in September this year. I had many good conversations in my time there. It proved to be a base from which I could visit local seminaries. The things promoted by this center, the 'Worldview Center', have a lot in common with vulnerable mission, I discovered. I hope we can relate and work together in the future.

The US Conference

After a great deal of planning, the day finally came for Viv Grigg, Stan Nussbaum, Jean Johnson, and myself to present our papers to a gathered group at this conference-cum-workshop. I had read a book by Viv Grigg in the 1980s. The book contributed to inspiring me to give my life to missions' service. Viv is absolutely passionate to encourage people to share their lives with the urban poor. Stan told us that the time was ripe for vulnerable mission. Stan has long had an interest in developing something like an 'order' for people who were serious about reaching out to people in the poor world. Maybe that's what the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) now is? Jean stood up and told a story. Then she told another story. Then another story. Then yet another story ... and so it went on! Jean was very deeply touched by her decades of involvement with Cambodian people, first in the US then in Cambodia. She poured out her hearts concern; that sometimes mission is better at bringing dependency than it is at bringing people to Christ. Then it was me. I came after Jean. I've been saddened by the many missionaries who come to Africa, only to get frustrated, disillusioned, hurt, and even broken by their experience. How to avoid this, was my topic. (Stan's and Jean's messages are already on the web in video form, see vulnerablemission.org, on the homepage.)



Val Arguello, US Conference Chair.



Stan Nussbaum, US conference speaker



Jean Johnson, US conference speaker.



Viv Grigg, US conference Speaker.



Panel at US conference (Stan, Viv, Jim, Jean)

Trinity School for Ministry

There is a buzz of anticipation in this seminary. “I’m coming back to hear you again” said a woman who’d joined one of the classes I was teaching. We talked about taking the message of Jesus to African people, to Asian people, to Latin Americans, and how that brings new life to them. Something happens when God intervenes, we realised. John MacDonald (the missions’ tutor) has invited us to consider this seminary as the location for a future VM conference.



Presentation at Trinity School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh.



Concentration at Trinity School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh.



Making a point at Trinity School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh.



Listen-in folks: at Trinity School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh.



Articulating a difficult point, at Trinity School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh.

GIAL (Global Institute for Applied Linguistics)

I had originally met Rob McKee in Nairobi. Rob is an anthropologist. Rob says what he thinks. If he thinks that vulnerable mission is 'wrong', he tells me. Then he explains why. Suddenly I am having to think like an anthropologist! Rob, who hosted me in his house, is an anthropologist in a sea of linguists. The institute he works at was started by Wycliffe to train their people. I find languages very interesting. At GIAL, everything was language, and language was everything! On the 3rd October at lunch-time the hall we were in got packed out with missionary-scholarly types. Many of the people there had spent decades in obscure parts of the world translating the Bible into people's mother tongues. Others were students who aspired to translate the bible. Across the road was Pioneer Bible Translators. Almost everyone here was very interested in vulnerable mission. (See http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/GIAL_Academic_Forum_3rd%20Oct.mp3 for a recording of the message I gave at this location.)

SIM (Serving in Mission)

This mission, that originally sent me to Zambia, is headquartered in South Carolina. The amazing thing they have done, is to appoint a Nigerian to head up the whole mission, that includes hundreds of missionaries from around the world. Joshua, the Nigerian, shared with me his desire to see missionaries working from a position of weakness. A problem with this, it appears, is that American churches like their missionaries to be strong. I could identify with that. In the West, we want to support people who are 'really making a difference'. Yet, in the parts of the world where they are sent, the most effective people are usually those who are humble, listening types who take their time before making decisions.

TWR

TWR once stood for 'Trans World Radio'. The letters now mean something different. A small select gathering, maybe of 40 people, gathered to hear and exchange views on issues of dependency. I was one of a dozen or more speakers. Unfortunately, I had to leave before the second day of the conference. My presentation, the final one on the first full day, was very well received and drew numerous questions.

Bible Translation 2013

The Wycliffe center in Dallas hosted a BT (Bible Translation) conference that attracted about 400 people. Being during my time in the USA, I joined them. I was particularly interested to learn what the linguistic experts who attended such a conference would say to us in the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission). By the end of the conference I can say that I received confirmation from experts for many of the thoughts I had about translation, linguistics, and intercultural relationships. We heard a great deal about bible translation projects going apace in diverse parts of the world.

Pictures below are at the final banquet of the Bible Translation conference, Dallas, 2013.



Anderson University, Church of God.

Visiting this university gave opportunity to meet up with many old friends. These included Mary-Anne Hawkins (KIST Dean up to 1998), Steve Rennick (KIST Principal up to 2002), Don Smith (KIST Principal up to 2009) and many others. I was able to share with many students about vulnerable mission, have many personal meetings, and preach at the School of Theology chapel during my time in Anderson.



Myself and KIST graduate at Anderson University

OMSC

The Overseas Ministry Study Centre in New Haven, Connecticut (near Yale University) has long been a centre for research and reflection on mission issues, visited by many mission scholars from far and wide on the globe. I was privileged to give 8 hours of instruction on vulnerable mission to about 25 missions scholars from around the world. All seemed to greatly appreciate the course.

Eastern University

Already famous for its contribution to Christian development NGOs, Eastern University was the location of my visit for one week. I had shared with the Masters students 3 years earlier. I was able to take advantage of my own training and experience in 'development' to do so again. It was my first time to give a lecture to the Palmer Seminary, with a number of faculty and students present. That lecture, and my other contributions were well received. I left behind a number of people very keen to follow up on vulnerable mission issues.

UK

In UK, it was a privilege to travel with Jean Johnson who is with the WMA (World Mission Associates). We visited Redcliffe Missionary training college. Jean gave an excellent presentation to the college community for their weekly chapel service. I was able to share in Andover Baptist church to a few groups as well as to the Sunday service, before we set off to Alresford, Wantage, York, then Norwich. The UK conference was excellent. We had a total attendance of about 30 people, many of whom had travelled internationally. After preaching at NCBC (Norwich) on Sunday morning, Jean and myself were interviewed in a fascinating 'Café Connect' service at Andover Baptist Church in the evening.

The pictures below are of the UK conference











Germany

My 2 ½ weeks in Germany were at 5 institutions. Korntal is an amazing town near Stuttgart. The town was founded a few hundred years ago around a church. The community in Korntal seems to remain very committed to Christian endeavours. The AWM (Academia for World Mission) was my host, culminating in a short lecture to the resident students and staff.



Preparing to present at the Academy for World Mission, Korntal, Germany



In full flow ...



Articulating a point in German.



The students – all on various Masters’ programmes.



With the director of AWM in Korntal, German.

From Korntal, I was hosted by the OJC, a Christian community in the Odenwald in Germany. This was a good opportunity to catch up with my friend and colleague Frank Paul. I made a quick trip to Marburg. There, the Marburg Bible Seminary seemed to be a very progressive theological and missions training centre. We had a lot of in depth discussions about a possible conference on vulnerable mission to be arranged in 2015. From there, I went to a theological seminary in Wiedenest. Student numbers for theological seminaries are on the rise, I was told, in the last few years. I had good fellowship with staff and students at Wiedenest. Many of the students were VERY KEEN on learning more about vulnerable mission. My final destination, marking the end of my formal trip, was to the CBF, the Church of God Bible school in Fritzlar, near Kassel. I had a week there with 25 students teaching missions, including insights from vulnerable mission.



The classroom at CBF Fritzlär



Fritzlär students busy discussing.



More intense discussion going on.



More intense discussion.



No lack of jokers in the front row of the class!

Glossy Magazine

There was a glossy magazine. It was produced in Kenya. There were a lot of pictures of people in it. I noticed – that all the people in the pictures had Kenyan faces! No whites, Chinese, Indians etc. I reflected – that in the UK these days people try hard to include a few black or other foreign faces in pictures. It seems this doesn't happen in Kenya. No white faces at all! I wondered why? Then I thought – that if they put a white face then it could look either like the white person was actually in charge, or at least was paying for what was going on. Hence white faces have to be kept out. The opposite of what happens in the UK!

Death Wrought Emotive Climax

Her subdued sobs ended, Deborah began to speak. The gathered crowd sat in tingling silence. Every ear seemed to strain to catch not only Deborah's words, but also their emotive context. She began by recounting the normal events of the church fellowship that had been held on the day of the death of her brother. She was with her brother's wife at his home when news came that he brother had unexpectedly collapsed while at work ... Deborah affectionately referred to her brother as "our child", a term used to mean "brother" or "sister" in the Luo language. All our eyes, 500 or so people who had gathered for the funeral service at this rural homestead, glazed with tears. "I loved nothing more than the contentment I used to get through coming and just sitting down between my two brothers and talking with them", Deborah added; something that was never to happen again on this earth.

This was no soap opera or reality TV. It was real life from the heart of this woman. Death had pierced her deepest emotions. Everyone present was able to put themselves into Deborah's shoes. We were able, in our own minds, to sorrow with Deborah. This, I am discovering is just part of the kind of drama that attracts throngs of people to funerals. People like to hear life-in the raw ... through others' accounts of their death-wrought emotive climax.

Subjective Views

"What's changed in the church in recent years?" I asked a Tanzanian pastor. "People are no longer looking to the *Wazungu* (white people) for everything", she replied. She gave an example. She and I had travelled 4 miles out of town to do some door-to-door visiting, praying for the sick and evangelism. The folks we visited gave us our lunch, and paid for a 3 wheel-motorcycle to take us back to town. "In years gone by they would have said 'the *Mzungu*' (white man) has lots of money. Let him pay" she explained. On this visit, locals happily paid for us.

Efforts being made a few years ago to improve the educational level of pastors in this corner of Tanzania are bearing fruit. It is hard to think just how close that fruit is to that which was anticipated 23 or so years ago when the then missionary came to these parts. I think what was anticipated was that there be more well trained clergy. Many who might have been amongst the highly trained clergy have abandoned pastoral positions in favour of alternative employment. This is not to say that investment into pastoral training has been wasted. They can still serve God and the church in various ways, including through financial giving.

English seems to be an important key for the ongoing financial liquidity of the local church in this area, even though Swahili is the dominant language. English is a much-coveted language in Tanzania. This is not without reason – knowledge of English can be key to the acquisition of all sorts of wealth. A large project promoting English-language education is perhaps now the biggest employer in the area for those connected to the church.

A Swahili-speaking church being grossly dependent on those of its members who through generous foreign subsidy have been able to acquire a knowledge of English does not demonstrate profound advance in indigenous theology. This situation is very unfamiliar to dominant English speaking nations like the UK. In the UK the language of power is the same one that is used by the grass-roots. Here and in other parts of Africa we have a multi-tiered linguistic system, with endless problems of translation between the tiers. Much work remains to be done to achieve a serious connection between discussion about theology, meaning and philosophy of life, and where local churches and local people actually are at in their thinking.

Fresh milk isn't fresh!

I wanted some milk so as to make tea. I went to the shop. The packet said 'fresh milk'. I took it home. It had gone sour! The next day I went back to the shop. I told them that the fresh milk (as it was labelled) had gone sour. "Sour milk here is called fresh milk" I was told! That is to say – it was freshly sour, or something like that.

Stirs I Knew not of.

Travelling through Tanzania I was able to meet up with various ex-students of mine at KIST. At one time my students, they are now my colleagues, or more accurately, my superiors. Now they are the boss. I am the visitor.

This has helped to throw light on some events at KIST a few years back. My research from about 2001 turned to issues of language. I realised there was a gap somewhere in people's understanding of what was going on in Africa. I realised that the 'gap' had to be somewhere in our understanding of language. I researched this – amongst other places in the course of doing my PhD. I gradually realised what was going on. Unfortunately other missionaries, including my colleagues at KIST, did not take the time to follow what I was doing. Neither apparently did all the students.

I would value your prayer for this situation. I committed myself for many years to exploring what was going on in Africa. I have recently been able to uncover important truths. I am going to a lot of trouble sharing these things with scholars around the world – by travelling and speaking and by writing. Meanwhile, some of my colleagues on the field do not understand what I am doing and why!

The implications of the linguistically-rooted discoveries that I am making are very consequential. They strongly imply a major need for increased efforts in Christian mission – ironically at a time when much contemporary wisdom is saying that there is now less need for Western missionaries in Africa. Missionaries are trying to hand

over what they are doing to nationals. It is as if nowadays, much missionary activity has been reduced to donating money.

The End of Reason?

Even philosophers these days have to accept that knowledge is subjective. Many 'men on the street' seems not yet to have realised this. This has major implications for inter-cultural communication.

Whole populations of people in Europe once took the Bible very seriously. Now many of their descendants no longer do so. At the same time that Europeans no longer take Bible knowledge seriously, people in other countries do: British people who once took the Bible very seriously apparently no longer do so, but many African people now take the Bible very seriously indeed! Many African people are as convinced that they should take the Bible seriously as some are British people that they needn't. This is strange. So who is right and who is wrong?

In Africa the value of the Scriptures is often glaringly clear. Their faith has brought people a long way from where they were. It has made an ENORMOUS impact to the positive in their lives. To many African people, the option of not-believing the Bible seems ridiculous.

The condemnation on the part of British people seems to be rooted in their understanding of rationality. When they test the Scriptures according to their rationality, the Scriptures fail the test. In other words; the wisdom of one age (Biblical) tested by that of another (modern) fails. Perhaps though, surely that should not surprise us. How can it be otherwise? That is why the Scriptures are to be believed by faith. That is to say, in interpreting the Scriptures into life, one begins by believing that they will 'work'. Then one finds that indeed they do. This principle of 'faith' does not only apply to the Scriptures. It also applies to everything else in life. One always has to begin with faith; an act of engagement implies the existence of faith that the engagement will be meaningful. Otherwise why engage?

Living and working with African people helps one to realise the subjectivity of knowledge. Impenetrable ways of thinking are equivalent to unfathomable ones. African Christians seem to believe in the prosperity gospel. This is somewhat innate – it is hard for an African Christian not to believe in the prosperity gospel when his understanding of the material and spiritual is that they are largely inseparable. Faith in the gospel means making out that one is materially better off than is the case. Even leaving the TV on all day brings 'prosperous' movies into one's home. Faith in the Gospel means being subject to a socio-technological world functioning around you, that you cannot fathom. It is being subject to forces that seem to be of chance ('fortune') over which you have little or no control. When an African Christian wants to acquire some control over life, quite likely he cannot do so by direct engagement, because he does not grasp that with which one is engaging (the modern, globalised, technological world). Instead an African Christian has to make tangential prods into a system that appears mysterious, if not mystical. Such means of 'prodding' are not so foreign to a people defined frequently by their beliefs in superstition. In Africa, life is after all frequently guided and dominated by mystical forces.

All this plays out in 'corruption'. Visitors to Africa want to listen to the people. The very people they want to listen to are inclined to run their society in ways that the native English world considers to be 'corrupt'. Then the above visitors base their understanding on articulations of systems that are corrupt.

Many people, who these days have little time for the Scriptures, also have no alternative to put into their place. They can seem to be kicking away the ladder that their forefathers used to climb to get them to where they are today. Some seem to think that the canons of life under the guidance of objectivity that they understand were handed down intact from heaven. They seem to conveniently forget that their way of life and their way of thinking arose from and has been defined by a complex history. That complex history includes profound influences from many forces that are far from 'objective' in origin. It is clear that without those historic forces of a particular non-objective nature they would not be where they are today. Neither the declaration of human rights, nor physics textbooks, nor contemporary government constitutions, fell out of the sky! The development of each of these was intricately influenced by religions, without which they could not have arisen. It is not then a question of *whether* a religious text, but of *which* religious text. British people who condemn the authority of the Christian Scriptures are seriously misled.

The 'end of reason' as the title of this piece is given, has further implications. The supposed existence of objective reason was intended to be the bridge that would enable the so-called developing world to appropriate what the 'developed' world is doing. But what if – as now seems to be the case – objectively is not objective? This means in short that ways of life (supposedly) rooted in what is objective are actually perceived by others to be 'religious'. They are so perceived because they are so. This means that the propagation of objectivity and that associated with it (science, etc.) is necessarily a religious process! This actually makes perfect sense: the barriers to the adoption of scientifically oriented worldviews are clearly religious. Hence they must be dealt with 'religiously'.

We have seen above, that there is no objective basis for communication. Everyone communicates from within a context. That context (social, religious, geographical, vocational ... etc.) provides the parameters and categories by which communication is defined. If the categories of communication are themselves defined by their culture of origin, and objectivity is not a basis for communication, then inter-cultural communication is in detail impossible. What is possible – is communication in so far as culture is shared, not to the degree that it is different. In practice this means that someone can communicate the nature of another culture to their own people in so far as they have been able to ascertain in some ways equivalent categories in their home-culture to those of the foreign culture. Intercultural communication then is in essence practiced by people who, following experience of a foreign culture; communicate some of that 'back home'.

Intercultural communication requires intercultural exposure. Without such exposure language used in inter-cultural communication is rootless, or more accurately it wrongly presupposes roots (i.e. categories presuppositions etc.) other than those of the culture apparently being communicated. The foundation for intercultural communication therefore is experience of the other culture! Because it is only in so far as one has experienced another culture that one can really communicate it then it

follows that (taking our contrast between Britain and Africa) it is British people who have had some exposure to Africa who can effectively communicate about it back to Britain and vice versa for Africans. That is to say – it is African people who have had exposure to British ways who can effectively communicate about Britain to their people. The best people to communicate British ways to the Africans are Africans. The best people to communicate African ways to Brits are Brits. To go contrary to this guideline is to invite a great deal of confusion – as is these days evidenced by the fact that some people reject the authority of the Christian scriptures, but offer nothing in it's place.

Tent Making Congress and Education in Africa

The tent making congress held in Dar as Salaam 1st to 4th August 2013 was attended by 160 people, mostly from Africa, with a majority arising from Tanzania. I had volunteered to help from when I first heard about the Congress at the start of the year. My offer of help was accepted. I became the main translator from English to Swahili.

I had expected that the Congress would be there to help local Christians to know how to produce funds to sustain them as they ministered. The orientation I found was a little different. The main focus was on encouraging professionals working in countries closed to missionaries know how to engage in ministry while working in their profession.

My own contribution was in translation. I found, as I had expected, that this was a critical role. It would seem a poor use of resources to prepare such a major Congress only to find that a majority of attendants could not understand what was being said. Unfortunately the latter could easily happen. It is very difficult for congress organisers who are non-natives to know how much is being understood.

Short of personally attending all conferences so as to translate for them (?) it is difficult to know how things could easily be improved. Certainly it is good to have nationals more heavily involved in conferences. At the same time; it may be true that the experts are the foreigners, so needing translation.

The practice of vulnerable mission can enable a foreigner to be a part of the translation process. Thus a missionary can be informed, instead of having to simply always rely on nationals to tell them what is going on. The voice of vulnerable missionaries could be critical in helping facilitate conferences such as this one. They can make a unique contribution.

Examining the Translation Process

The case for secularism has largely on the assumption that objective knowledge exists and is reproducible. Contrary to such assumptions of the existence of objectivity, knowledge in the real world always seems to be socially and politically contingent. That is to say: nothing objective is ever said or communicated as all communication occurs in contexts of tension, competition, awareness of power interests relationships and so on.

Perhaps a case could be made for some kind of objectivity in the purely material world - such as that of computer chips. The transference of principles learned from supposed relationship between atoms to inter-human relationships is another ball game! Yet the latter has underlain and underlies to date a great deal of social science.

The absence of objective foundations to knowledge interferes with communication in international intercultural conferences such as the above. That is to say – African attendees at international conferences invariably receive, process, and give contributions in the light of their own contexts (unless they present using regurgitation and rote learning). Not having the supposedly 'objective' background of Europeans, makes it difficult for them to contribute without transforming the message(s) in question by reinterpreting it in the light of their own culture. Such transformation can appear to Europeans to demonstrate failure to understand – with some justification. Hence the primary contribution must continue to be Europeans (in which category I include most North Americans). While good translation helps to get the European message to African ears, it cannot do away with the transforming effect of comprehension that arises in peoples heads who are from vastly un-European cultural roots.

Ironically it seems clear historically speaking, that Christian teaching has been at the root of the development of the pseudo-objective thinking that is widespread amongst European people today. Hence there is truth in the understanding that real transformative impact arises from a profound grasp of Gospel truth. Arguably such is still 'in process' in much of Africa. That is to say that African people understand the Gospel different than do Europeans. Faith is a major part of the Gospel. A major role of conferences such as the above is not necessarily that they succeed in getting their key message across. It is their demonstration of the lengths European people will go to in order to share a Christian message that they find to be important. That speaks volumes about faith as it testifies to Christ!

The above raises questions regarding the way forward in other areas such as in education. A serious problem at the moment in that when Western education is exported to Africa, African people are discouraged from using their minds through fear that to do so would be to corrupt the purity of what they are receiving. It is European education that is valued after all. The closer the link from Africa to Europe (or America) the better. The more the African 'gets in the way' the less valued the end product. European language (English) curriculum, teaching style and appearance should be preserved as far as possible! What then should Africans do if they are asked to contribute? Usually they know that as far as possible they must imitate the European. African contributions that come from their own hearts and minds, ironically can easily be seen as corrupting educational systems.

Mosquito Friends

I found the mosquito net already on the bed. It was a little disconcerting in the morning to find that 6 or so mosquitoes slept with me inside the net! To say they slept with me isn't accurate - they were busy feeding as I slept. I was lunch.

I taught the group of girls that were learning to sow from God's word. They appeared to listen attentively, then to ask intelligent questions. A number of these girls are

Muslims I was told later. That included those the keenest to hear God's word! The challenge for them is to find a Christian husband. If married by a Muslim, they just might continue to be Christian, but even if so their children would automatically be Islamic.

Governments and Religion

Whereas governments of Islamic states can actively promote Islam, governments of people with a Christian background fear promoting Christ. Tanzania has many Muslims and many Christians. To some this means that it must be governed pre-Islam or neutral. This seems to be contributing to an under-valuation of Christian theology. Christianity being at the root of economic development, this is tying people into poverty and denying them freedom. Meanwhile formal education that might once have revealed more truth is in our globalised world increasingly tied to accreditation that is dominated by secularism, that overtly likes to deny its Christian roots.

Translators Appreciated?

I translated from English to Swahili at the Congress in Dar-es Salaam. I perceived only praise for the job I did. I was able to significantly raise comprehension rates and was duly thanked.

If I was to suggest that translation from English to Swahili is usually far from adequate, I may be less appreciated. My doing such translation often may also be less appreciated as I would be denying nationals of what may often be a lucrative role for them. If missionaries do not take translation seriously they risk legitimising their whole project. They cannot know if translation is being well done unless they are familiar with the language(s) being translated into. It is therefore vital for missionaries to know the language of the people they are reaching. (One might suppose that one could rely on people to say so if they cannot understand a translated message. Not so in today's Africa, where no one wants to put the charitable benevolence of the foreigners at risk by daring to affront them in this way.)

Good Morning

I sat on a bag of unshelled groundnuts. Crowds of Tanzanians were around me waiting for their various buses at this busy station. A lady and her 2-year-old boy sat beside me. I heard her tell her boy: "*umsalimie* good morning." That is "greet him by saying 'good morning'." Noting that I was White, she wanted her little boy to make a special effort to greet me in English.

"Don't do that mother," I responded in Swahili. (It is normal in East Africa to refer to any woman of childbearing age and older as 'mother'). I said it was not good to greet people differently because their skin colour is different. She responded by telling her boy to greet me by saying "*habari ya asibuhi*" (the normal Swahili greeting).

I paused to reflect on our short conversation. It is very common in East Africa to greet someone according to their perceived ethnicity. Hence people of European origin are typically greeted in English. Many parents encourage their children to greet white people using English, even when they greet everyone else using an African language.

I reflected on how this would go down in the UK; if children were taught to greet and to treat black people differently from white people. How would it be if we expected that any black face doesn't know our language so needs to be addressed using an obscure African language? I don't think that would go down very well!

Reflecting further, I realised that there was a problem. Frankly – very few of the white people in East Africa are very familiar with Swahili, never mind other African tongues. It is rather silly for local people to address them in languages that 99.5% of them do not understand. If for no other reason than from experience alone African people get used to greeting white people using English.

Having realised this, I observed something else. That is to say – it is for practical purposes pretty much impossible in Africa to implement the kinds of strategies we have in Europe for dealing with racism. In fact – White visitors to Africa won't appreciate constantly being addressed in Kiswahili, when they only understand English. Whereas in the USA or in the UK we can attempt to treat everyone equally, this is grossly impractical in much of Africa!

The objective I suppose is that English become the universal global language. Then everyone everywhere can be addressed with 'good morning'. In the meantime, however, until everyone has learned English, we have a problem. One must ask: "will everyone learn English sufficiently well?" Even if they do, would it not be pleasant and respectful at times to talk to people in their mother tongue or some other language that they know well instead of always in English? Are all other languages inferior and best discarded, so that the whole world can operate as do parts of the USA and UK, treating everyone 'equally'?

"We laugh at Kenyan Swahili", a lady told me. I laughed a little with her, knowing how by Tanzanian standards some Kenyans butcher Swahili. Many Kenyans fear using Swahili when Tanzanians are present. They would rather use English. Some Tanzanians think it is OK to laugh at someone who abuses their language. In the UK we consider it very rude to laugh at someone who abuses English. Hence English is used by all sorts of people around the world. People who 'abuse' English do not fear because they do not get mocked. Hence English can become a global language, but Swahili it seems cannot. It seems that strategies designed to counter racism are also contributing to the success of English as global language!

There is a cost to the process. Not laughing at someone who abuses your language means taking them seriously. Then you have to take them seriously, or at least make out that you are taking them seriously, even if they speak nonsense! Politeness is in this sense pretentiousness. English people will appear to take anyone seriously as long as they speak to them in English. Thus nonsense can be given credibility. In other words - English can only achieve its role of being a global language by throwing a good dose of 'sense' out of the window.

In practice it is not quite like this. Indeed, Brits and Americans will encourage others to learn their language by not laughing at them. Once so drawn to English, however, non-native speakers are faced with serious obstacles in communication. In theory they

speak perfect sense. In practice, they are kept out. That is to say – true English continues to be that which comes from native speakers.

As I write, I am watching Tanzanian teenagers go to their secondary schools. Secondary schooling is currently booming in Tanzania. "Why do you teach your children using English?" I recently asked a group of Tanzanians. The response I got was the one I expected; so that they can talk to foreigners! Not so that they can make sense using English. English is for most Tanzanians their third language. Culturally, it has very few moorings in their own ways of life. Yet they are flocking to secondary schools to cram English through rote learning. They walk for miles daily for years then spend hours and hours in class. Their parents often sell vast amounts of property to pay school fees. The target is: to know English. Once you know English well, you have made it. That's the contemporary god. Schools are temples. Sometimes one wonders why African children are so keen to learn whereas in the UK many children don't like school. There's the answer. School in Africa is like a religion, in the negative sense of that term. The aim of school is to make money. The method is by learning strange codes. The reason UK children rebel against school is because they understand it and can intelligently engage with it and critique it. African children, all too often, simply have to swallow it all hook, line and sinker.

There are issues here that urgently need attention from the top. English as global language is not bad, learning English is not bad. On the other hand – the use of English as medium of instruction in much of Africa is terrible. It only happens because of subsidy from the so-called global community. Such subsidy, in the way it is reaching vast swathes of people incompetent and dependent on native English speakers, can be very cruel.

Efforts at 'treating everyone as if they are the same' as goes on under the heading of countering racism in the West, are extremely nonsensical and destructive on a global scale. Difference needs to be recognised and accommodated or countered.

The underlying reason for the globalisation of English language education powered by numerous Western countries' aid budgets seems clearly to be domination of the rest of the globe. The fear is clearly that if not so dominated, wars and tensions could be the order of the day. Yet, cutting someone's legs off to stop them fighting is cruel! The means to induce global peace that isn't going to forever handicap everyone who isn't American or British has to be different. Indeed, it needs to be sharing God's words of peace and love. Christians who believe that people can be 'good' when God's spirit dwells in them should be working for freedom and for Christ instead of for 'English'!

A Myth

Critics seem to suggest that Christianity is a myth. If it is no more than a myth, they argue, then why should it be followed? Following such reasoning, they abandon overt adherence to the Christian faith in favour of what seems to them to be a better kind of faithlessness to mythlessness.

What they seem to forget is that while indeed Christianity could be considered to be a myth, there really is no alternative but to make a myth the basis of one's life understanding. So one should ask; where is other than a mythical basis for life?

It would seem to be supposed in the modern world that we have found a basis for life that is other than mythical. I would like to ask – how can this be? Is this an ignoring of history resulting in the supposition that modernity is somehow a 'norm' that has fallen out of the sky? In practice such ahistoricism seems to be very prevalent in today's Western world.

There is no objective guideline for life. There is no objective basis on which we receive the canon of life according to the rules of objectivity. The canons rather have all either come from God(s), or been invented by very subjective men. They have been invented by men who (as all men) have been subject to historical contingencies. Those historical contingencies were not objective. They were the basis from which objectivity was drawn. The bases from which objectivity was drawn were by necessity of themselves not objective.

That is to say, that there is of necessity a cause of understanding of life that is based on myth, that might or could lead someone to 'believe in' objectivity. That cause or route to objective understanding is itself of necessity not objective but 'mythical.' There is no way of getting away from myth. The question is not whether one should base one's life on myth. The question is – on which myth one should choose to base one's life!

This latter question, on which myth one should base one's life, is critical. But because, as I have said above myth is myth, the question can only be answered by faith. Unless we believe that the canons of life were somehow handed down from heaven by God; we have no alternative but to be objectively arbitrary (!) in choosing which myth we are to follow. We really have no honest alternative to conceding that we are choosing our course in life according to myths handed down to us that our forefathers chose on a basis that was objectively speaking thoroughly arbitrary.

The fact that there are lots of myths to choose between has troubled people from the beginning of the world. The arbitrariness in absolute terms of 'myth choice' has contributed to a lack of unity amongst and between human communities. At least that was the case – until certain 'myths' came to the fore. During the time of the Roman Empire, a set of myths that had been the preserve of one doggedly determined people, were re-interpreted in such a way that they came to be of universal appeal. That is, to simplify a little, the set of myths that revolve around the life of one Jesus Christ that have universalised a great deal of what had been Jewish (or Israelite) teaching about one God *Yhwh*.

A rather arbitrary choice has in recent times been made by a set of people we call secularists, to reject this myth. To reject the myth or a myth is in a sense fair enough – as all myths are held by faith. Yet what I as a Christian missionary might like to protest at – is the claimed authority on the basis of which the myth has at times been rejected. There is no legitimate basis for the rejection of the myth, except for 'counter-myth'. Why should counter-myth be any more believed than myth? The myth concerned does root its claims in text said to have come to men through divine

inspiration. The counter-myth does not even make such a claim. Its beliefs it seems, are totally arbitrary. For mankind to fall into such arbitrariness is really, frankly, dangerous.