

Jim's Journal

November 2016



With a colleague in Kenya, August 2016

Update

I am these days occupied, amongst other things, by my writing of a novel. It looks like it will be about 150,000 words. I am VERY grateful to Angela Merridale for doing the typing for me. (Angela also produces and sends out this journal – so I am also grateful to her for that.) Anyone who is good at novel-writing and interested in helping out, please get in touch. The idea is that a reader will, in the course of reading, learn a lot about good ways of doing missionary work. My latest book (before the novel) has been accepted by the publisher. Marilyn James is helping me with copy-editing, for which I am also very grateful.

**Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year to all my
supporters.**

Success in Africa

Decades ago now a missionary colleague, finding me living with African people in the way they lived, told me that “to be effective in ministry you will have to get your own place”. My ‘own place’ would not be dominated by African people. Most intervention into Africa from the West believes this: that you will succeed in so far as you follow the West.

This raises the question: can an African ‘succeed’ in life without getting money from White people and copying them and their language? If I can’t be effective without drawing on things from the West, then what hope for a local person?

“It is certainly not easy” I have discovered. All around me that for an African to prosper they must become as ‘white’ as possible. Most African people I know have in this sense ‘given up on themselves’.

I am in catch-22. Should I ‘succeed’ in a great way in Africa, well, I am a white man, and people will think that is why. Hence I must not succeed. I must be more of John the Baptist, and less of Jesus.

Success, then, for me is failure. Proving that success arises when one gets things from the West, is the greatest failure! My aim must be to prove that African people can have a good life (without of course myself seeming to succeed) *as they are*. That is, I should do what I can using their languages, and locally available resources.

Some challenges

Yesterday, I discovered that one of the challenges of living and ministering to scattered churches in this area continues. During the middle of the day it gets very hot. Yet, many church meetings start around 2.00pm. So, yesterday (13th October 2016) I cycled about 7 miles (5 miles as the crow flies) in the hot sun, so that I was tired and dozing during the meeting, up to the time I was asked to preach. After we had finished, it started raining. I knew the mud was bad to that home. If I tried to move after the rain had finished, I would have a terrible job getting out with my bicycle. So I set out during the rain. I got thoroughly soaked, only to find that for the last 1/3 of my journey (total 10 miles as the crow flies) there had been no rain at all!

When talking is destructive ...

A colleague with experience working with indigenous people in Argentina recently told me what he tended to do on visiting an indigenous home. That is – that he would remain silent, presumably after initial greetings, unless spoken to. He advised other missionaries to do the same. It is difficult he conceded, as it can be embarrassing to stay silent, and it is tempting to be the one who starts up a conversation. The idea though is that, if one waits, local people take the initiative over what is to be said or discussed. Also, someone who remains quiet demonstrates a certain humility. ... To read more of this blog, go [here](#).

Praying to God in Africa

Sitting outside my house with a friend, two ladies walked past on the adjoining path. It was Saturday evening. “*Udhi e lemo ma gotieno*” (It looks like you are going for night prayers.) I shouted to them over the fence. “Yes we are” they responded.

My German friend had recently read my book *Three Days in the Life of an African Christian Villager*. "If I had not read your book I would not have known how much people are pre-occupied with going to prayers", he said. I started at his comment. I had never read and considered my book as carrying that content. I know that many people who are moving here and there are going to or coming from prayers. For my friend, who had recently come from Europe, this was quite surprising. ... for more of this see [here](#).

Kamikaze Christians: a transformation of Christian mission between the 19th and the 21st Century

Kamikaze pilots, during WW2, also known as 'one way Charlies', were ready to give their lives on suicide missions for their 'divine' emperor. More volunteered, by far, than planes were available.

Twentieth century Christians into the twenty first century face a parallel dilemma, I suggest, to that of kamikaze pilots. In the 19th Century, explorers opened up parts of the world that had previously barely existed for Western Christians. At the time, debate was rife, over whether the newly discovered people were actually fully human. They did not seem, ... to read more go [here](#).

Please don't speak to me in English

I have been attending a pastor's bible study in Kisumu in Kenya. Our principle language is Dholuo. My colleagues at times use English. One might have thought that when they use English life is made easy for me an Englishman; but not so.

I realised what the difficulty was, or at least one of the difficulties. Recently I explained that to a local pastor. "The problem is" I explained, "that when you use English I end up not learning". I had to unpack that in more detail for him to understand. For more on this go [here](#).

Racism versus Christ: competing ideologies

The 'secular' West believes that race cannot be a basis for human differences. In effect, it believes that all races are, or can easily be, or should be, the same. The standard with which all races must be the same is a modern Western standard. It is secular. All Western secular nations were once Christian. Hence secularism, as the modern West understands it, is a 'post-Christian' position. In so far as it is caused by Christianity, secularism is a form of Christianity. In other words, we can say that the West, in the name of countering racism, expects everyone (globally) to be either Christian or 'post-Christian'. For more on this see [here](#).

Resolving conflict and longevity issues in Western mission to Africa.

Let us imagine a slightly simplified scenario whereby people of two different cultures and languages meet each other. People of culture and language A (for example, African) will learn about people of culture and language B (for example, Britain), and vice versa. There are two options regarding the direction of learning. A member of the African language/culture group can learn about the British either from a Brit who has learned an African language, or from an African who has learned the British language. I want to ask; which is better? ... for more on this go [here](#).

The directionality of translation: translation should be from unknown to known. Part two.

The need to consider the direction of translation is generally insufficiently considered. Assuming someone has been born and raised in contexts with which they are familiar, and that they are familiar with that into which they are born and raised, then a person can be said to have two arenas of knowledge: the familiar from birth, and the foreign or other. ... for more on this go [here](#).

Global Connections Blogs

Global Connections, perhaps 'the' national UK evangelical missions coordinating body, has recently had many people contribute blogs for its various people to read. I have recently been able to contribute the following: [Try it out](#)

For even more of my blogs, see [here](#).

Conference plans for 2017

Those of you in the USA especially, please note plans for a conference below, in November 2017:

**Moving beyond post-colonial dependency:
developing sustainability through vulnerability**

sponsored by the **Alliance for Vulnerable Mission** (vulnerablemission.org)

Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, www.tsm.org
Wednesday 8th November 2017 registration at 5.00pm, finishing 12 noon on Saturday 11th November.
Cost: \$270.00 conference and meals. Bed and breakfast separate. Discounts available for those attending part-time and/or students.

Speakers to include:

- Jean Johnson, Director, World Mission Associates.
- Dr. Stan Nussbaum, Global Mapping International.
- Rev. Canon Dr. John Macdonald, Trinity School for Ministry, PA.
- Dr. Jim Harries, Chair, Alliance for Vulnerable Mission.
- Fred and Carol Lewis, Worldview, Portland, OR.
- and other speakers ...

'Emphasising the use of indigenous languages and resources as the norm for some intercultural workers.'
We are looking for presenters of papers in other languages: Korean, Swahili, Spanish ...

Queries to: jim@vulnerablemission.org or jmacdonald@tsm.edu (Details may still change. Registration to open 1st March 2017.)

Baby Dedication

Below are pictures in this journal from a 'baby dedication' event I attended on 30th October 2016. The dedication was for twin girls. It was an ancient Luo ceremony, these days based on Leviticus 12:

'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.' The mother concerned had completed her days of uncleanness due to bleeding.

Our ceremony was to release her, so that she could take her babies into public, and so that she could be considered 'clean' so that she could attend church.



Figure 1 About to set out for a march of witness, that marked the start of the baby dedication



Figure 2 The children dressed in pink are one of our choirs.



Figure 3 Drums and flags form a part of the procession



Figure 4 Flag-Waver in action



Figure 5 The flag



Figure 6 Off across the fields



Figure 7 The march of witness took about an hour. It took a long circular route around the home of the babies being dedicated, covering about 2 miles, beating the drums, singing and dancing all the way



Figure 8 Back at the home, here's the choir in action during the actual ceremony



Figure 9 Paying attention during the ceremony. The ceremony included a christening. It was made clear that baptism by immersion on confession of faith should follow once the babies have grown. (Babies , circled, are being held by older women. They are twin girls)



Figure 10 Beating drums to accompany the singing



Figure 11 People in these churches like to wear colourful clothing and gowns, perhaps the men even more than the women



Figure 12 Drumming, singing, dancing

Sent by: Andover Baptist Church, Charlton Road, Andover, Hants SP10 3JH
<http://www.andoverbaptist.org.uk/content/view/14/14/>

To: Western Kenya, working in the region of Yala/Maseno with some extended ministry to other parts of East Africa.

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