



With Coptic and American Colleagues



With Kenyan Colleagues

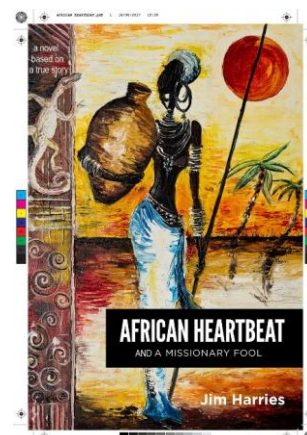
Jim Harries News and Prayer Letter from Kenya

Books and articles

I really am quite excited about the prospects for the two books that I have that are now ‘in press’. One is called ***The Godless Delusion: Europe and Africa***. It should be out within the next two or three months. It’s a medium length book. It takes a critical look at atheism, by comparing Europe with Africa. So it is an apologetic, that draws on a lot of insights acquired in Africa. Those who have read it so far have given some very positive comments.

Here’s a foreword to this book, written by Stuart Ernie, of Anderson University, USA: “Most books offering a critique of one kind or another involve a rearranging of the furniture. Not so with Jim Harries’ book “The Godless Delusion.” This book gets down to the very structure of the house itself by challenging basic assumptions about such ubiquitous and amorphous terms/ideas as “religion,” “G/god,” “secular,” and “sacred.” Harries holds nothing back in his challenge to the western view of the developing/majority world—particularly in the realms of ministry, development and aid. Even if you don’t (and if you are like me, won’t) agree with everything that Harries proposes, the provocation he brings is a fresh wind that wipes the slate clean, allowing us to ask ourselves: “What if we could start over? How would we conceive of and carry out this work we are called to?” And even if we don’t come out the same places that Harries does, the exercise is vital! Uncovering the lingering and often unconscious biases of the Western/“Enlightened” mind, Harries reveals how, in order to live and work effectively in the Majority World (East Africa, in particular), one must be willing to meet it on its own terms—which includes an acceptance of G/god and the spiritual that is not only assumed but is viewed as synonymous with Reality and inseparable from the natural, empirical world. Further still, Harries’ message comes with and out of decades of living and working in the Majority World (East Africa); and not only living/working there but doing so in a way that is deeply shaped and effected by the very approach that he is promoting. In other words, Harries lives what he preaches. This makes his critique (sharp indeed at times) harder to dismiss and one that must be grappled with. For missionaries, development and governmental workers, or anyone interested in Western and Majority-World relationship this book will be deeply provoking and deeply enriching.”

The other book is to be called ***African Heartbeat: and a missionary fool***. This is a novel, 124,000 words long. It is my first novel. Many of the reviews I have been getting of the draft so far have been excellent. It relates the experiences of a contemporary missionary from the UK to Africa. I hope this book will be available at the end of the year, or early in 2018. Here is a preview of what the title page might look like:



Here’s the summary intended for the back page: “Can a white man thrive living in an African village? Does the generosity of western people cause problems in Africa? Does wisdom you get in the UK work in Africa? Philo commits himself life-long to serve the poor. His adventure takes him to Zambia where he rapidly learns new things. Fellow missionaries are not impressed with the change in direction that Philo makes. He makes a new start in

Holima, a fictional African country. "I did not realize that it was so easy to be so stupid," Philo's friend concedes. Philo is adopted by an African tribe. He in turn adopts and rears their orphans. Philo is determined to serve God in churches he meets in Africa. Many have a very African style. Can Philo convince western people that a vulnerable approach is the best way to reach Africa? This is an account, based on a true story, of God's powerful acts shown through human weakness."

I am similarly excited by **two academic articles** that should both be coming to press very soon. One looks at anthropology. Anthropologists have for decades been widely known as 'enemies of the Gospel'. Things are turning around. Things that anthropologists accused missionaries of years ago, they now seem to be guilty of themselves. Their discipline lacks foundations. In recent years, anthropologists are going back and looking at Christianity, which they have been trying hard to ignore. My article, to be published shortly in a new journal coming from Philadelphia in the USA, invites anthropologists to come back to assist the mission of the church.

Another article, that I am optimistic will be approved any-day, considers cognitive science. The latter is a new discipline, that has arisen post about 1980. Before the days of cognitive science, people used to understand that the human mind could see things in the world 'as they are'. A lot of research has more recently shown that this is not the case. Instead, our minds (cognition) limits and determines what we perceive and how we perceive it. This is phenomenal: it seems to undermine vast amounts of Western philosophy! What I point out in my article, is that cognitive science points us to Christ, and powerfully so.



*Wedding at my home church
17th June 2017*

Report on Children in my Home in Kenya (2017)

I currently have 13 children staying with me in my home in Kenya, as below:

Christine, aged 19, One of the greatest privileges of rearing children is seeing them mature, certainly the case for Christine.

Michael, aged 15, Pray for aspects of Michael's future we are working on. He is doing well, now in secondary school.

Michelle, aged 21, Michelle left me in December. She is now staying with her brother, about four hours away.*

Laura, aged 14, A quiet girl, but nevertheless maturing fast.

David, aged 20, maybe Kenya's future football star? To finish secondary schooling this year, so who knows where next?

Andrew, aged 15, Struggling with academics and with English. Might be looking for a job at the end of the year?

Paul, aged 13, Continues to be a very sensitive and helpful boy.

Alison, aged 14, Helps particularly when it comes to 'nursing' younger children at home.

Yvonne, aged 9, As bouncy as ever, but she is going to have to grow up as well ... !

Dusty, aged 9, "I am not going to steal any more" he said to the whole household recently. I hope this is true!

Diana. Aged 12, A very aware girl, maturing fast, and becoming aware of her femininity.

Franciska, aged 9, Playfulness still the major order of the day, but can be very friendly also.

David, aged 11, Is mastering the art of reading and writing, fortunately!

Toby, aged 5, A very friendly, lively and articulate playful boy! (Stella is his mum.)

Stella, aged 23, Now here as an adult, we help her take care of Toby, as she looks for work.



With a 'grandchild', who passed away on 18th June

*False names used throughout. * indicates no longer living with me.*

Taking Jesus for myself ...

"I am seeing what you mean about the need for us to use African languages," my colleague told me. That was perhaps more of an admission than I had got so far, after 29 years in Africa. Many many African people don't see any particular 'functional' value in their languages at all. The benefits of using a European language such as English are just too enormous: jobs, career, prestige, money, power, friends around the world, internet ... you name it!

“We don’t volunteer,” my friend added. “Hmmm. I thought to myself. I think he is right!” “We just don’t have the orientation to volunteering that you do,” he added. I was glad that at least my colleague was being honest. On the surface, it might appear that local people are very quick to volunteer to do things. But, as my colleague pointed out, that does not last very long. Someone volunteers for a day or two, but then if there is no clear evidence that some reward will be forthcoming, they will stop. This really baffles me about how people from the West can relate to African people without coming to live here. African people using English can seem to say one thing, while actually meaning something very different! They can express belief, faith, conviction, commitment, dedication, and you name it – that can fizzle into nothing if no money is forthcoming.



At an indigenous church

(I do not mean by the above that African people are not committed to their own churches. I am referring to things that they do and ways that they engage with Westerners.)

That put me into a bind. It is VERY tempting to turn now to raising funds in the UK. If I raised money in the UK, then I could pay my colleague to do work that will encourage use of the local language. It is sooo tempting to do that. It is sooo tempting to push people, to give them a leg-up, especially to pay them to do what you think they ought to be doing. Especially when they wholeheartedly express agreement with you! But once you start following that course, then where does it end? Then how could I ever again believe my African colleagues – how could I ever know they aren’t saying what they are so as to get more money? My colleague and I had a ‘deep’ conversation about the above issue a few days ago (as I write).

Discipleship and discipleship training in this part of Africa is becoming practically impossible. Training all comes from the West. People aren’t allowed to and aren’t supposed to think for themselves. As soon as an African raises his head, so to speak, to say something, unless he is imitating a Westerner, he is quickly condemned. The thinking of local people is not supposed to exist! It is very hard to find ‘evidence for it’. To find evidence for it, in fact, is illegal – because doing so will have you condemned as being racist. (For more on this, see here: https://www.academia.edu/33495033/Thinking_not_allowed_in_Africa_barmy_ways_to_render_thought_illegal)

I am still waiting – will any Africans take Jesus for themselves? Or will all my friends and colleagues continue seeking to maintain their umbilical cord to the West? As long as they do the latter, my relating to my colleagues is always strange: am I a friend, or am I their god? I still hope that my colleague, mentioned above, will move. It won’t be easy for him. If he tells people that he wants to write theology using the Luo or Swahili languages, they will laugh at him. To other people, and it won’t be easy for him to convince them otherwise, he will be worse-than wasting his time! There’s no point in African people trying to think for themselves. Doing so only gets them into trouble, has them go around in circles, has them be condemned by their own people, and invites poverty.



Me in front of the Yala waterfall

Plans

I appreciate prayers for a trip I am planning to make, starting on 6th July. After 5 days in Kenya, visiting one of my children and then some branches of my home church, I hope to cross into Tanzania. My plan in Tanzania is to make a large arc visiting mainly KIST graduates, but also other church leaders. The aim is to encourage them, as well as for me to learn from them. I made my last Tanzania trip two years ago. For those praying, I hope to be in the following places:

July

- 6th KENYA Homa Bay
- 7th Migori – Zion Harvest Mission.

9th Kuria – Zion Harvest Mission.
 10th **TANZANIA** Musoma – Coptic.
 11th Mwanza – Mennonite/Coptic.
 14th Singida – Church of God, Fellowship.
 17th Dodoma – Church of God, Christian Mission to Many Lands (CMML)
 20th Babati – Church of God.
 24th Mbulu – Church of God.

27th Arusha.
 28th **KENYA** Nairobi.
 29th Home.



With a Mennonite colleague coming back from a church visit

After that trip, I should be back home for a month and a half. During that time, 8th August, we are to have the Kenya elections. Feelings are certainly running high on the elections. Please pray that they be peaceful!

God willing, from 15th September to 23rd November I will be **in the USA**. Plans are as follows:

Sept
 15th Dallas, EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society) annual conference.
 18th Vancouver, with friends, visiting seminaries / universities.
 23rd Portland Oregon, with friends, visiting seminaries / universities.
 30th Los Angeles, with friends and family, visiting seminaries / universities.

Oct.
 9th Oklahoma, visiting Christian University.
 11th Abilene – Dallas, visiting Christian University.
 16th Dallas – Bible Translation conference.
 18th Dallas – Global Institute for Applied Linguistics.
 21st Dallas, visiting family.
 23rd Chicago, Moody Bible Institute.
 27th Washington DC, visiting family.
 30th Philadelphia, Eastern University.

Nov
 3rd Visiting family.
 7th Ambridge, PA, Anglican seminary, vulnerable mission conference.
 12th Pennsylvania – visiting friends.
 15th Indiana: Anderson University.
 21st Travel back to Kenya.



Church Plant, 18th June 2017

At the end of April to early May 2018, I plan to be the guest speaker at a missionary retreat with some German missionaries in southern Tanzania. May, June, July, I am to be in the UK for my regular home-leave.

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