

THE REAL AFRICA

- A careful consideration of a formative and significant year, as it can now be seen in perspective - and in the context of the years that preceded it and the years that followed.

Cambridge,

MAY 1978



Preparation

(- 3 brief insights which helped to give me a compelling vision for a Year in Africa)

1) Peter Thomas' illustrated talk on his year in the Camerouns - in a bush school, in the middle of the Jungle, near Yaoundé. The challenge and beauty of working hard in a strange situation miles away from anywhere - out in the silence of Africa, out of reach of the demands and complexities of modern civilisation:

'... with stars and moonlit nights
away from city lights.'

Peter's talk engendered within me the first pangs of a desperate yearning to break free and get out of the system, to go and "do my own thing" in Africa. Peter described his return to UK: "You just get on top of a London bus - and blow your mind" ...

2) The story of Andrew Bulmer's work with a Roman Catholic mission helping to rebuild an Indian village. The challenge of utter selflessness and sacrifice - of getting completely lost in self-giving; dying to self-interest; spending and being spent for the Land in the service of the poor (cf. Mother Theresa of Calcutta).

eg. A sum of money was sent to Andrew to buy himself a refrigerator. The money was spent - one imagines, unhesitatingly - on the project

3) Andrew Gandon's description of Kenya. A fellow volunteer (Robert Barbar) lived '4 miles' walk away. But what is 4 miles' walk in Africa like? My imagination conjured up pictures of dark forests of tall trees - tracks through the jungle, a fierce vertical midday sun, deep and cool shadows, natives living in mud villages



Preparation (continued) (two other insights ...)

1) Arthur Blessitt's book: 'Turned on to Jesus' - the exhilaration of being suddenly put into a difficult situation for the Lord - and, by prayer and hard work, just seeing what you can make of it. The challenge of making dynamic progress, in both physical and spiritual work, eg. the church that was built with bare hands in 6 weeks ...

2) The amazing letter from Catherine Wigram - which arrived on August 7th - describing the Tanta Hills and the Mbale situation. Pictures of beautiful old residual forest of Africa; waterfalls, rocky outcrops, mountain peaks a few hours' walk away. - I imagined there might be a mountain top nearby, from which you could look down over the school and Mbale valley, and think and pray, (like the view over Kitzbühel from the mountain slopes).



Arrival... - September 5th, 1973: my last night at home. After a concert in Lincoln, and after D. had told me the devastating news that he intended to transfer the inheritance to me ...

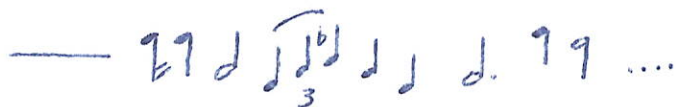
'The Night is dark, and I am lonely.

There are so many things I've left unsaid,

So many things I've left undone ...

Sigh - You've been a good Home!'

And the Great Adventure began ... - whistled up into the air, at dusk, at the end of a long, hot summer's day; spirited away out of England and all the life I had ever known ...



Arrival at
Wundanyi



... into the Taita Hills, and, with a long conversation with Don Suddick the minute I arrived, plunged suddenly and completely into a strange and difficult situation - demanding, challenging and full of hardship from the beginning, and later leading to suffering - as I was warned through a prophesy given for me at Shimo-la-Tewa. But for the first few days, the thrill of knowing I was actually somewhere - as we saw the palm trees sweeping the white Mombasa beaches, and the twilight Indian Ocean, and drove by night across the Nyalali porton bridge, on the way to Shimo-la-Tewa ...



THE REAL AFRICA (1)

- Strip away the subsequent experiences of working with the CMS group in Cambridge, going to endless 'YSA re-unions', showing endless slides. Remove the emotional sequel of a love affair with a returned YSA - and you're left with a single, isolated year: - complete, needing no embellishment, entire unto itself.

Where did it go deepest? What do I now long to recapture, in preparation for hard years abroad in the future? Where does the real Africa lie? - Certainly not in the standard 'YSA-bit' - that Central Province syndrome of visiting each other every weekend, of having to keep in contact and do everything together. Nor in the occasional visits to Nairobi, or in climbing expeditions ... - but 'at home', in the TAITA HILLS. Free, for a whole year, to 'do my own thing' in a world entire of itself; independent, isolated from other YSA's and from the whole of the outside world. Here, right in a situation, in the Community of Mbale, in the Taita Hills, I was able, for once in my life, to get lost - in Africa - forgetting all that lay behind (Haileybury, Lincolnshire, England), ignoring what lay ahead (Cambridge) - relegating them to a separate, dreamlike, almost 'forgotten-world' existence.

- Here was the amazing thing: for this one, special Year - which seemed like a life-time - I was out of the 'System'. All my life I had been struggling against the System: - protesting against the miseries of Packwood, shaking free from the conformity of Haileybury, praying for spiritual breakthrough in the family - desperately trying to escape from its Authority. And as soon as I got

back again, ironically, yes - unbelievably! - I went straight back into the System: Cambridge, CECU, Conformity, and so on ... And it's only now, beginning at last to live my own life, away from the cloying community life of an Institution (school, university), and free from the entire spectrum of 'Authority' - that I can fully appreciate the value of that Year, miles out in the bush, miles away from the System.

- And what an incredible Year!

The central core of experience - the Taita Hills - enriched by the perspectives of Nairobi and Mombasa, an unforgettable Christmas in a beautiful Christian family circle, an exciting (if disturbing) trip to Zambia - a 'break within a break' - a final farewell Birthday party with the staff of Ngulu High School, - the year rounded off with the final bastion of 'the Last Mountain', before returning to UK ...

- And what a contrast with the year that followed. On return, I faced, perhaps, two major setbacks:

1) After the excitement and fulfillment of living my own life in a difficult and demanding situation - suddenly the stifling humiliation of a hospital bed, - treated, almost, like an impertinent child, unable to do a thing for myself; and then the bitter disappointment of having to go up to Cambridge a month late.

2) When I got to Africa, I was away from Haileybury at last - my days as a submissive student, under authority, taking exams - were, to all intent, over. Now I was my own master, now I had responsibility; an employee doing a full-time job, earning my living; a householder - keeping house and garden in order, employing a

servant, responsible for his welfare; a teacher, responsible to both staff and students, - helping to run the school, setting exams, invigilating, marking...

But when I arrived in Cambridge, physically weak, and already a month behind, all this 'fame and glory' was stripped away (like an Officer's uniform when he enters prison camp). I was back in the System, going on from where I'd left off, a year before. To the authorities, my 'life-time' in Africa was irrelevant - a myth, a delusion, for all they cared - I was a student once again, a poor, insignificant first-year undergraduate, - pushed into the vast machinery of the Engineering Faculty, having to live in terms, and having to take exams all over again.

Partly because of these set-backs, things were confusing, muddled - there were so many conflicting pressures, and it seemed that I lost cutting edge. It was a disturbing contrast with the clear, straightforward challenge of life in Africa - where the situation was simple, and you could always see the enemy you were supposed to be fighting. All told, these set-backs threw that entire year into confusion; - it seemed I had taken a big retrograde step, and it was not really until my sixth term, and Pakistan, that I fully recovered and began to make forward progress once again.

- So, what of the real Africa?

The LORD had put me in a situation - isolated, remote from the compromise and complexities of the outside world: -

a) I was detached, free to be my true self as a Christian. I was free to express my faith - sincerely and openly, encouraged by the warmth and joy of the Christian community in Taita - fellow missionaries, and

our African brothers and sisters in Christ. I had to live up to expectations, it is true - but they were the expectations of fellow Christians, who could sympathise with my weakness and help me when I stumbled. I was under Authority - true, but it was a Christian hierarchy based upon the Authority of God - a 'Theocracy' - and to serve Him is perfect freedom. But all this time I was out of range of 'The System' - that insidious spectrum of worldly authority which permeates and infuses Western Society - which imposes its values upon you as an individual, which judges you relentlessly by its standards, and which applies subtle and persistent pressure on you to conform... I had grown up with it, been moulded by it - and until I really began to experience the Freedom of the Spirit, and Newness of Life in Christ, until, through God's Power, I began to be 'transformed by the renewal of the mind', I was a captive of that System; helpless, brain-washed, unable to resist or break free. But here, safe in the remoteness and vastness of Africa, I had escaped - at last - from its clutches. No longer could anyone ask awkward questions - about my thoughts and beliefs and experiences: I was free to live them out and be true to myself, without having to put on appearances.

For I was immersed in Africa. News did come from outside - wars, rumours of war, family upheavals, distant unrest. But news often came too late, when I could do nothing to help - separated by distance and time, those events were somehow unreal, remote - they seemed to belong to some other world, forgotten like a fading dream. For Africa was all around me - bright and colourful, in its fulness and Reality, - in its vivid contrast of good and evil, pain and Joy.

b) I was committed to the Lord - to His death and resurrection, to His Suffering, to His life - and to the people He had given me to serve. The verse which perhaps impressed me most vividly when I went out to Kenya was Mark 8.34:

'Anyone who wants to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his Cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost, but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake and for the Gospel ... he will find his true self' (NEB, approx).

And perhaps the most significant event of the Year was the time when, in the midst of frustration, disappointment, sickness, confusion and suffering - I could see, suddenly clearly (like a single shaft of sunlight in a dark forest) the loving hand of God at work, wanting to reach out and save those who were lost and helpless ... - this was altogether the most important thing, the Gospel - 'the Power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith' ... - and it was for the sake of the Lord Jesus and for the Gospel that I had to give myself up entirely for Him to use, to die to self, to 'get lost' in Africa for the Lord. So I was able to experience (perhaps only momentarily) the thrill of being not just immersed in Africa, but 'lost in Africa' as well. And perhaps it was just this - a glorious sense of 'lostness' - which gave rise to the whole concept of The Real Africa.

For the moment I stopped holding on to my self and my own miserable happiness - as soon as I was prepared to let go and lose myself for the Lord.

I found complete fulfilment, deep Joy (even in the suffering - especially in the suffering ...), satisfaction and wholeness - I found my true self ...

This I know is the challenge for me, now.
 For this experience of total self-forgetfulness and self-loss
 was only momentary - at most, a fleeting glimpse ...

But it was a glimpse of a great Truth - a foretaste,
 perhaps, of deeper and greater things to come. And
 this Truth, together with the art of Praising God -
 which is in fact very closely linked - was perhaps the
 greatest single discovery I made.

This is the lesson of The Real Africa - the lesson
 that I need to put into practice more and more, both
 now in Britain, and in years ahead in countries far
 away - the Art of deliberately letting go, forgetting self,
 looking to God, praising Him in all circumstances,
 Rejoicing in Him.

Looking across

Mbale valley



PART I : EARLY DAYS - EXPERIENCES



When I arrived in Taita, Revival was in full swing - part of the great East African Revival movement, sweeping across the continent like a bush fire ablaze - The Breath of Life, as described by Patricia St. John. At Mbale, students were witnessing to one another; many were being saved, and some were baptised with the Holy Spirit.

During a morning Service at Kenyatta High School, Muatate, I came before the Lord in prayer, and, as an Act of Commitment, asked Him:

- to make me a soul-winner, one able - by the Spirit's power - to lead others to a personal faith in Christ. That He would give me the gift of Evangelism, and the privilege of seeing people saved and born again ...

Acts 1.8: 'You shall receive power when the Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses ...'

- to make me above all a man of Prayer, someone who knew how to pray with power - for the conversion and Salvation of sinners; for sanctification and maturity in fellow Christians, that 'Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith - enthroned as LORD.'

Eph 6.18 'Pray at all times in the Spirit ...

... for all the Saints.'

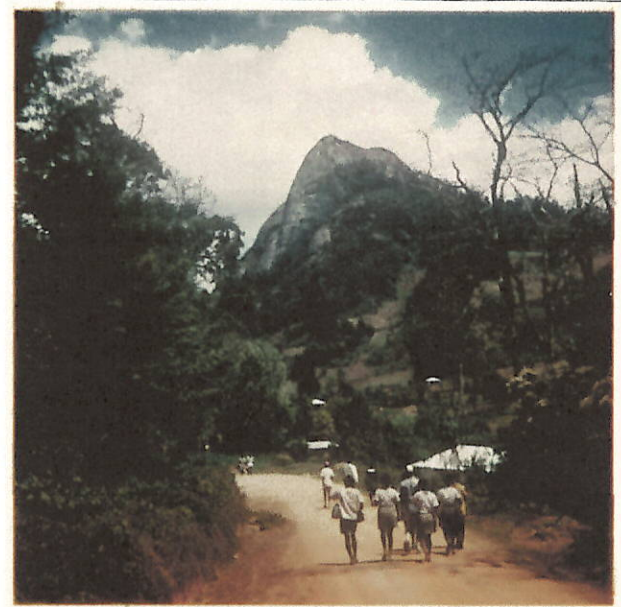
Impressions:

- This is a land of Blacks and Whites, where distinctions are as clear as the pure, hard African light - the vivid contrast of landforms in sharp relief against the deep blue sky, the dazzling brilliance of the Sky at night.

In spiritual terms, you are either 'saved' (nimeokoka) or 'not-yet saved' (bado ku-okoka) - everyone seemed to know exactly where they stood. Thus it was easy to see how people could turn from darkness to light - from the power of Satan to the power of God. Those who were Christians rejoiced as they walked together in the light, for they knew that they had been delivered from the dominion of darkness, and transferred to the Kingdom of light - the Kingdom of God's beloved Son, in whom they had redemption and forgiveness of sins.

Such was the joy with which they sang 'Bora, bora bora again, I'm glad I'm bora again ...' or 'Ni-me-zaliwa ... kwa Roho, maji, na damu ...', 'I'm so glad that Jesus set me free, I'm singing Glory Hallelujah! that Jesus set me free.'

Mgala students on
their way to St. Mary's,
Lushangoni for a
Christian Union Rally.



Such was the exuberance and zeal with which the new converts sang and testified to the work of the Spirit in their lives. You were either 'in the Kingdom' - part of the Family - or outside. Either you were saved, or not. Black and white: no greys, no compromise.

The great Truths of the Christian Life were learned and expressed in song - such as the quiet, slow, devotional 'Da-mu ya Yesu ... husafisha kabisa' - 'Oh, the blood of Jesus, it washes white as snow!' And another verse went 'Ndugu, Twende umbete kura imani ...' - 'My brother, let's go forward (together) in peace.'

- A sense of belonging (for the new convert) to a family, to the Body of Christ in His believers - a sense of togetherness, one-ness, wholeness in being One. It means losing your individuality, - even your identity, in order to become part of One Body - the Living Fellowship of True believers: sharing together, ministering to one another, - not kept apart by differences of colour, nationality, age or background - but working together as a team, complementing one another with different gifts and skills - in the task of effective witness and outreach. This 'coming Together' of God's people is something the Africans find natural - but as Westerners we find less easy: so much Western culture and philosophy has emphasised the individual rather than the corporate aspect of our lives - and this is no less true of the (Western) Protestant church with its emphasis on private devotions and individual accountability toward God ('The onus is on you alone; - you cannot take refuge in the Church or the Sacraments')

When the Spirit comes, barriers are broken down, healing and reconciliation begin to take place. Then we can

truly sing - as we sang in Kenya - 'We are One in the Spirit, we are One in the Lord' ...

In this realm, as in others, we have so much to learn from our African brothers and sisters. From their background of community and family life, when they become Christians they do not naturally become 'Lone Rangers' - nor should we, as Christians and members of Christ's Body - the Church throughout all the world.



'Time moves fast, bitterly fast ...
Round turns the Earth, Round itself Round ...'
'... matches burning the Night ...'

(John Mbiti)

The African Sky at Night.

Dark as the Night; far away from cities and the glow of lights. - Out in the vastness and silence of Africa ...

The Sky spread out, - immeasurable, remote; - and in its depths the stars flashed and danced like burning fires.

'The Heavens declare the Glory of God,
And the Firmament showeth His handiwork.'

And here your mind could recall the trivialities and sophistication of modern civilisation - drawing rooms and gossip - and dismiss it all as remote and irrelevant.

Here you can come face to face with reality.

This is Africa. The shapes of banana leaves against a star-bright sky. Terrific.



'Visitors are like the rain;
they come, and they go - but always, they leave a blessing.'
(- African Proverb).

Marambee Day - the day the Rain came, - and
the Visitors!

Sunday, 11th November: a 'day of blacks and
whites, in the true African spirit.' The thrilling ex-
perience of preaching my first ever sermon: 'Repent and
Believe in the Gospel.' I tried to get the message across
in the style of Richard Wurmbrand - the terror and
bondage of Sin, the Joy of Salvation; the beauties of
Heaven and the horrors of Hell - clear distinction,
Black and White. C.U. Rally at Kituri High School -
terrific atmosphere; news that Peter was going to be
appointed as headmaster to Mgaha in the new year.
An empty bus gave us all a lift back to Wundanyi;
the noise of singing and clapping was deafening - such
was the spirit of the day.

But no sooner had I returned to Mbale, than
I found that quite a different progression of events had
taken place. The 'Boogie' - forbidden to take place at
Molongondongo had actually been held in Our House
- under the sponsorship (but not supervision) of Aggrey
and George - and when discovered, a regular furor had
taken place, between them and the Padre and Andrew
- resulting in a series of unpleasant relationships,
much hot air - and a scandal throughout the entire
Mbale location, in whose responsibility it seemed I
had to take a share.



This last incident perhaps highlighted the problems I had sharing a house with Aggrey, a graduate from Nairobi University. He drank - and got drunk - sometimes going so far as to be seen drinking in front of students. On one occasion I saw him at it and - by way of disapproval - drew his attention to the fact. I was severely reprimanded that same evening and this gave rise to an argument which lasted till around 3.a.m. (In the front room, by the light of a Dietz, ...)

True, it was wrong of me to have embarrassed him like that - and I admitted it - but I had the interests of the students at heart and I could see they were being set a bad example. He kept appealing to the more liberal standards of the West with "It's not a question of ..." - and reproached me for being young, inexperienced etc. But once again it was so clear that African standards were in black and white: drink is a sin - and the cause of much delinquency and crime - the ruin of many a man and family.

Eventually we came to an agreement. Aggrey promised that he would refrain from drinking during term-time, and we shook hands on it. But the resolution was soon broken; there were more unpleasant incidents - and by the end of term a student had put up a notice which read "Is this a school or a beer house?"

And with staffing problems as well, the school was not a happy place, that first term. Members of staff were removed, transferred from one school to the next. Unwanted teachers arrived - the administration was hopeless. And all the while it was the students who suffered





Storm clouds
at sunset...

But for me, the suffering and unhappiness did not stop there. N. sent a letter announcing his engagement... there was a pause, and then the inevitable storm broke - and though coming from afar, it seemed I was being bombarded from all sides at once. As in the upheavals at Ngulu, so, again, I seemed to be caught in the cross-fire of a situation that was not of my own making.

In many ways it was providential that I was not at home - the outrage and hysteria and bitterness within the family were unpleasant enough when I felt the reverberations 5,000 miles away; and after a time-lag of some 10 days. But here at Nibale, a remote corner of Kenya, affairs back in England were themselves remote. I was detached, independent, free even from the ties of family loyalty. Given the situation, it was a tremendous advantage to be able to see things from afar - and thus in a clearer perspective.

- The unreliability of the postal system caused problems of its own, and in one letter I had to explain the local situation by admitting that Postal communication with Mbale depended upon:

- a) The efficiency of the Voi postal administration,
- b) The reliability of the Voi - Irina bus service,
- c) The competence of the Irina post-mistress, and
- d) The loyalty of the runner between Irina and Ngatu!

- One occasion I remember vividly: -
sitting on the terraced slopes of the 'Amphitheatre' which formed the head of Ngatu valley, - overlooking the games field where a football match was in progress.

I sat on my favourite tree stump, reading family mail - when the holocaust was at its height -

I could hear the exuberant, rhythmical singing of the Christian Union from the school buildings below. I looked up and watched the game of football in progress. It had rained recently and the terraced hillsides were a rich, vivid green. The warm evening sun was about to dip below the far range of hills. Suddenly, I felt completely at home - here, at Mbale. How beautiful and hospitable Africa was - at that time in particular she was mercifully kind to me.



'One thing have I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the House of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD
and to enquire in His temple.' (Ps 27.4)

Times I remember when the house was like
His House, filled with praise and intercession.

- 'For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to
men but to God; for no-one understands him, but he
utters mysteries in the Spirit.' (1 Cor. 14.2).

Flows at a weekend, alone in the house, pacing
up and down the corridor, or to and fro across the front
room ... the view from the verandah: - green hills falling
away into the desert plains; distant mountains so clear
you could almost reach out and touch them ...



The view from the
verandah - on a
clear day ...

... better still were the days when the rains came; when the clouds came up from the valleys below and the mists closed in and swirled about the house. Then it was like a ship at sea, fogbound or storm-driven - shut off from the outside world and all its troubles; - a place of perfect privacy, perfect freedom. Then I could really take Time to pray - for the fearful situations in hand - that the Flood-tide of God's salvation and Grace and Blessing might be poured out - as a torrent of water revives a desolate land:

'The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the Glory of the LORD,
the Majesty of our God.' (Isaiah 35. 1, 2)

- On fine days it was wonderful to go up 'Prayer Mount', which looked over Ngatu valley and commanded superb views over the entire Mbale location and beyond - out over the hills and on to the plains (dappled with the blue-grey shadows of clouds), away from the island - to where your far-reaching gaze could make out the beginnings of the outside world.

Here you could meditate - and pray 'over' the entire situation: immediately below you, or away beyond the horizon ...



Illness - after an unpleasant brush with Aggrey (who was drunk), and an unsuccessful attempt at invigilating and marking examinations. Spent the afternoon lying flat on my back, in a kind of floating dream - my eyes completely unable to focus.

It was then that a very wonderful thing happened:
 - I suddenly came to - Catherine had come into the room, with a Dietz lamp, as the light was beginning to fail. She had brought me a plateful of home-made scones and a pot of tea ... outside and over-head there was a deafening roar - the unforgettable, delicious sound of heavy rain falling on the bati (tin) roofs. The oppression of the hot and sultry atmosphere was lifted; - and the long-awaited arrival of Rain brought thankfulness to our hearts. "
 "... Joy is like the rain ..."



Christmas with the Wigrams:

- a vivid and in some ways heart-breaking contrast with the worldliness of Christmas back at home (- 'No shortage of the flesh pots!') - This is how Christmas is celebrated by true Christians: Jesus' birthday;
 'Glorify to God in the Highest, and Peace to His people on Earth!'

As old Father Wigram preached in his short address, at family communion on Christmas morning:
 'Joy, Simplicity and Forgiveness ...'

The beauty, greatness and depth of a truly Christian family - serving the Lord, led by the Spirit, open to Him. For those who love God and give themselves in

His service, He has promised:

" And the LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your desire with good things,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."
(Isaiah 58.11)



Susanna, John,
Margaret -
Christmas Day.

- and the Joy of being with such delightful children
- Susanna, John and Margaret, - so playful, carefree
and happy: - with a Freedom in the Spirit. Their laughter
and playfulness contrasted with the subdued, docile behaviour
and morose expressions of African children their own age
- eg. at the Mbale wedding.

Boxing Day: - family expedition to the top of Wesu. Walk through woods, with pockets of mist hiding in the valleys; across streams and up a long, grassy slope to the rocky summit. After a picnic lunch Andrew, Susanna and I went on to climb Yalé, following a wooded ridge running between the two mountains. The path climbed through deciduous forest, past rock faces catching the golden rays of the afternoon sun streaming through the foliage. The summit with panorama of hills, ridges - through clouds and mist which swirled around us ...

As we came down, winding through the forest, we gathered bunches of strange, heavy-scented flowers. The rock of Wesu, catching the full beams of the stark sun, towered above us, brilliant white against a deep sea-blue. Far above, an Angur buzzard, white-winged, wheeled and turned ... And then the Rock turned to gold, and the shadows sprang out of the forest depths, and across the valley the wooded ridges became waves of rich dark green fading to softer blue in the extreme distance.

The breath-taking beauty of Africa - in this I found Joy, consolation and healing for the troubles of those early days ...



My decision to spend the greater part of the Christmas vacation 'at home' - in the Taita Hills, and with the waTaita - was a significant one. For I took advantage of a unique opportunity to get to know the people of Taita - and so really get to the 'heart of things' - rather than indulge in a superficial sight-seeing trip with a group of compatriots. This particular decision I hope will become for me a symbol: preference for deep involvement as against superficial interest.

And so, my journey to Taveta to stay with Thomas Mwanasi, a student from Mgaim. For the next five days I entered Total Africa. Through sisal estates to Riata Kitobo - a settlement of the waTaita, supported by irrigated shambas. Thomas came to the door to greet me: 'Just take it easy, sir ...' - the motto for the next few days. Memories of long hot walks round the shamba, pursuing agricultural conversations in Kiswahili. Meals of ugali and eggs. Endless chow, flies, the smell of woodsmoke. Children screaming - cows being milked, the family circle; fellowship, prayers. After sundown the moon was up, full and high overhead. The air was still and warm. A scene of primitive dwellings on a compound of moonlit dust; a forest of sisal poles, - and a feeling that at last I had got somewhere near the heart of Africa. All beneath the everlasting snows of Kilimanjaro...

Bicycle expeditions by day: - hard work cycling through dust and sand; nights of deep sleep recovering from the Day's heat.

First day: visited the famous Njoro springs (from which Kilima Njoro derives its name) - Plunged into dense green forest, cool and silent, - and then found a rapid stream, bubbling fresh and clear, which seemed to come out from under the roots of an enormous tree ... We looked at three such springs, and in the last one we found an old man washing himself.

On the second day we cycled to Taveta market, - in gruelling heat, and storms of fine, gritty dust. Went up to Mako church - over 100 years old, one of the first to be built by missionaries who came inland. It is set upon a small hill; it is octagonal in shape, and with large windows on all sides, it commands superb views over the township of Taveta, and the sisal estates and settlements in the hinterland beyond.

The third and last full day: - murderous journey - 'Jua Kali sana' - towards a long, low, ordinary-looking hill about 10 miles beyond Taveta. Its slopes are covered with sparse bush and from a distance it looks as arid as the surrounding plains. But on climbing to the top an amazing spectacle awaits you: a circle of wooded cliffs plunging hundreds of feet into a huge lake of dazzling blue - a forgotten world, mysterious and hidden, - completely invisible from the outside. Lake Chala - the third deepest lake in the world, - the remains of an ancient volcanic crater filled almost to the brim with water. We clambered down to the water's edge and watched fishermen putting out, against the wind, on little waterlogged rafts.

Back into the Taita Hills. Evening up on Ngangao rock, looking out over the plains I had just left - towards the North Pare mountains of Tanzania, and the volcanic shape of Kilimanjaro - the two peaks dead in line - crimson in the West.

" on highest peaks
last embers catch
in shimmerings of distant snow

as I gaze
entranced,
the visions fade;
and night advancing
like an ocean
carries them away "

And as night advanced, the comet, Kohoutek, finally made its appearance. Andrew found, through his binoculars, what looked like a 'blurred star.' As we watched, almost imperceptibly, the Comet's tail began to fan out behind — like the wake of a small boat on still water ...



END OF PART I

PART II : LATER EXPERIENCES



Mgalm High School

- on the way to

morning Assembly ...

January 14th, 1974 : The first day of a new Year at Mgalm High School. Peter Mulu, back now as Headmaster, took morning Assembly; - opening the term with Psalm 103 :

" Bless the LORD, O my soul ;
and all that is within me, bless His holy name !
Bless the LORD, O my soul ,
and forget not all his benefits ... "

- a wonderful psalm of praise to God - for his goodness, his steadfast love and faithfulness.

And from the very beginning there was a perceptible change in the atmosphere and general quality of life at the school. The complement of staff had changed radically :

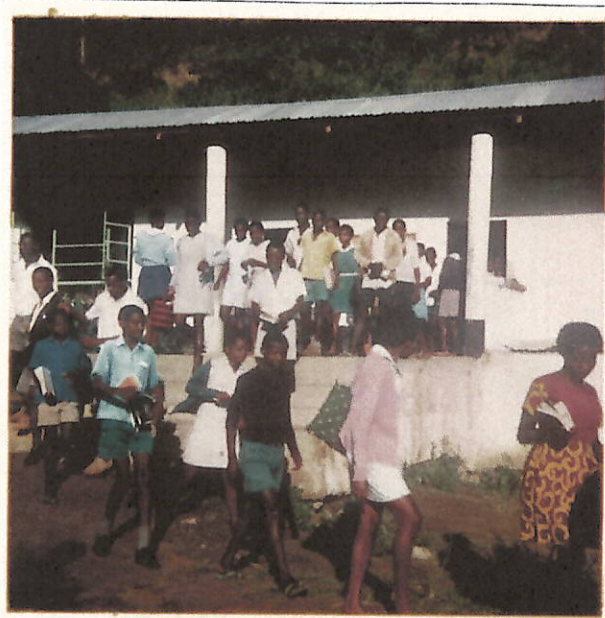
- many of the 'hard drinkers' of last term had left - and we were joined by three very nice young ladies (sixth form leavers): Jaunda, Philicia and Grace.

But to begin with, the new regime meant hard work - getting the wheels turning smoothly once again; and the steady instilling of discipline into the school was a slow and painful task. Later on, when the primary school results were out, the Form I's arrived (with double streaming), the time-table was redrafted - leaving me with a full quota of periods and a wide range of subjects to teach - and we all began to work to full capacity as a team.

- Like a Sailing Ship which lies becalmed - when suddenly a fair breeze springs up, the sails billow out, and at once the ship begins to make way, surging swiftly through the sea ...

After Assembly -

Form I students



This new sense of 'working together' (among the Staff) was well demonstrated by the occasion of Grace's 20th birthday. She invited us all up to the 'Helicopter' for tea (- so named because of the steep flight of steps leading up to the front door). Everyone was there, - including Aggrey, who rolled in late, and mildly drunk, and got a bit annoyed when, after half an hour of disconnected monologue, he was accused of being 'a chatterbox'! But it was a good time - we were all friends - and, as many of us remarked - the first time in recent days that all the members of staff had come together for a purely social occasion.

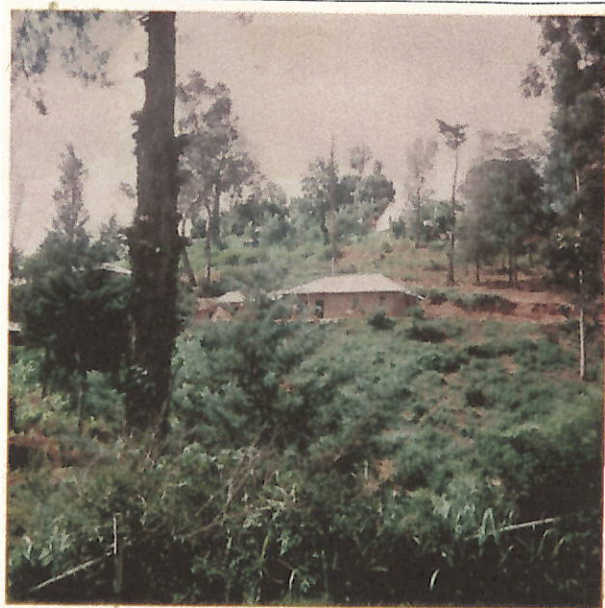


At the same time - running almost parallel with this transformation in the school - there came a definite change in my attitude towards the marriage. For as we discussed it and talked things over, Andrew and Catherine helped me to see the situation in its true light. For times had changed. Determined efforts to dissuade them had failed, and, in spite of family opinion, they had gone ahead and the marriage had taken place. Now it must be accepted. Now it was time for 'positive thinking'. They were man and wife. And 'what God has joined let no man put asunder' - irreparable damage is caused when such a Union is broken. My duty now was clear: to accept the situation, to rejoice in it, thank God for it - though at the same time sharing in the family's sorrow, - but above all to accept them, to love them, to pray for them both, and for their marriage, - that 'God's love might be poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit which He gives them.'

Once again I was reminded of God's clear promise that: "In everything He works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" - and so I was able to rejoice.

And here again was a demonstration of the value and purpose of true Christian fellowship. For I could not have changed my attitude by myself - I was too emotionally involved. It needed someone else to extricate me, to lift me out of my 'set' ways of thinking and make me see things as they really were - as God sees them. For only then could I judge without partiality, and thus know the ^{will} of God.

View from the
bedroom window -
the Mwaseyghes'





One day, in the course of conversation, Catherine suggested 'I see ... you mean you will be judged not so much on what you've done as on how well you've related to other people ...'

- Learning to relate to one another in Love - this is the lesson of the Body of Christ, which is the living fellowship of all true believers. In this new year we began to learn something of the importance of the Body - commitment to the Lord, and to one another in the fellowship of the gospel.

In Mombasa I was able to take part in a fellowship group that was more experienced in corporate ministry. It was there, - in the meetings I attended - that I could really see the power of God at work, as we ministered to one another in the gifts of the Spirit; as we 'taught and admonished one another, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God.'

It was exciting to see prayers answered, and to experience something of the power of prophesy - and to see those who were sick healed and encouraged.



Nyali beach,

Mombasa

But still more exciting was the creation and development of our own fellowship group in the Taita Hills. Comprised firstly of missionaries and local teachers (The Wigrams, Suddicks, Peter Mulu ...) we began to meet at Terienyi House, Mbale - and later on at Wundanyi where our fellowship was extended and we were joined by others in the district. (Kate Curtis, Ambrose Mwalagaya, Harold Mwanganga ...)

Here again music - hymns and choruses - formed an essential part of our worship, and, as a generally smaller group, we were able to share our personal problems and our Joys - and to bring them all before the Lord in prayer.

We discovered the value of fasting together as we prayed and prepared for evangelism and outreach through the local churches and schools. Above all, we found it was important to be completely open to the Spirit - for Him to guide and direct us - and lead us on to New Things ...

How important it is to be sensitive and listen to what God is saying -

"Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

But more often it was outside the weekly fellowship meeting, in everyday living and working together, that the concept of the Body of Christ really came into its own - greeting each other as we met (- Bwana asitwe! Praise the Lord!), praying together spontaneously, speaking the truth to each other in love...

As an example of this, I remember vividly one particular occasion, - I was suddenly taken ill in the course of a morning's teaching and had to retire to bed for the rest of the day - doubtful as to whether I would be able to go to Mombasa the next morning, for a weekend visit.

Jackson expressed his sympathy: 'Hapana mzuri ... mbaya sana ...' — But in the evening Peter came round and asked if he could pray for me. He laid hands on me and we both prayed for healing. 'And the prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up' (James 5.15); — And it seemed I was suddenly made well again — the sickness and fever disappeared, and I was just left with a healthy, end-of-day tiredness! The next day I was up at 0500 and able to say, 'According to my health I am just like a fiddle'!

An hour later I was on the road to Wundanyi, with a glow in the West as the moon began to set, and a brightening in the East as the stars faded and the sun came up out of Rang'e ...



Some of the fellowship:
 Auntie Kate, Don Suddick —
 Anne, Iain and Mark;
 Peter Nukhsya wa Nulu:
 "He saves, He keeps, He satisfies,
 this wonderful Saviour of mine!"



Beautiful walks up among the complex of hills and ridges above Mbale continued, — though less frequently. I remember particularly one Saturday afternoon at the end of March, when I set out on safari with a mac and umbrella because of the storm clouds gathering in the East. At once I noticed all about me a sense of heaviness and ominous silence ... There was not a breath of wind and no melody from the birds — only a single-noted call, like a warning signal.

I climbed through forests tense and silent, feeling the damp heat contained in the slow, sticky air. The heavy sky hung — poised and menacing above the hills. And as I gained the rocky outcrops near the top of the first ridge, the moisture-laden air eased itself at last into a soft, fine rain; and the mists rolled in from Sagalla. I made a brisk descent and reached Iriwa before the storm — observing how the dark grey skies made a dramatic contrast with the golden expanse of the Tsavo plains, and hills catching the last rays of the Sun.

I returned home, changed rapidly into dry clothes and set off again for the Wigrams to make some arrangements for Sunday. It was half past six and a few minutes before it had been almost too dark to see. But now, all of a sudden, it was incredibly bright. Grey clouds still covered the sky, and yet everything was filled with a curious yellow light coming from the western hills. It reflected off the red surfaces of the roads and paths which took on a vivid orange glow. And as I turned into the front drive, the red flowers in the garden (*Poinsettia*) shone with almost supernatural brightness, against a background of grey hills and sky. That momentary contrast between the vivid scarlet of the flowers and the rich blue-grey of the background is something I hope never to forget.

As I reached the house a light rain was beginning to fall. And then the heavens opened and the Rain fell in torrents. The children went wild with delight. A Ngala girl with a plate of food crouched beneath the eaves of a nearby building. Flashes of lightning followed by long, fearful peals of thunder ...



LENANA CONFERENCE, NAIROBI: 25th April - 1st May

The Theme of the Conference, as it turned out, was really on 'Knowing Jesus'.

A chorus we sang frequently:

"More about Jesus would I know ...
more, more about Jesus ..."

Paul wrote to the Philippians:

"Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things ... in order that I may gain Christ ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings ..."
(Philippians 3. 8, 10)

a) 'that I may know Him'

Our faith becomes firm when we find Jesus to be real.

The promises of God find their fulfillment in Him:

"... Jesus Christ ... was not Yes and No; but in Him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. That is why we utter the 'Amen' through Him to the glory of God."
(2 Corinthians 1. 19)

In Revelation 3.14 Jesus is described as

"... the Amen, the faithful and true witness"

we need to know in our hearts by experience that He is utterly trustworthy, so that through Him we can say with conviction, 'Yes, the promises of God are true for me today; Jesus Christ is real to me.'

"Because Thy steadfast Love is better than life,
 my lips will praise Thee.
 So I will bless Thee as long as I live;
 I will lift up my hands and call on Thy name."
 (Psalm 63. 3, 4)

b) '... and The Power of His Resurrection.'

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we
 are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the
 right hand of God, and having received from the
 Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured
 out this which you see and hear."
 (Acts 2. 32, 33)

And in one day a new Nation was born - the community
 of new believers - a new People who could satisfy God, a
 People who had a heart after Him, through whom He could
 communicate His manifold personality.

Bob Manzano went on to describe some of the
 characteristics of the New community - brought into being
 and living by the power of the Resurrection - the manifest-
 ations and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do
 not want you to be uninformed ..."
 (1 Corinthians 12.1)

One morning we came together before the Lord,
 and waited upon Him. And the Lord ministered to us in
 the power of His Spirit. - Those needing special ministry
 came forward, and as Bob prayed for each person in turn,
 words of prophesy were given.



City of Nairobi
at sunset.

On this occasion the Lord spoke to me :

- that He was going to bring a fresh stability into my life so that I would stand firm and not waver,
- that through the breaking and the melting and the softness and the gentleness there would come new strength,
- and that He would lead me by His Spirit in such a way that, rather than being influenced by others, I would be able to influence them and they would be drawn to Him.

We talked about the life of the early church, and the blueprint of the New community :

" And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. " (Acts 2.42)

c) '... and may share His sufferings ...'

Talk on Moses - the man who made right choices:

" He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward."

(Hebrews 11.26) - cf. Philippians 3.8.

The challenge:

" So Jesus also suffered outside the gate ... Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing abuse for Him."

(Hebrews 13.12,13)

Are we willing to pass through the gates - of security, popularity, respect - to bear the reproach which comes from obeying God?

In the midst of rejection, loneliness, despair, we can ask, 'Is this how you feel, Jesus?'

And He will reply, 'Yes, and I'm so glad to have you to share it with me.'

We are seated with Him in the heavenly places to share His sufferings; and for Him to share in our sufferings.

For we are His workmanship (- Ephesians 2.10) (Greek: 'ποίημα' = 'poem', - beautiful created work of Art). God is working relationally in each one of us so that we become conformed to the image of His Son. He looks not at ourselves as we are now, but at our fulfilment in His Son. As a potter perfects a piece of clay because he sees in it a beautiful vase, so, as the Father works in us, He keeps His eye on His Son until He sees in us a perfect replica of Him ...

" ... that I may know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, - that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. "



Kenyatta
Conference Centre,
Nairobi.



ZAMBIA

Perhaps the highlight of the Easter vacation was a trip to Zambia, - though its real value lay less in the holiday itself than in the incredible journey out there, and the vivid impressions on return.

After the conference we returned to the Taita Hills (on May 1st) and the next day I received the long-awaited letter from the Males with information about flight arrangements - only to discover that my flight left Nairobi that very day. For a moment I thought that all was lost...

But Andrew saw my predicament and v. kindly took me to Wundanyi, and then on to Voi (because the lines were down), so that I could telephone the Zambian Airways Office, informing them of my cancellation before the departure of the flight. After nearly 2 hours at the Post Office, and just as I was on the point of giving up, I managed to get through at last - and secure a booking on their next flight, which was not until May 8th.

It was on the way back, as we wound up into the hills through Muwasingambu and Msara that Andrew said, "It's a lesson in tenacity..." - determination and the ability to keep trying and not give up. As it turned out, the letter had actually reached Mbale two weeks ago, but until that morning it had been kept safe in the hands of the school clerk, who had received it (along with other mail) from the Irira post-mistress - who in turn had led me to believe that all my mail had been collected by the Wigrams! Had I been more determined in the first place, I could have tracked down that letter and got word of the information before the start of the Nairobi conference. As things were, it was by determination - not to let go when everything seemed so difficult -

that I managed to contact the Airline office in time, and so was able to go to Zambia at all. And after we had committed everything to the Lord, it was amazing to see how He took care of every little detail, making good the things that had seemed to go wrong, and transforming a hopeless situation into a really worthwhile trip.

I left for Nairobi the next day - and was given a lift by Zambian holidaymakers (in a Mercedes) who were returning to N'dola - my flight destination - the next day! Sure enough, on arrival in Nairobi I found that E.A. Airways had room for me on the same flight, and I was able to get my ticket transferred accordingly...

The journey itself is worth remembering:

Take-off from Embakasi, - superb aerial views of Mt. Meru, Kilimanjaro, Lake Chala ... following the coast-line down to Dar-es-Salaam where we came into land amid palm trees and overwhelming heat. Flight to Lusaka, over vast stretches of forest and bush - cut by occasional tracks and rivers overflowing their banks.

Crossed over Lake Malawi before coming into land at Lusaka. The 'domestic' flight to N'dola left some three hours later, after I had watched the sun go down on the Zambian bush. When we took to the air again, we enjoyed the unusual sensation of seeing the sun 'unset' and the orange glow in the west increase as we gained height.

Then it was only a few minutes before we saw the lights of the copper belt towns - a chain of civilisation in the dark expanse of the African bush. Finally N'dola airport - and a lift to Luanshya where we found the house - but the Halls (Maurice and Elaine) were out, and for four hours I was left sitting on the front door step - watching, it seemed, the whole of Luanshya go by, either in cars or as pedestrians with cigarettes

... Alone, in a strange country at night ... Read Psalm 27, and thought about David when he was running away from Saul:

" I believe that I shall see the goodness
of the LORD
in the land of the living!
Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
yea, wait for the LORD! "

ZAMBIA — and an exciting trip South to see the Victoria Falls. Reached Livingstone at the end of a long day's drive, and caught first glimpses of the Zambezi river a few miles further South — and eventually a bank of mist rising out of the river: — spray from the Victoria Falls — called by the Zambians 'Musi-oo-Tunya,' or 'The smoke that thunders.' ...

Later that evening we walked down from the hotel to the East Cataract for our first view of the Falls — sideways on and mysteriously floodlit. Because of heavy rains in West Africa 2 months previously, the Zambezi was now in full spate — colossal volumes of luminous water cascading over the edge of the gorge, disappearing in a deep, thunderous roar and sending up clouds of mist and spray so dense that you could only see a section of the Falls at any one time. Dramatic contrast of pale water falling, against the deeper background of the night.

An amazing geological phenomenon, where for 360 ft. the great Zambezi river, nearly a mile wide, suddenly becomes vertical, and re-emerges through a complex system of narrow gorges — formed along fault-lines in the basalt ...



The Victoria Falls

- East Cataract.

And in the morning the incomparable beauty of the Victoria Falls was enhanced by the appearance of a rainbow - clear and distinct as the sun began to shine...

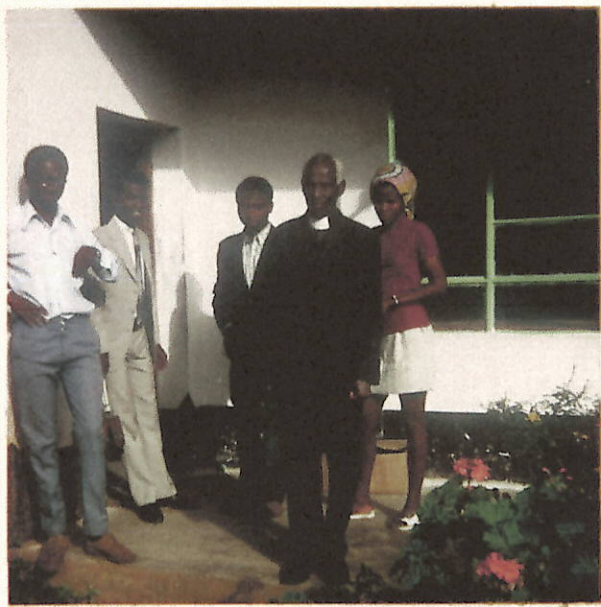
But quite apart from the outstanding natural beauty of the country, Zambia for me was in many ways a bleak and disturbing experience. - Endless discussion of Southern African politics, criticism of the new regime in Zambia ('not to be compared with life during Federal Days...'), various recent political scandals. - it seemed their whole language was built out of criticism and resentment. More disturbing still were conversations which revolved round mysticism, and theosophy - and a serious questioning of my motives, and the value of the work I was doing: 'They're not worth it...' etc.

Zambia was a 'break within a break' in more senses than one. For apart from the stimulation of travel, this brief interlude brought me back into contact with the outside world - its confusion and despair, and for a few days I was back in the confines of the family circle, bereft of the freedom and fellowship I was enjoying in Kenya.

Thus it was with a sense of gladness and relief that at last the lights of the City of Nairobi appeared, spread out on our left, and a few minutes later the plane touched down and I was back in Kenya. - And I shall never forget the sense of warmth and welcome I felt when I got home; - walked down to Peter's house where we spent a glorious hour or two worshipping the Lord together, and praying for the new term; then went on to the Wigrams for supper ...



And so, my last term at Ngabu. Another complete staff turnover, - and we welcomed Miss Evelyn Mwanjala, Mr. Ngamba, Jerome Kitti, Mrs Wamalwa - and Rastor Nyalleh who shared the house with me.



The Padre, -

John Nyata;

Staff, Ngabu H.S.

Once again, the flavour of the new term was distinct, - differing from each of the two previous terms. In a way I was more involved - getting the KSTC Science kit for the school, able to perform scientific demonstrations in class - generally more competent as a teacher. But in another way I was more detached: - far less affected by staff inter-relationships and the tension which began to charge the staffroom atmosphere again. It was almost as if I had got into gear at last, and I might have sailed on quite happily for another three terms. It seems that I had just about got the hang of things when my Term ended and I had to leave. I have since regretted not having been able

to stay a second year, - but then I would rather have been at a school which was run more efficiently - like Taru Secondary School where David Johnson was a volunteer for two years ...



Early in the term a very significant thing happened to me. John and Brenda Fletcher were staying with the Wigrams one weekend at the end of May. They had led a Christian Union Rally up at Wandareji on the Saturday. Then on Sunday evening I was invited to supper. We were discussing spiritual problems and I said I needed to be released from a spirit of fear (- that inbuilt fear of man which inhibits and paralyzes Christian witness and social contact). Then Brenda was given a word of knowledge and suddenly said, 'You know, I think you need releasing from your father.' We talked about this and it appeared she was right. My father seemed to have an unnatural hold over me so that I was unable to escape completely from his influence. I needed to be spiritually released before I could become fully emancipated and a free person in my own right.

We prayed and I was released - and also set free from the bondage of fear, - filled afresh with the Spirit that God had given me: a Spirit not of timidity, but of Power and Love and soundness of mind.

I don't think I saw the full significance of this event for another year or two, when I first began to stand out against my father and exert my influence as a free man. But I believe the Lord worked a miracle that day, and for me it marked the beginning of true independence and adulthood.



Saturday, June 22nd :- Catherine's birthday.

Decided we should go down into the valley rather than up into the hills as the weather was cold and the cloud level low. A steep valley, with a fast-flowing stream at the bottom, arid slopes of shale rock, sparse bush and cactus rising up on either side. The soil was poor, and the slopes deserted except for the occasional grass bent clinging to the hillside. Across the valley and slightly below us was a sudden cleft of green - a single field in which a small herd of cows was grazing. A herdsman was sitting cross-legged on a rock, looking after the cows - and he had a curious one-stringed instrument in his hand. As the wind stilled the air was haunted by a strange, three-noted melody; it seemed to fill the valley, sometimes distant, at other times distinct. Time stood still, as it seemed that all the beauty and simplicity of the true, rural Africa was captured in a single scene. A world apart, fast disappearing, retreating with every forward step of modern civilisation. - A world I would soon be leaving forever.

We spent a fascinating afternoon exploring a 'hidden valley' locked away in a fold in the hillside. People greeted us as we passed (their houses made of grass and mud. Young children followed us through the lush vegetation, bush and maize shambas - children who perhaps had never seen white people come into their valley before. - Countless butterflies, all of them brightly coloured, - and curious succulents, green and turquoise; large indigenous African trees, ancient as the hills, with lichens hung like stalactites; - and in the Jungle depths:
 '... deep crimson orchids, mauve and purest white
 breathed incense strange and sweet' ...

The next day, Sunday, was a very special day: it was the occasion of Robert Mark Suddick's christening, which took place at Murray High School, Wusi.

A wonderful gathering of people: The Suddicks, the Wigrams, Ken and Betty Ogden (from Mountbasa), David Johnson, Ailsa Pank, Julius Righa, Aunty Kate - and Archdeacon Jeremiah Kiminda who led the Baptism Service ...



The gathering
at Wusi

At the moment of baptism, the Archdeacon, who had been conducting the service in Swahili, suddenly reverted to Ki-Dabida, the tribal language of the Taita Hills, as he touched Mark's head with water and made the sign of the cross. - There was something really beautiful and symbolic about this.

The Service was followed by Holy Communion, conducted in English by Andrew Wigram.

Tea and christening cake by candle-light, in front of a roaring fire. I was able to have a few words with the Archdeacon, - saying how sorry I was to be leaving Taita, and explaining that a Year in a place was really not long enough to make much of a contribution to the community there ...



THE REAL AFRICA (2)

What I contributed during my Year was probably very little. But what I learned was of immense importance. — for this was the Year in which I was able to learn fundamental lessons of Faith, the year in which real foundations were laid. And for me Africa is the Foundation for a Future of missionary involvement and service abroad.

— Once again, I have to ask 'where does the Real Africa lie? What are the most important lessons I learned, and, in a sense, have to learn time after time again? Some I have already discussed; but a few of the deepest truths I have left until the end, because they are mostly concerned with things that happened late in the Year. Once again — particular experiences are the means by which spiritual truths are discovered and applied; and the three principles which follow are no exception. They were all discovered and illustrated by events which took place in the last six months — after I had let go of my past, and my problems, and had learned to be more receptive to the qualities of indigenous African culture.

1) Submission

— Learning to accept the situation as it is; — not as you would like it to be. There are two possible ways of responding to any given situation: —

- a) The way of the world: criticism and rebellion, which leads to bitterness.
- b) The way of the Lord: humble submission — which leads to Praise.

This was a principle I did not appreciate in my early days at Mgaha where the prevailing attitude towards the school was one of cynicism and despair. But, as I explained, when Peter took over as headmaster everything changed... And so, when Peter called me out of class one morning to tell me that a new teacher had arrived from Kitani, I made a definite resolution not to complain or be critical, - even though the transfer (by order of the Bishop) was against all our wishes, and really against all commonsense. It was a situation that affected me personally because the new teacher, Venant Mwasi, was physically handicapped - he had a wooden leg and had to move about on crutches. And as ours was the nearest house to the school, that meant he would have to move in with us. And that would have meant sharing my room with him, or one of us (probably me) moving up into Caspin's old house - African-style and miles up the hill. * - But I was prepared to accept anything that came my way, determined to do my best in the circumstances. And as nothing more was said that day I saw no point in answering unasked questions - and resolved not to speculate on what the future might hold. For I learned that speculation was useless. Life in Africa was so full of uncertainty - situations could change so suddenly for better or for worse, I found that Acceptance was the key - not allowing myself to fall into the trap of wishing things (situations over which I had no control) to be otherwise.

* [In fact, as it turned out, Venant stayed with Peter, whose house was a little further than ours - and a week later he left us again - transferred to Muangeka by order of the Bishop!]

This principle of submission does not conflict with the principle of tenacity - the determination not to let go and give up. The one is an attitude of humble submission before the Lord and a joyful acceptance of the situation He gives you; the other is a determination to do your very best in the given circumstances.

In other words, when confronted with a difficult situation:

a) If you can do something about it (Flight to Zambia), do it, and then don't worry about it.

b) If you can't do anything about it (The arrival of Venant Mwasi), then don't worry about it.

- Accept what you cannot change;

Change what you can.

2) It's People that Matter ...

People come first. People are more important than things. People matter more than plans. They are more important than time-tables and schedules and duties and quotas.

- Such a basic principle of life - and yet so easily forgotten in the rush of the West with our obsession for punctuality and efficiency. We can forget this in our Christian lives as well, and adopt a fundamentally 'Western' approach: - In our efforts to serve the Lord efficiently, people can become de-humanised, - we think of them as numbers at a meeting or names on a prayer list, rather than real people to love ...

There are so many people. We are forever meeting new people, - and their numbers can overwhelm us. But Jesus had compassion 'on the multitudes' who

came to Him. And we are to love as He loves us. We cannot pray for everyone we meet, but we can love and welcome each person who comes to us, and that is more important.

People come first. The principle is illustrated very neatly by a situation I often found myself in, and which, to begin with, was always a dilemma.

You come home after school and have supper. Then you sit down at your desk with the evening before you. On your left is a time-table showing tomorrow's lessons which you have to prepare; on your right, a pile of books waiting to be marked. — And then there's a knock at the door:

— What do you do? Turn him away and get the work done? Or welcome him in and blow the work? The English attitude is, 'Go away, I'm busy.' But this is Africa, and people must come first.

— So you invite him in, and entertain him — for he has done you the great honour of calling at your house. And when he chooses to get up and go — only then may you resume your task.

And the next day you go to school over-tired or inadequately prepared ...

3) Praise

In Africa I also learned something of the Power of Praise, of positively thanking God in and for all circumstances knowing that 'In everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.'

In the final analysis there are just two languages in this world:

- a) The language of criticism and resentment and bitterness, spoken by the majority of people you meet.
- b) The language of thankfulness and Praise, which should be spoken by all of God's children.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

" Rejoice always,
 pray constantly,
 give thanks in all circumstances "

(1 Thess. 5.16-18)

In practice this meant thanking God not only for breath-taking mountain scenery or a beautiful sunrise, - but when there was no chalk in the classroom, or the board duster was broken, or half the class were missing.

This lesson was brought home to me in an unforgettable way, over half-term at the end of June.

I was on my way back from Mombasa after a quiet weekend with the Ogdens - trying to relax and recover from the rigours of the term. I was still pretty tired as the decrepit old bus, which had left Mombasa late, crawled painfully towards Voi. But I was reading Merlin Cartner's 'Power in Praise'. So when we reached Voi at six and the Mbale bus had gone, I decided that God had allowed this to happen on purpose, and I started to thank Him for it. 'Thankyou, Lord, that I missed the

Mbale bus. Thankyou that I have a three mile walk from Wandanyi in the dark with a rucksack and a KSTC Science Kit.' And in view of the black clouds hovering around the Taita Hills, 'Thankyou Lord that it's probably raining at Wandanyi.'

And then the Lord did a remarkable thing. When I stepped out of the bus at Wandanyi, it was a brilliant, clear moonlit night. Then a couple of students (who were on the bus) offered not only to keep the Science Kit at Wandanyi until the next morning, but to escort me all the way back to Mbale! I was able to witness to them on the way down...

Then followed the most amazing week of the year. I was duty master for that week; I had a full quota of periods to teach; and Jackson was in Wesu hospital, so we had no domestic help. There was no time to do anything - not even to read a long-awaited letter that had just arrived. I was under tremendous pressure, but I just thanked the Lord hour by hour for everything - even the little, trivial things (walks between the classrooms, preparing food, washing up...)

So I discovered the Power of Praise, and a week which promised to be so difficult was transformed by the language of Praise, and became the best and happiest week of the year.

For to praise God is to forget self;
to praise God is to take Delight in Him.

" Take Delight in the LORD,
and He will give you the desires of your heart."
(Psalm 37.4)

" Rejoice always,
pray constantly,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."



Flamboyant tree;
- at Mbale.



Epilogue

I would like to end by recalling one of the saddest experiences of my life. I had enjoyed a final weekend at Mombasa singing in 'Come Together'; and going for a last swim at Nyali beach - in cool, dark waters, under the palm trees swaying in the moonlight. Then, after a busy week of examinations, I set out, late on Saturday afternoon, for what I knew would be my last walk in the hills above Mbale.

About half way round the 'upper valley' - at its highest point - I just stopped, and felt the cool wind sighing in the bracken and the trees. It was so quiet and peaceful, - as it always was; - an invincible stillness, out of reach of the clamour of the world outside. Why must I go back? Why not stay here for a while? I turned and looked out over the valley - the world I had come to know so well and love so much. I knew I was looking at it for the last time. Now, in idle moments - back in England - I dream of how I would return to the Taita Hills. It would be so simple - to step into a car and drive to London Airport; catch the next plane to Nairobi; take the OTC bus to Windanyi and walk down the hill to Mbale. - but it could never be the same. I was looking at a world I was going to leave behind me forever.

With a sigh of resignation, I turned round and started down the hill...

- End of term finale. an African-style, farewell birthday party with all members of staff; final assembly at school, in which I was able to say a few last words, based on Romans 12.12:

"Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

- Last evening with the Suddicks. - Walked over in the dark and the pouring rain listening to the roar of water tumbling down the hillside ...

- Away to Nairobi; and a lightning tour of the West: Nakuru, Kericho, Kisumu, Maseno.

Ascent of Kilimanjaro, - the 'Last Mountain' - cold, glaring, windswept desert before the crater wall.
Sunrise from the Crown of Africa ...

Last evening in Taita. Supper with the Wrygrams - chicken, pilao and home-made ice-cream. Reflected on the highlights of the year, and discussed possible reactions on returning to UK, and how this Year Abroad might be seen in the perspective of years to come ...