

WESTERN WORLDVIEW STRESS ABOUT AN ENCHANTED WORLD:

A CARBURATOR DEMON

Western Missionary Correspondence

Bill & Kathy Kiesselhorst with Jan H. Boer

FROM Kiesselhorsts, June 12, 2021

I had been traveling often in my first 2 years in West Africa, visiting pastors and preaching in village churches. On this particular morning I was with Sunday, a native evangelist friend, with whom I had traveled extensively. Midway through visiting 30-40 villages, I was growing weary from the demands of village travel – dehydration, exhaustion, lack of sleep, culture fatigue, dysentery, and an encroaching bad attitude. This kind of travel is challenging to any Westerner, but we were also experiencing spiritual pressure and attack in sharing the gospel with a population fraught with juju and spiritism. My companion, Sunday, was a wonderful friend, a mature leader and adept in spiritual warfare. I was thankful for his companionship on this trip, as I was a novice, a bit timid in this active environment, and wearing down under the constant spiritual pressure.

This morning we got into my Passat to depart for yet another village when the engine failed to start. Groan. Checklist: battery's strong, starter's good, petrol, plugs connected – ah – carburetor. Check fuel line, and tried hand-choking as Sunday manned the ignition. Nothing. I finally sat down, defeated, smoldering in frustration. Sunday calmly smiled: "Are you done?" (Sigh) "Yes."

Sunday stepped up to the engine, laid hands on it, and in the name of Jesus cast a demon out of the carburetor! The engine started! I sat sputtering.

Not another word was spoken about the incident. All in a day's work. But inside I was in serious turmoil. My worldview says carburetors don't have demons – they run on gas, chemistry, physics and mechanics – not spirit! This is tangible! But today Sunday's method worked, not mine! There were other possible answers, but my worldview was spinning out of control.

This was a point in my time in Africa when I caved in and simply submitted myself: Alright, I give up! Carburetors have demons, juju is real, spiritism is powerful despite what I think. I quit resisting Africa, quit my reluctance to

enculturate, quit trying to change Africans, and quit trying to be the model Christian for Africa. I began to listen, and as I listened, doors began opening to me. Friendships opened up emotionally and spiritually. I began to understand why Africans are the way they are and to accept them as such, with affection, my family in Christ. I didn't agree with everything, but I accepted it as the reality I was living in. Subsequently a great deal of anxiety simply disappeared, friendships deepened, and I came to peace within myself and with Africa.

I share this amusing experience to illustrate some of the worldview changes missionaries encounter. These little encounters happen every day, usually without immediate resolution, meaning we are living in unresolved internal conflict and anxiety almost all the time. This is exhausting and can lead to emotional burnout.

All of us need counsel along the way, a friend. But friends and relatives, homeys, lack understanding of our unique stress. For this reason, Kathy and I make ourselves available to FMI missionaries to simply engage, relate, and talk with fellow travelers. We get it. Will you help us do this? Praying and giving helps us.

Thanks,
Bill and Kathy

From Jan Boer, proprietor of this website, June 12 2021

Dear Bill and Kathy

Thank you for this particular circular re your run into demons and their spirit cohorts. That is a wonderful story that touches me deeply, for I know the story from parallel experience along with missionary helplessness AND annoyance with our secular training.

Please do me a favour. I would like your permission to place this story on my website, name and all, if you agree. That would be so appreciated.

However, I also have a question. So the engine did not work and a prayer for healing did the job. That would seem to indicate that God (can) hear our prayers and correct physical things and their processes. But does this indicate that there are evil spirits that have interfered? I believe there are or can be, but the story does not "prove" that in any way. How do you know that it was not just a case of

mechanical failure and God graciously intervened to heal since there may not have been a mechanic for miles around?

So, I'm waiting for your permission as well as the answer! Thank you.

JAN

FROM KIESSELHORST. June 16 2021

Hi Jan and Fran,

Thanks for the feedback – I figured you'd be some of the few who have had direct experience with this phenomenon. You are more than welcome to use this piece any way you like, and my name, as well.

I think most western missionaries encounter these phenomena regularly, but I would guess few are prepared or even willing to engage the situation. I think this is a great failing of the western missionary movement in general, as our God is made to appear impotent in the face demonic manifestation. Charles Kraft has written well on this dilemma. At the same time, many (usually Pentecostals) who have engaged in this ministry in the Spirit, have done so in overly dramatic ways that puts the focus on them and their ministry, and not the Holy Spirit's gentle presence.

Our pastors in Nigeria ministered deliverance as a matter of course in leading disciples to Christ, along with water baptism and instruction in the Scriptures. Interestingly, they did not learn this from missionaries so much as from the direct intervention by the Holy Spirit. I was a student in this ministry under our indigenous Nigerian leadership, and I learned to take things as they came, without getting all worked up about it. I think this ministry never gained credibility in the west, mostly due to our worldview of denying the spirit realm but also due frequently to the flamboyance of those who do. There is a sensible balance, and it is found simply in the imminent presence of Christ in all our ministry engagements with people, as he releases us from our bondages to sin and receives us into his graceful presence.

Proof? No, this experience is by no means proof of anything. This was for me one vivid example of my own confrontations and engagements with West African culture and worldview. It was at a point where I had been bombarded for months by these kinds of spiritual encounters in village ministry settings, and I had been in

staunch denial of it all, explaining it away in some rational counter argument. "Coincidence" is a catchall rational excuse for denial of spirit action. This was a point where I simply relented (exhausted) and accepted African worldview as a reality I was living within, one very different from my own, but equally valid and powerful in the face of my rationalism. And because I trusted my friend and colleague, Sunday, and his spiritual maturity and discernment, I was able to relent to this situation without losing anything, but rather gaining in an instant a whole new insight into the spirit realm. I woke up to something. For me this has been part of the richness that I have gained from my African brothers and sisters during my time in West Africa, and the experience has dramatically changed my worldview during the latter half of my life.

I had one brilliant translator (with a degree from the London School of Economics) who summed things up for me when he said, "We understand rationalism. . .it is just not our way." We can choose how we look at things, but denial is not a good choice!

We love you guys: you are part of the richness of our life in Africa.

Blessings,

Bill

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Hi Bill and Kathy

This is developing into an interesting correspondence. I actually wrote an article on a similar experience, though not involving any material incident like yours. Too long for inclusion in this correspondence, but I refer you to the material on the BOERIANA page of this website:

"Opening the Reformed World to the Powers." *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought*, Feb/1994 (pp. 16-18). Slightly edited versions have been published as "Worldviews: Enlarging the Reformed Tent," *REC Mission Bulletin*, vol. xiii, no. 3, Sept/1993. CC, Oct. 28/1994. See there for the article itself under the section "Wholistic Health Care."

["Propositions about Miracles."](http://www.lulu.com/shop/abraham-kuyper-and-jan-h-boer/faith-science-miracles-islamfour-kuyperian-essays/ebook/product-20929893.html) *AlumNews* of CTS, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1994; <http://www.lulu.com/shop/abraham-kuyper-and-jan-h-boer/faith-science-miracles-islamfour-kuyperian-essays/ebook/product-20929893.html>.

Dick Eppinga, staff of CTS, letter of August 1, 1994: "I've received many favorable remarks on your article, John. Lots found it thought-provoking."

RESPONSE FROM ME

REFERENCE TO MY ARTICLE AND STORY

REF TO IAN STORY