



No God in My Suitcase

A Priest's Quest in Africa

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St. Paul advised those who would follow him that they should be 'a Jew to the Jews, a Gentile to the Gentiles'. In the case of Father Claude Boucher he would have added, 'and a Chewa to the Chewa!' As a newly-ordained 28 year old, inspired by an aunt's lifelong work in Africa, Boucher set sail from Quebec thirty-six years ago to take up a missionary's challenge.

In contrast to exhibiting the traditional missionary's zeal of absolute truth, Boucher sought to find the eternal and divine among the lives of African subsistence farmers. "God is already there!", Boucher observes, "The spirit of God is active before you come. ...you're not carrying God in your suitcase!"



Today, as founder of the Kungoni Arts Centre, Father Boucher, runs an expanding operation of museum, art centre, research archive and cross-cultural training - all dedicated to not just the preservation of indigenous culture, but to "inculturating" it into a model of an expanded Christianity—an Africanized Christianity.

The efforts of Father Boucher's unrelenting vision are not couched in terms familiar to the orthodox dictates of the Catholic church. "He had to give birth to a new way of thinking - different, from most missionaries." says an African nun and longterm friend, "He has suffered for his vision, and accepted to be rejected." Boucher's awakened consciousness found it's flowering in the traditional culture and spiritual practices of the local, Chewa, Ngoni and Yao peoples he took up residence with. For the artistically-motivated Boucher, adapting "...local philosophy, local concepts, local materials..." challenged him to "not import anything that was coming from the west, but to be very cautious about the way you would bring the message." In relinquishing the role of all-knowing priest and assuming a place on the reed mat alongside Malawian villagers, Boucher grew to the realization "that I had very little to give, but I had much more to receive."

Throughout Kungoni and the surrounding mission Boucher's work and inspirations are everywhere in evidence; from the decorative borders outling staff houses to the exuberant choreography and drumming of the annual Chamare Days, to the unorthodox towering roundavels housing the museum, to the senuous renderings of the carver's sculptures.

The quest of Boucher's life continues to fill him and those he touches with wonder. Looking back at his early life and education in Canada, Boucher observes, "...nothing has been lost - from taxidermy, to painting, to carving, to makeup - it's all there, all there. Here I am in Mua, running an art centre, training artists and being part of ministry and part of the Christian community. It's just amazing! - to see how God writes straight lines with crooked lines!"

One hour broadcast documentary filmed in HD format on location in Malawi.

Production and Direction

Douglas Curran is internationally recognized as an author, photographer and visual anthropologist. For over twenty five years he has documented a wide range of exotic people and their beliefs, ranging from UFO cultists in Washington to charismatic tent preachers in Florida. Acclaimed author Tom Wolfe wrote, '...Curran is not only a photographer..but a reporter and an extremely gifted one...' In addition to his life as an artist/photographer, Curran has maintained a career as a stills photographer for major motion picture studios.

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Roger Williams brings with him over twenty years of production experience in the motion picture and television industry. As founder of Image Pacific Communications he oversees one of Canada's largest independent production facilities and includes among his international clients TSN, Discovery Channel and many motion picture studios.

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