

## Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin – March 2010.

\* For the more scholarly amongst us, the journal 'Culture and Religion' has its first edition for 2009 available for free on the internet. The topic is Hip Hop and Religion. It looks at the prosperity Gospel, in Africa, UK and beyond, and so may be of interest to AVMerS.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t713694811~tab=issueslist>

\* Birth looks at different understandings of time, and the way they influence communication (what he calls coevalness). Birth has recognised that different people's have different ways of considering time, and thus of organising their lives and their histories. For example, we have time as a bringer of change, time as a part of eternity, time as governed by the passing of events, time independent of events, etc. According to Birth, "post-Enlightenment rationalism severs time from eternity and precludes cultural ontologies that do not do the same" (2008:16). Birth also tells us that "... the consciousness of time is central to being for all humans, and this suggests that consciousness of culturally shaped times creates different senses of being-in-the-world" (2008:13).

What makes Birth's work interesting to us in the AVM, is his suggestion that post-enlightenment perspectives on time are incompatible with non-Western ones, and incompatible with Christian ones. Arguing for the Gospel while leaving wrong presuppositions on time intact can be a process of self-contradiction. Rapport cannot be acquired unless the temporal organisation of narratives is mutually intelligible, says Birth (2008:7). In other words, a missionary needs to acquire an appreciation of a people's understanding of 'time' in order to communicate profoundly (about the Gospel - achieve coevalness) with them. The latter inevitably requires use of local language, and the kind of association with a people that is very difficult to achieve from a donor pedestal. Birth brings to our attention one of what I believe to be many hidden dimensions to inter-human communication that are often missed by the West's tendency to consider others to be 'the same as them', but the ignoring of which impedes the level of relationship needed for mutual intelligibility, progress, and deep appreciation of the Gospel of Christ. Hence the need for VM.

See: Birth, Kevin, 2008. 'The creation of coevalness and the danger of homochronism.' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 14, 3-20.

Sorry that this month's Bulletin is shorter than usual.

Apologies for those trying to access the [www.jim-mission.org.uk](http://www.jim-mission.org.uk) site. It is down for a few days

Yours,

Jim Harries  
Chairman, Alliance for Vulnerable Mission