



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission encourages some missionaries from the West to engage in their ministries using local languages and resources.

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- The AVM is grateful to be able to announce a new hosting-location for previous and up-to-date editions of the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) Bulletin. The Bulletin was previously hosted on the jim-mission.org.uk site. As from January 2020, the archive is to be on the missiology.org.uk site. Please find archived editions of the Bulletin listed here:

https://missiology.org.uk/journal_alliance-for-vulnerable-mission-01.php Thanks to Rob Bradshaw for making hosting-space available on missiology.org.uk

• **A report of 2019 AVM conference by Nick Henwood is available [here](#).**

- Craig Greenfield in [this blog](#) considers that: “*SLAVES OBEY YOUR EARTHLY MASTERS*” *MAY JUST BE THE SUBVERSIVE WORD YOU NEED IN 2020*. This ‘subversive’ blog by Greenfield questions efforts by the West at trying to solve issues of slavery in other parts of the world. Greenfield recognises that many slaves ‘just have to obey’: “And it’s this lack of choice that Paul is addressing [in Col 3:22-24]. Paul is saying, ‘You gotta do what gotta do.’ He’s conceding that for most of the world’s downtrodden, it’s impossible to just walk away, or immediately rise up in revolution. For now, you gotta obey. That’s just an everyday reality for a lot of people. These words right here are Paul’s subversive instructions *for the interim*. While we’re waiting (and agitating) for the world to be turned upside-down, we actually need to know what to do.”



Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col 3:22-24)

- On Knowing Humanity journal has a special edition that looks at [Child Witchcraft Accusations and the Church](#) This follows extensive research, especially in the Congo.



- Here is Kamal Kweku Yakubus opinion about: [Open Stellenbosch and the importance of mother tongue education:](#) “Perhaps what is really not being said is how **we are racist towards ourselves** by not having confidence in our culture, languages and traditions, instead self-subordinating them to European standards all the time” (my **bold**).

- **Some Reactions to Vulnerable Mission and a response from Jim Harries**

See *Missio Dei* for this article by David Williams: [‘Toward a Worldwide Theology of Vulnerable Mission’](#). David William’s abstract reads as follows: “The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission has proposed a theology of vulnerable mission that encourages



Western mission workers to cede power in key areas. Eleonora Dorothea Hof has critiqued the Alliance for proposing a model of vulnerable mission that does not enable the participation of ‘non-Westerners.’ This article seeks to develop a worldwide theology of vulnerable mission that is rooted in the inherent vulnerability of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- The above mentioned PhD thesis by Eleonora Hoff: *Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Context: A Theology of Vulnerability and Vocation at the Margins* (Utrecht, NL: Boekencentrum Academic, 2016) is available for download [here](#). (See especially pages 188-195 for Hof’s comments specifically oriented to vulnerable mission.)

Response from Jim.

We are very grateful for the above scholars’ serious engagement with vulnerable mission. I offer a few reflections on what they have shared. David Williams’ sharing that draws especially on Hoff’s work are an excellent evaluation of whether VM should be universal rather than ‘for Westerners’, as the AVM proposes. While he concludes that there is much in VM that is of universal value, he also accepts that there is great value in concentrating on the application of VM specifically to Westerners.

Williams assumes that the choice of language to be used by a Western missionary should be made by a community receiving the missionary. Here in my understanding of the AVM we would disagree and rather argue that some Western missionaries have a prerogative to be vulnerable even if their hosts prefer them not to be so, hence that some Western missionaries can (and should) chose to use an indigenous language even if locals prefer them to use a Western language. Williams also thinks that foreign missionaries must use people’s mother-tongue, not a trade language, whereas in many ways in my view a trade language (like Swahili), as long as it is culturally-rooted in the target community, is ‘OK’.

Eleanor Hoff’s PhD thesis provides a careful detailed and heartfelt evaluation of VM. Particularly striking and encouraging to us are her comment that the AVM represents “to date the only academic and professional group of thinkers and practitioners who both research the theoretical underpinnings of vulnerability in mission and have strived to incorporate these principles in their praxis of mission.” This is a major commendation of our

activities in the AVM! Unlike that of the AVM, that wants activities by Western missionaries to continue but in a vulnerable way, Hoff's evaluation is rooted in a profound questioning of whether there should be Western missionaries on the ground in the majority world at all.



- A short-term visitor to Ghana observes that Christianity in Africa is thriving as the West is losing its faith rapidly: [Ghana, Christianity, Culture Wars and the West](#) One wonders why ... ? This is in: 'CultureWatch Bill Muehlenberg's commentary on issues of the day...'

- Harries, Jim, 2019, 'Magic, divine revelation and translation in theological education in the majority world today (with a focus on Africa),' *Missionalia*, 47(2), 165-176. <https://missionalia.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/265> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7832/47-2-265> Perhaps African English should be written starting with a z, suggests Jim in this article, like this: "zcould zbe zwritten zpreceded by a z, or underlined4 or put in bold ..."

