



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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**Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin**

**November 2020** (Archived back-copies [here](#) Subscribe for free [here](#))

**Volume 12, Number 11.**

Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM



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Daniel Albert	Deborah Bernhard	Jean Johnson

**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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**Advance Conference Notice: 2021.**

The next UK-AVM conference is to be held at All Nations Christian College, Hertfordshire, 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021. **Call for papers below.**

***Potential speakers please tell me of your plans asap, so that we can include you in PR materials for the conference ([jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)).***

Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin, to [jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)

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- **The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission welcomes Daniel Albert to the executive board**

Daniel's blog: <http://www.danielreedalbert.com/>

A **video** of Daniel being interviewed by Jim Harries: <https://youtu.be/p2LyoJyLmVg>



Daniel Albert, DMiss., first went to a particular East Asian country in 1994 where he first focused on language acquisition. Living in community from that point on and contextualization through understanding culture and learning language, drove Daniel to desire all three of these moving forward in his ministry. Returning to this East Asian country after graduate school, Daniel married his wife, a national of that country, and

they proceeded to live in community with Christians in their neighbourhood for the next eight years while setting about the ministry the Lord called them to within their context. Back in the U.S., Daniel now runs a business, Bless Enterprises, which allows him to continue ministry, online, with that original context. Daniel teaches synchronous Bible courses with an online university to Christian workers in that context. Daniel serves on the Executive Board of AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission), an organization whose mission is to promote language learning and living off of local resources for foreign missionaries.

Daniel has already done a lot of work on revamping the website. To see it so far, go to [vulnerablemission.org](http://vulnerablemission.org)

**Call for Papers. Conference.** 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**You are invited to submit paper proposals to this event**

All Nations Christian College, UK, 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

.....

**Vulnerable Mission:  
English and Dollars  
Powering Ministry,  
Good Idea?**

We urge some missionaries to practice their ministry using the languages and resources of the people they are reaching. This will honour the indigenous. It is a Christ-like starting point for sharing the Gospel in contextualized ways.

**We will be discussing issues such as:**

- Practicalities and ramifications of use of indigenous **languages** by Western missionaries.
- How does **translation** to and from an indigenous language affect missionary work?

- While **finances** are needed for mission work, how can one ensure that finances do not dominate?
- What **good practices** are there to ensure a missionary remains vulnerable in their local context?
- How to engage in mission without exuding (excessive) **power**.
- What **organisational structures** enable vulnerability on the side of Western missionaries on the ground.
- What help can we offer **churches who want to engage directly in cross cultural mission** to avoid pitfalls of power.
- **Tentmaking** and **business as mission** models that leave the Westerner vulnerable. (Can the **commercial** world engage in mission without promoting ‘ evils’ of capitalism?)
- When the uneven spread of wealth is itself an injustice, how can one use one’s surplus to enact global **justice**.
- How can mission agencies promote vulnerability, when dominant models of understanding presented by a vast **global media** are rooted in **positivism and liberalism**?
- Is vulnerability the key to **contextualisation**?
- Theology traditionally draws strongly on **metaphor**. However local metaphors from the majority world are unfamiliar to the Westerner, and vice versa. How can one then engage in theology interculturally?
- Where **politics and ‘religion’ are not separate categories**, missionaries need to be careful not to get bogged down in unanticipated conflicts.
- Is **miracle** a post-enlightenment category? Is **‘magic’** a normal aspect of life? What does this imply for cross cultural missionary engagement?
- Does the **introduction of outside technology** result in exploitation and enslavement? or liberation?
- **Globalisation** as a force that cripples the periphery. How can the voices of those at the periphery be heard, and their dignity guarded?
- When **short-term mission** has become **poverty-tourism** intended to adorn facebook pages with images of charity – what is the way forward?
- Can Westerners relate to **non-Western missionaries** without dominating them?
- The bible is God’s inspired book, but theological training is dominated by **Western curricula**. Are there alternative paradigms for local-context training of Christian workers?

Papers should be between 4000 and 8000 words. Abstract maximum 300 words. Anyone wanting to write and present a paper other than in English, please consult.

Presentation time will be maximum ½ hour (strictly), followed by 30 to 60 minutes of discussion with those in attendance.

Submit your abstract asap, latest May 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, to  
[jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)

- Please give us some information on your background / experience.
- Please contact me and let me know of your interest in writing and presenting a paper.

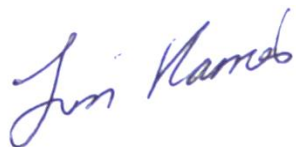
### **Conference Details**

This will be a three-day residential conference. It will be held in the English country house at the attractive rural location of the UK's premier missionary training college, near Ware in Hertfordshire. Full cost will be £300, or early bird £260. (We will recompense speakers IF we get a sufficient attendance to be able to afford to do so.)



Conference sponsors:

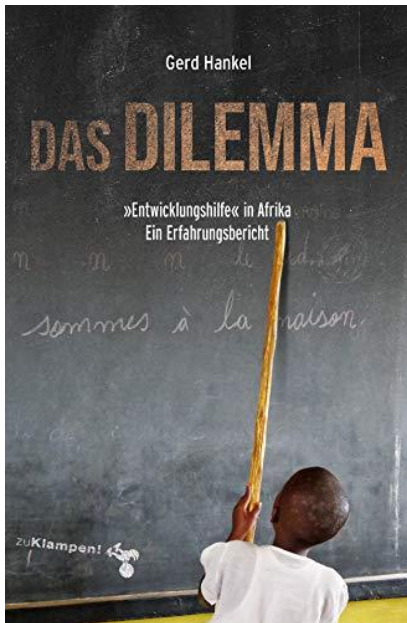
<p><i>Alliance for Vulnerable Mission</i></p> <p>vulnerablemission.org</p>	 <p>ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION</p>
<p>All Nations Christian College, Easneye Ware Hertfordshire SG12 8LX Tel: +44 (0) 1920 443500 Email: info@allnations.ac.uk</p>	



Jim Harries, PhD.  
Board chair, Missionary in East Africa

Organising Board:

Jim Harries (East Africa, Chair)	Andy Dipper (UK. Host.)
John Macdonald (USA)	Nick Henwood (UK)
Frank Paul (Germany)	Peter Stagg (UK. Finance)
Daniel Albert (USA)	Deborah Bernhard (Germany)



- [Das Dilemma: Entwicklungshilfe" in Afrika. Ein Erfahrungsbericht](#) bei Ger Hankel "Entwicklungshilfe, beschönigend heute auch "Entwicklungszusammenarbeit" genannt, ist eine umstrittene Angelegenheit. Gegner wie Befürworter führen gewichtige Argumente ins Feld, sind sich jedoch darin einig, dass etwas geschehen muss, gerade im subsaharischen Afrika. Nur was und wie? Sollen Veränderungen durch radikale Beschränkung auf humanitäre Hilfe und durch das Hoffen auf Eigeninitiativen aus dem Druck menschenunwürdiger Verhältnisse heraus zustande kommen? Oder durch zusätzliche finanzielle Hilfen und Kooperation in der Erwartung einer allmählichen Veränderung zum Besseren? Und zu welchem Besseren überhaupt?"

- [Ubuntu Versus the Core Values of the South African Constitution](#) is the title of this article. Keevy indicates that the supposition that deeply held African values in South Africa align with its constitution, is simply wrong. He looks at issues such as gender and patriarchy. The South African constitution is in favour of gender equality. Yet, values deeply held by most of the population, often considered to be *ubuntu* are inherently patriarchal. Scholars turn a blind eye to massive discrepancy between the national constitution and people's values at their peril.

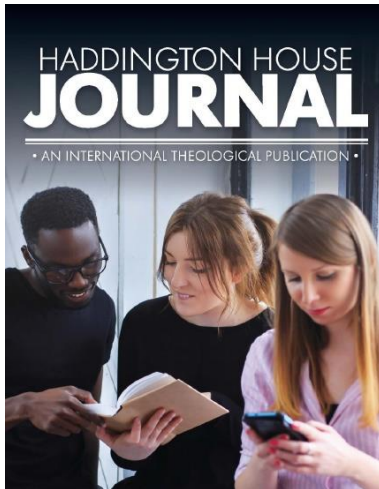
Vulnerable mission intends to, by giving them ears to hear and eyes to see, make Western missionaries aware of these kind of discrepancy. In practice, Keevy describes the tip of an iceberg. Taking what he helpfully articulates to its natural conclusion, and almost all official discourse coming from sub-Saharan Africa for international digestion, is foundationally untrue. I hope people who



read this do not consider me to be blaming African people. Who knows who 'should be blamed' ... ? Colonial and post-colonial economic imposition of English makes the kinds of deception that Keevy describes almost inevitable. The problem then, is perhaps those Westerners who take what African people say in English seriously. They need to listen to them in their own languages, understood using indigenous categories.

- For comments on the above by the Mail and Guardian in South Africa, see [here](#).





- Thorsten Prill's 2018 article entitled '**Cross-Cultural Stumbling Blocks on the Mission Field,**' gives a lot of pointers towards vulnerable mission. He specifically critiques two widespread missionary practices: 1. Use of English as medium of communication. 2. Western (and other) missionaries' suppositions regarding their own superiority, and their tendency to communicate their culture with the Gospel. Bibliographic information: Prill, Thorsten, 2018, 'Cross-Cultural Stumbling Blocks on the Mission Field,' 161-170, in *Haddington House Journal, An International Theological Publication*, Volume 20, 2018.

This Journal can be downloaded in full for free, for those registered to academia.edu [here](#).

- Click on [What a coup taught me about missions](#) to watch a 3 minute video produced by fivestonesglobal, that advocates for an end to heavy handed mission in the majority world ...



- '[Languages of Wilder Confusion: Big Words, Big Trouble,](#)' is the title of this 2019 blog by **David Rowbory**, a missionary in Nigeria. David tells us that: "... it's easy to talk about [some things in English] — easier than trying to talk about the same thing in a Nigerian language, at least. It's not just religious terms but science too: how would you teach people about hydration or polymers or anatomy. This is commonly a justification for rushing kids to English in school and abandoning the foundational languages they come with. There are no words for these ideas in the home languages and we have no textbooks (and don't intend to write any) in local languages for children to memorise. So far, so convincing, but of course that's only part of the picture. Leaving aside the



slightly questionable  
Sapir-Whorf  
exaggerations, the  
argument relies for its  
adequacy on two  
questionable

assumptions which no-one really questions.”

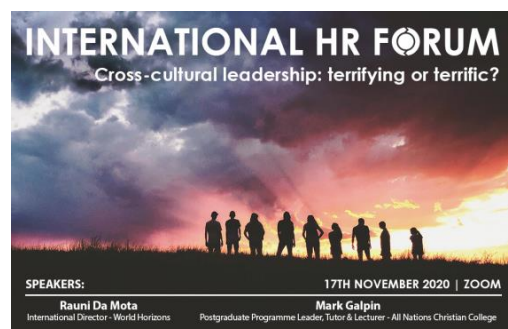
- In this article: [Languages of Wilder Confusion: hidden dangers for international collaboration](#),

David Rowbory tells us:

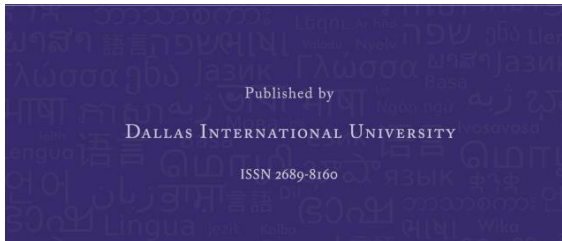
I’m still wrestling with the implications of this issue. 3 options present themselves:

1. Ignore the problems. Just continue to do as much as possible as fast as possible using English and all the technology that we can muster.
  - *“This is very tempting... especially to a mostly monolingual English-speaking person like me.”*
2. Stop trying to use English (and Hausa) to communicate about anything remotely important. Just concentrate on one language and go and live in one community for 10-20 years with keen observation and cultural/language acquisition.
  - *“Please send someone else to do this.”*
3. Use English, Hausa and as many other languages as possible but with extreme caution and suspicion, requiring much evidence to be convinced that successful communication and shared understanding has been achieved.
  - *“This is what I’m trying to do right now.”*

- **International HR Forum.** It would be good to have one or two people from the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission involved in this event. (Click on the image for more details.)



- New Journal! Dallas International University has brought out a new journal, entitled [Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion](#). Click on the link to see and download articles from the first edition. The concerns raised are of great interest to us in the

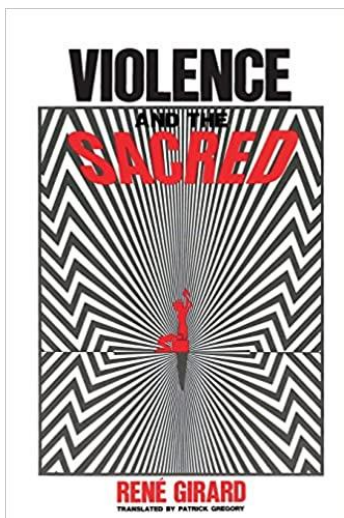
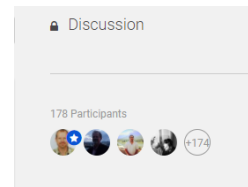


AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission). I hope some of us can make some contributions to the Journal! (The particular focus is on Bible translation.)



- [WHITE SAVIORS HELP PEOPLE, SO WHY IS THAT A PROBLEM?](#) asks Craig Greenfield in this blog. “We need to do the hard work to understand and address the true root causes of injustice, even when that shines an uncomfortable spotlight on us,” Craig concludes.

- To participate in a discussion on ‘What’s Wrong with Anti-racism’, on academia.edu, go [here](#).



- **Book Review: Girard, Rene, 2005, (1977) *Violence and the Sacred*.** Trans. By Patrick Gregory. London: Continuum. I include a mention of this book in the Bulletin, because it is increasingly clear to me, that Girard’s writings fill an important gap in Western understanding of what is going on around the world in contemporary times. In short: this is no easy read. References to ‘primitive people’ helped me to navigate the book by comparing with my experiences in Africa. The book sets out the foundations, largely by drawing on classic literature, that enable the author in later writing to articulate the central role of the Gospel of Jesus in bringing enormous benefits to the world as it is today. In this book, he identifies the centrality of the institution of

sacrifice to human existence. Sacrifice, to Girard, is a way of overcoming violence, slightly deceptively, through killing of a surrogate victim. (Download your copy [here.](#)) (By Jim Harries)