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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM.



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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.



Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to jim@vulnerablemission.org

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Upcoming webinars in 2024



Click on image or go here (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/avm-webinar-with-natalie-mullen-tickets-749050850257?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>) for more information and registration for this webinar.

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Truth in Contextual Ministry: Relative, Different, or Expanded

<https://youtu.be/xu1xiZu0-yo>

Tamie Davis presented her webinar, titled as above, as one of a growing series of AVM events, on 18th April 2024. Tamie told us that she and family had lived and ministered in Tanzania for 10 years, culminating in 2023, based in Dar es Salaam, focusing on work with students. Tamie's webinar was rooted in John 14:6, Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It drew on the research she has been doing for her PhD that has a focus on the Prosperity Gospel. She drew particularly on work by Paul Hiebert, to divide her presentation into three parts: 1. All theology is contextual. (In this section she focused on use of finance / resources in foreign mission.) 2. Look at what God is doing. (Tamie told us that in Tanzania healing is always on the table, the pertinent question is, whether it will come through Christ or from a witchdoctor.) 3. Boundaries are best set by reading the Bible together in an indigenous language. (The difference between the material and the spiritual easily collapses in Tanzania, Tamie explained.) (This review is by Jim Harries)

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Mission – Wer hat denn das Problem? / Mission – Who has the problem?

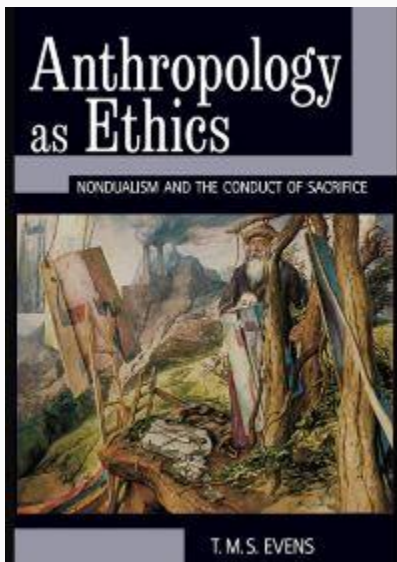
<https://mission.de/blog/wessen-problem-ist-die-verwendung-des-begriffs-mission.html>

In a nuanced way, Behera counters critique of the term 'mission' in the postcolonial era. Hailing from Mizoram, India, she describes how indigenous Jesus-followers both critique colonial forms of mission they used to be subject to and develop a self-aware and self-confident way of being 'Christian'. This is happening while under pressure by both Hindu nationalists and those who advocate 'development' which can again be experienced as colonial praxis.

She argues for a critical engagement with historic and contemporary mission. At the same time, she warns against a postcolonial reduction of majority world people to victims of their colonial past. Instead, she points out people's agency and ability to embrace 'Christianity' and ways of being involved in mission in manners they see fitting for their context.

Postcolonial critique of mission terminology, she suggests, may at times be a continuation of the disempowerment that was allegedly perpetrated against the weak and powerless by Western mission practice.

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The Ground is Deeper: review of - *Anthropology as Ethics: nondualism and the conduct of sacrifice*.

https://www.amazon.com/review/R370MEW9J8W7HR/ref=cm_cr_srp_d_rdp_perm?ie=UTF8&ASIN=B00J0EN78E

This review by Jim Harries of T.M.S. Evens' (2008) book unpacks some important potential contributions towards facilitating the understanding of and practice of vulnerable mission. An anthropologist whose fieldwork was in Israel, who also made detailed studies of ethnographies of Sudanese people, Evens digs deeply into Western philosophy. Evens' focus is on undermining (Western) material vs spiritual dualism. He explores many ramifications, and potential ramifications, of nondualism. (Taken as different from monism. Monism, according to Evens, is an outcome of a dualistic perspective on nondualism.) This is a difficult read, but highly recommended for those seeking for a profound understanding of varieties of 'cultures' around the world today.

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'Why the West cannot reach the rest and should not try'

Talk given by Dr F. Lionel Young III at the Frontier Missiology Forum, 26 April 2024

Lionel Young and his respondent David Bogosian spoke about ongoing, 'colonial' types of mission from the West to the rest. These are characterised by relational paternalism, unwise use and control of external funds and attitudes of superiority that bypass local churches that don't fit one's own theological framework. In their eyes, 'the West cannot reach the rest' due to ignorance of what God is doing already and lack of trust in those Christian communities that are culturally and spatially closer to 'unreached people'. 'The rest' can only be reached if those local Christ-followers are not bypassed but taken seriously as gospel partners that one relates with through humility and servanthood. Using huge amounts of outside funds to boost the ministry of local partners was seen as counterproductive. Local churches from non-evangelical denominational backgrounds should not be dismissed: Referring to unorthodox doctrines Jesus encountered e.g. in Samaria, it was said that 'Jesus waded right into the mess instead of bypassing it' and setting up foreign structures. They encouraged the building on 'what is already there'. Examples given included the roughly 500 Mio Christians in the so-called 10/40-window. It might be wise harnessing their capacities rather than 'parachuting in' and planting churches informed by Western ideas and money. The question raised by the title of the talk was resolved by rephrasing it 'Why the West cannot reach the rest *on its own* and should not try'.

The forum ties in well with what AVM members are concerned with in respect of work with indigenous churches and insider movements, focusing on locally rooted Christianities that are self-governing, self-theologising and reproducible without outside resources.

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Courses, coaching, and training to enhance your cross-cultural work

<https://fivestonesglobal.org/services/>

We provide missionaries, teams, and organizations with the training and coaching needed to multiply disciples using biblical, reproducible, and culturally effective approaches that avoid mission-generated unhealthy dependency. Go to the above link for more information on the activities of five-stones-global.

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From Hello to Heart: The Missionary's Guide to Learning a Foreign Language

<https://missionexus.org/from-hello-to-heart-the-missionarys-guide-to-learning-a-foreign-language/>

This article is by Natalie M. “When I travel to other countries, I’m consistently amazed at how often English is spoken. It’s easy to get by with English while you’re on vacation or a short-term mission trip. But if you’re considering full-time missions, don’t overlook the importance of learning the local language. It’s not primarily about surviving in your new location, but about communicating effectively and building heart-level discipling relationships.”

(Here is an alternative url if you can’t find the article above:

<https://crossworld.org/blog/details/missionary-guide-to-learning-a-foreign-language>)

A comment ‘Henry’ added to this post: “Having learnt the heart language once saved me a traffic fine! I had been pulled over and the traffic officer already had his book out wanting to write a stiff fine. I was speaking to him in the country’s trade language, Portuguese. I turned back to the car and said to my passenger in the local heart language “I think this is going to take a while”. Upon hearing me speak the local language, the officer promptly put away his book, smiled, and said with a smile ‘You speak the local language? Go. Don’t do it again.’”

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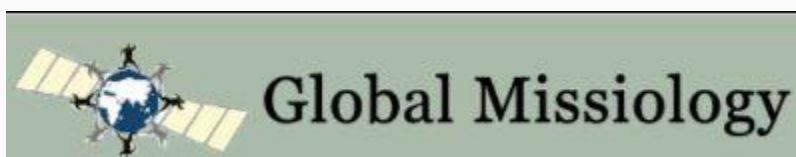
Talk by Julia Pring

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KH-VTPwEafQ>

(For relevance to vulnerable mission, see especially 41.00-44.30 minutes.)

Julia Pring, who has long been associated with the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) here talks about her often-difficult experience of mission in Africa, in a very homely, affective, and personal way. For her specific references to vulnerable mission, and her interactions with the founder of the AVM (Jim Harries), go to 41 minutes, and listen up to 44½ minutes.

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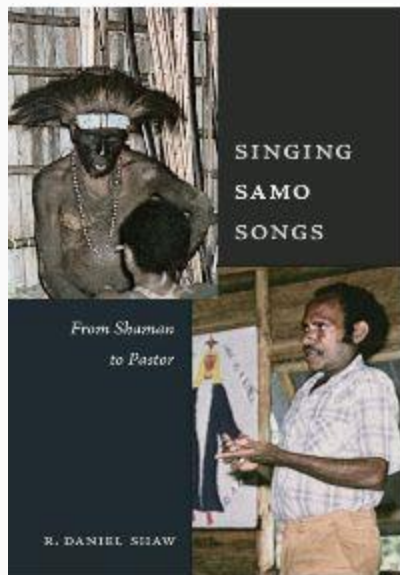


Anthropologists Taking an Interest in Christianity, and Missionaries in Anthropology: A Constructive Contextual Engagement

<http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2845/7146>

Jim Harries, a founder member of the AVM, shares benefits he believes missionaries can acquire by borrowing some tools from anthropology. The discipline of anthropology, that grew out of Christian theology, has in recent decades often been counter Christian. This is changing. The Church lost something important when the orientation to understanding the people one is reaching became secular and Marxist. This orientation needs to be recovered, Jim tells us.

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Singing Samo Songs: From Shaman to Pastor

<http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2842/7156>

See a review to this book by David Beine at the above link.

“This ethnography is based on over fifty years of the author's personal interaction with the Samo who live in the Bosavi region of Papua New Guinea. It recounts the transition from shaman to pastor with both filling similar socio-religious roles. It is reflective of much cultural change among the Samo as well as throughout the region. It also reflects the author's understanding of culture and human spirituality which have been profoundly influenced by Samo songs and close interpersonal relationships.”

(For the book on amazon, go to this link:

<https://www.amazon.com/Singing-Samo-Songs-Studies-Monograph/dp/1531023797>)

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How Emojis are Perceived Differently by Different Cultures

<https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/emojis-amongst-cultures/>

This fun, but also serious article, looks at the massively growing business of emoji derivation, use, and intercultural understanding. Originally from Japan, emojis have in the last decade and a half taken the world by storm, the author tells us. They are used by 90% of internet users. But they are also capable of diverse interpretation. It is even possible for the same emoji to appear differently on diverse platforms. Have a read, and become emoji-literate.

Editorial comment: while this makes a fascinating read in terms of the study of translation, in this case the translation of emoji's, this article seems also to have many hidden agendas. The origin of the term emoji is given as Japanese, when the very similar term, that was apparently used earlier, emoticons, clearly from English, is not mentioned. I ask, to what extent the article is endeavouring to cleanse our thinking of Godly content and displace it with gods (are emojis gods?) from the far East, which would in today's world be politically correct?

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25th July 2024: Dr. Natalie Mullen



The When's and How's of language learning as basis for fruitful cross-cultural ministry



17th October 2024: Craig McCorkindale



Teaching the Bible cross-culturally in a local language
Benefits and requirements



(Click on images for more information including on how to register.)

Upcoming webinars in 2024

Details and registration: <https://www.vulnerablemission.org/quarterly-webinar>

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