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## Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Founder, AVM



*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 [bulletin@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:bulletin@vulnerablemission.org)

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The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission in cooperation with



22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026: George M.



### When the Change Begins in Us

Beyond new skills – a transformation of perspective



## When the Change Begins in Us (AVM webinar on 22 January 2026)

George will take us along on his journey of how he was changed through his many years in Thailand. He will show us how a paradigm shift in what and how we think is so much more important than just augmenting our thinking or learning new skills.

Sign-up [here](#).

*Meet the Speaker:*

George M. has been living and working in Asia since 1991. He is professionally employed in IT. Father of 3, grandfather of 10, he is bonded to his local community through hardship. His first wife battled and succumbed to cancer after a 9-year struggle. The support of their local community in Asia both humbled and transformed his engagement in advancing the Kingdom.



## A Year of Vulnerable Presence

As 2025 draws to a close, we reflect on the many ways the AVM has been present—in conversations, in local and online communities, in contexts where vulnerability is not a weakness but a witness.

Until this year, we had not asked for financial help as an organisation. This is new for us—but it is our hope that broadening our funding basis would allow us to see the awareness of and commitment to vulnerability in mission grow.

**If you've been encouraged by AVM's work this year, would you consider helping us continue?**

Every contribution helps us continue this work we feel the Lord has set before us.

Thank you for your trust.

Please click [here](#) for once-off or regular donations to the AVM.



## Master's thesis by Manuel Becker

Becker's [master's thesis](#) through Columbia International University Korntal asks, "What Christian practices harm the task of making disciples in Thailand, and what are conducive alternative practices?" (This is the title of the thesis.) One of his two presentations at this year's Evangelical Missiological Society conference more briefly touched on similar themes, of which a write-up by James Alongi (AVM Governing Board member) is below:

*Detoxifying Christianity Through Reimagining Ecclesiology: How Frontier Missiology Can Reform Harmful Practices and Cultivate a Healthier Global Church*

Becker opened with evidences from Greenland and Thailand of how mission has failed, even when successful in leaving a legacy, to be appreciated by the people to whom it was directed. He went on to describe effects of mission like family breakdown in Hindu culture, making a parallel to the deconstruction taking place among young people in the West; calling these the result of “toxic practices”. He identifies some of these as distorted gospel presentations, incomprehensible gospel presentations, emphasizing the supernatural, and aggressive or culturally insensitive evangelism (he suggests one remedy for this: Allowing for local people to evidence “unprovoked” responses to Jesus). There are many other ways that mission can become toxic in leadership, worship practices, and beliefs. Becker closed by encouraging learning from the early church (with a focus on Jesus), but also from case studies that help us to grow in Christ-likeness.

One member of the audience asked: From where does this detoxification process begin? From the margins of Christianity or from the West? Becker responded that it may be easier to start something new, than to try to change an entire system from within. One church he worked with did change the way they did things, becoming more interactive. My observation, to perhaps work beyond this, is that Jesus' relationship to His disciples was that of the person among them who was more willing to sacrifice Himself than they were to sacrifice themselves.



## Reasons for approaching cross-cultural mission from a position of vulnerability

Summary by James Alongi of a presentation to Dallas Theological Seminary students by Jim Harries, 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2GkGNRLtDQ>

This online presentation, made in 2021 due to Coronavirus preventing an in-person visit, details partly Jim Harries' experience (complete with pictures) which led him to consider principles of vulnerable mission, and the ways that those principles apply to mission today. Namely, by conducting ministry using only local language and local resources, one avoids entering the “contested” arena that is English-language use, and competition for foreign funding, in Africa and other parts of the world today. One in fact functions on a lower level than many of the people with whom one lives. The main takeaway for missiological students (such as at DTS or other theological schools) may be that we should very carefully consider how to “live-with” others in a way that not

only recognizes comprehension and lifestyle gaps, but chooses the self-sacrificial example that Christ gave us of engaging with people on their level, even being dependent on them to some extent.



## Harvey C. Kwiyani (2025): *Decolonizing Mission*. Kindle edition. London: SCM Press.

The following is a ChatGPT-based summary of a [longer review](#) by Marcus Grohmann:

Harvey Kwiyani’s *Decolonizing Mission* confronts the deep entanglement of Christian mission with colonial expansion and European civilizing agendas. He traces how, from the Jesuits of the 16th century to Livingstone’s 19th-century vision of commerce and Christianity, mission was inseparable from conquest, violence, and economic domination. Kwiyani critiques the persistence of colonial patterns in contemporary missiology: militant terminology, Western dominance despite church decline in the global North, paternalistic mission trips, and the marginalization of authentic non-Western voices. He insists that colonialism was not an aberration but constitutive of mission thinking shaped by empire. Yet Kwiyani does not abandon mission; he affirms that “the sharing of the gospel must continue,” though only through weakness and vulnerability.

From a perspective of vulnerable mission, the challenge is for Western Christians to listen deeply, embrace cross-cultural learning, and practice co-discipleship on the linguistic and cultural-religious terms of others. The book leaves open questions about how to acknowledge majority world practices without subsuming them under Eurocentric paradigms, and how to foster genuine intercultural togetherness. Ultimately, Kwiyani’s work provokes introspection, urging mission organizations and individuals to grapple with “mission according to the colonized” and to embody a kingdom opposed to structures of empire.



## Dichtkunst, Sprache, Dekoloniale Theologie in Mali

*Deutsche Original-Version (please see English below)*

**Auszug aus Dr. Alfred Meiers Infobrief 45/Oktober 2025, den wir mit seiner freundlichen Genehmigung hier wiedergeben'**

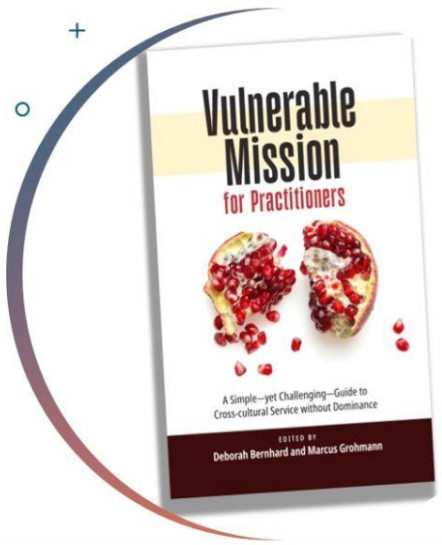
Es war nur eine Randbemerkung im Chat – und doch ein kleines Ereignis. Ein Kollege aus Mali, promovierter Theologe, schrieb, er habe zum ersten Mal in seinem Leben ein Gedicht in seiner Muttersprache Bamanan verfasst. Bisher hatte er auf Französisch publiziert und auch Bücher auf Bamanan herausgegeben – etwa eine kurze Einführung in die Systematische Theologie oder einen Band über Leben und Denken des Apostels Paulus. Aber Poesie ist mehr als Fachprosa: Sie verlangt zusätzlichen Mut, neue Wortschöpfungen, klangliche Bilder, Sinn und Reim. Diese Anekdote erzählt von erwachtem kulturellem Selbstbewusstsein. Für Kolleginnen und Kollegen in Mali wird es immer wichtiger, den Reichtum der eigenen Sprache und Kultur selbstbewusst zu entdecken und zu gestalten. Solche Schritte gehören in den weiteren Rahmen der Dekolonialisierung, wie er in vielen Regionen des Globalen Südens sichtbar wird. Für die theologische Ausbildung bedeutet dies, dass einheimische Sprachen, Konzepte und Denkweisen noch viel stärker in die Vorbereitung der Kurse einfließen müssen. Wenn ich Kurse vorbereite, dann frage ich oft nach bei meinen Kollegen und Studierenden und lasse mich von ihren Einsichten bereichern. Mir wird bewusst: Wenn ein Gedicht in Bamanan entsteht, geschieht mehr als Literatur. Es wächst etwas aus der Mitte der eigenen Kultur. Und genau das ist die Zukunft, der wir dienen.

## Poetry, language and decolonial theology in Mali



**Excerpt from Dr. Alfred Meier’s Newsletter 45/October 2025, which we reproduce here with his kind permission.**

It was only a passing remark in the chat – and yet quite significant. A colleague from Mali, a theologian with a doctorate, wrote that for the first time in his life he had composed a poem in his mother tongue, Bamanan. Until now he had published in French and also produced books in Bamanan – for example, a short introduction to Systematic Theology or a volume on the life and thought of the Apostle Paul. But poetry is more than academic prose: it requires additional courage, new word creations, resonant images, meaning and rhyme. This anecdote tells of an awakening cultural self-confidence. For colleagues in Mali, it is becoming increasingly important to discover and shape the richness of their own language and culture with confidence. Such steps belong to the broader framework of decolonization, as it is visible in many regions of the Global South. For theological education, this means that indigenous languages, concepts, and ways of thinking must flow much more strongly into the preparation of courses. When I prepare courses, I often consult my colleagues and students and let myself be enriched by their insights. I realize: when a poem arises in Bamanan, more than literature is happening. Something grows from the heart of one’s own culture. And that is precisely the future we serve.



### A compact book for practitioners that explains ...

- what vulnerable mission is
- what it can look like in a variety of cultural contexts
- how vulnerable mission differs from other mission approaches
- why vulnerable mission is so important
- what serving according to the principles of vulnerable mission may require

## Now available: Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners

The recently published book ‘Vulnerable Mission for Practitioners’ is available on [Amazon](#) as well as on the [AVM website](#) as paperback and PDF ebook. Listen to a brief summary in form of a 5-minute AI-generated podcast [here](#).

Since the book is available on a donation basis through our website, this could be a great option if you’d like to request multiple copies—for example, for members of your organisation, missionary colleagues, or ministry partners.

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**- Relating to people through their languages and local resources -**



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