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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

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9th October 2025: Dr. Mark Smith

Doing Research in 21st century Africa as a European

A decolonial approach

Webinar on
9 October 2025

Register now!

Doing research in 21st century Africa as a European: A decolonial approach (AVM webinar on 9 October 2025)

Dr. Mark Smith shares from his work in North Africa and what steps he took towards vulnerability in research.

Sign-up [here](#).

Meet the Speaker:

From early encounters with religious diversity to guiding cathedral tours as a student, Mark Smith's path was shaped by a deep curiosity about language, culture, and meaning. He studied Computer Science and Communication Research, later teaching dictionary-making and computational linguistics in Europe and Africa. His long-term field research in Africa—particularly among ethnic minority communities—has often been guided by the questions and priorities of local participants, rather than external agendas. Most recently, he completed a PhD in African Studies, further deepening his commitment to context-sensitive, participant-driven research.



Presence That Matters

This year, AVM members have not only pursued to live out the vision of ministry in weakness and vulnerability themselves wherever they are. They have also been invited into key gatherings which are always precious opportunities to contribute vulnerable mission perspectives. These include:

- Christian Community Development Conference (Frankfurt, Germany)

- Talks and conversations at a number of theological faculties and colleges, mission organisations, as well as with podcast and blog hosts
- Micah Global Consultation (Cape Town, South Africa)
- Annual Conference of the Evangelical Missiological Society (Dallas, TX)

Whether through conferences, webinars, or strategic dialogues – these moments allow us to engage with others on our core commitments: **local language and local resources** in our witness to the gospel of Jesus.

As we approach the end of the year, we'll be sharing more about AVM's financial needs and possibilities for support. **Up until now we have not done this yet—but we believe it's important to invite those who walk with us to consider contributing, if they feel led.**

Our annual budget has been minimal (less than €2,000), sustained by eight committed members. Conference and travel costs have often been paid out of AVM members' own pockets. To expand our presence, we need additional support.

If you'd like to help us make this possible, we invite you to contribute. Even small gifts—€ / £ / \$ 25, 50, 100—can make a real difference.

Thank you for walking with us.

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



God, Mammon and Empire - Church Mission Society (CMS)

<https://churchmissionsociety.org/blog/events/god-mammon-and-empire/>

The following event looks as if it could be of interest and value to those interested wanting to practice vulnerable mission:

Location: Hybrid – CMS Oxford, Watlington Road, OX4 6BZ or join online.

Date: 21 October.

Time: 10.30am to 4pm.

This event will provide an opportunity to reflect on current missiological discourse at the intersection of world Christianity and postcolonial studies. It is open to interested members of the public.



Pitfalls in Accreditation, Funding and Contextuality in Theological Education in Africa, including a Kenyan Case Study

<https://www.academia.edu/s/cbd81bd495?source=link>

Jim Harries, non-exec. Chair of the governing board of the AVM, presented a paper using Teams, at a symposium held in Norway. The Fjellhaug Symposium 17–18 September 2025 in Oslo, was on “religious persecution and theological/missiological education”. Jim’s paper looked at the vexed question of the relevance of theological education programmes in the Majority World. These programmes, often small islands of Western civilisation surrounded by indigenous contexts, are dominated by Western languages and curricula designed for Euro-American situations, Jim told his listeners. Efforts at allowing indigenous control of curriculum are frustrated by use of European languages, the West’s habit of providing massive financial rewards to ‘yes-men’ who agree with and praise them, accreditation bodies who insist on content being the same as in universities in far-away civilizations, and appropriation of school catalogues from mother bodies. Ironically, Westerners who attended Jim’s presentation remained silent, allowing a representative from Langham Partnership to ask all the questions. Jim shared his personal experience, whereby an indigenous theological education programme engaging locally relevant issues lost all local traction as generously foreign funded alternatives insisted on using outside money to swamp people with dependency-creating irrelevancies that disenfranchised local believers. Jim advocated for

Westerners to acquire long-term experience in the Majority World while using indigenous languages and resources in their ministry.

Decolonial or Paternalistic and Eurocentric? Jim Harries' Concept of Vulnerable Mission in Light of His Critics

By Marcus Grohmann

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evangelische
missiologie

Publication by Marcus Grohmann

Evangelische Missiologie, the leading evangelical missiological journal in Germany, recently published an article by AVM director Marcus Grohmann. He concisely laid out the basic tenets of vulnerable mission as conceptualised by Jim Harries in his long-lasting service in East Africa and engaged constructively with criticism the approach of vulnerable mission received over the years. The article (in German) can be downloaded [here](#). Below is the abstract in both German and English:

Dekolonial oder paternalistisch und eurozentrisch? Jim Harries' Konzept von Verletzlicher Mission im Lichte seiner Kritiker

by Marcus Grohmann

Abstract

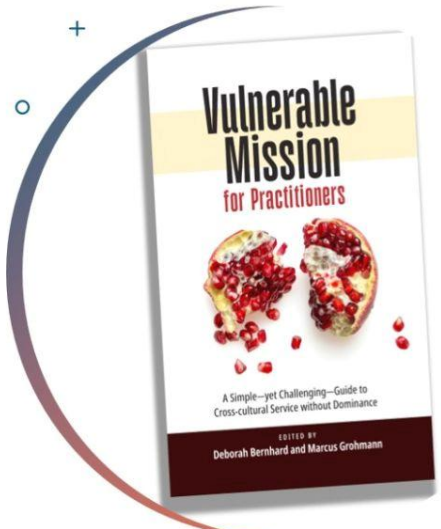
Die von Jim Harries konzipierte und gelebte Praxis Verletzlicher Mission hat neben Anerkennung immer wieder auch Anstoß hervorgerufen. Menschen problematisierten die Absolutheit seiner Thesen aber auch seine als überkommen wahrgenommenen Missionstheologie. Bezugnehmend auf Harries' eigene Schriften sowie auf Erkenntnisse des Autors aus seinem Dienst in Südafrika, wird auf die Kritikpunkte eingegangen und differenziert Stellung bezogen.

Decolonial or Paternalistic and Eurocentric? Jim Harries' Concept of Vulnerable Mission in Light of His Critics

by Marcus Grohmann

Abstract

The practice of Vulnerable Mission, conceived and lived by Jim Harries, has received both recognition and repeated criticism. People have challenged the absoluteness of his theses as well as his mission theology, which is perceived by some as outdated. Drawing on Harries' own writings and the author's insights from his ministry in South Africa, this article addresses the points of contention and offers a nuanced response.



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. Since via our website we're giving out the book on donation basis, you may consider this a good option if you would like to get several copies, e.g. for members of your organisation, missionary colleagues, etc.

The book is an introduction to vulnerable mission that is both comprehensive and compact. The short chapters, written in accessible language, present clearly how vulnerable mission differs from other approaches to mission. They explain why (more of) vulnerable mission is important. The book closes with some simple and concrete steps towards more vulnerable weakness in cross-cultural ministry.

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



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