



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

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Volume 11, Number 4.

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.

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- UK conference planned for December 2019, title:

Title: **Missionaries: aliens, providers, or fellow travellers?**

Strapline: Should the majority world be the target of patronage from rich missionaries?

Any potential speakers please write to me at jim@vulnerablemission.org



- To be held at All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, UK. Sunday 8th December 2019 5 pm, to Wednesday 11th December 2019, 1 pm. (*see call for papers below*).

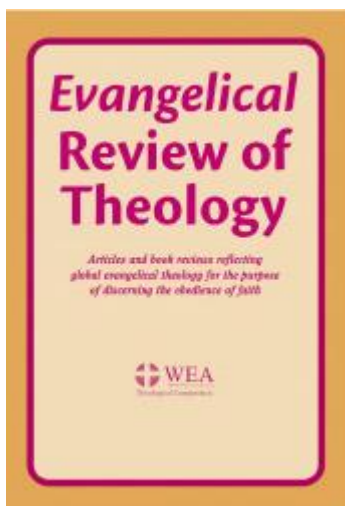


- See this ‘reply to sceptics’ in this edition of [The Inside Edge](#), in response to this issue:

“Responsibility for witnessing to the Good News in Asia's poor neighbourhoods lies mostly with Asia's growing church.” This claim is one of many reasons for growing hesitancy in the West about going as a missionary to Asia, or anywhere else with an active growing local church. Is the claim true – where does responsibility lie for preaching and being Good News for the poor in Asia? And if the responsibility

mainly belongs to the church in Asia, what does that mean for Christians in the West or elsewhere?”

- University world news tells us about problems faced by Canadian universities’ efforts at trying to accommodate non-western students in this piece entitled: [More work needed to overcome legacy of colonialism in HE](#)



- See: this article entitled: [‘Practising Mission and Development in a Multi-lingual African Context of Jostling for Money and Power’](#), *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (2019) 43:2, 152-166, (by Jim Harries).

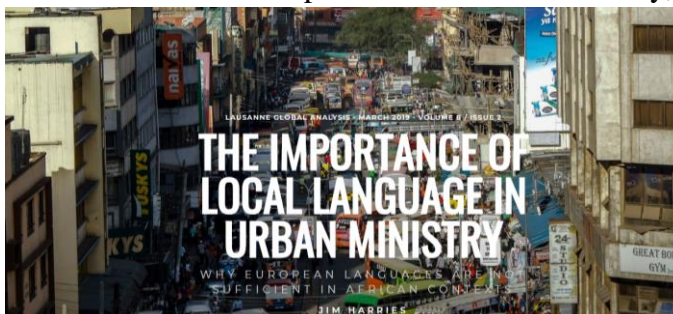
“The frequent warm and open welcome by African people to Westerners can occlude ways in which resulting relational dynamics are self-destructive, suggests Jim Harries in this recently published article. Yes, the welcome may be very genuine indeed. So might be the intentions of the visiting Westerner. Non-vulnerable approaches however very quickly result in Westerners digging holes into which they subsequently fall! We could say that this is because of Western Christians’

naïve under-estimation of the power of money they handle. Flows of funds can quickly convert recipients into yes-men. Receipt of finance comes to be the measure of success. Donors share a similar assessment of the nature of ‘success’, for them also donating is their aim. As a result any Westerners on the ground who try to make money do what it is supposed to do, can very quickly be condemned both by their national colleagues on the field, as well as donors back home! One wishes that donors would become wise to this dynamic. Most of all Jim advocates in this article that some Westerners must avoid being identified with donor funds.”

- In this article entitled [‘The problem with applying Western theories that don’t fit’](#), Ted Sun shares his frustrations arising from experience with PhD students. Instead of innovating, endless PhD students simply acquire, and maybe ‘test’ Western theories. This bodes badly for innovativeness outside of the West, concludes Sun.



- Harries, Jim, 2019, ‘The Importance of Local Language in Urban Ministry: Why European Languages are not Sufficient in African Context,’ *Lausanne Global Analysis* · March 2019 · Volume 8(2). <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-03/the-importance-of-local-language-in-urban-ministry> “Some missiologists make a clear case in favour of urban rather than rural ministry. Westerners ministering in urban contexts in other parts of the world can easily, I suggest, be deceived by the



apparent familiarity of settings and languages that they meet. I have here identified this apparent familiarity as often being based on ‘magic’. Reliance on magic for Christian ministry and development activities is

problematic. The importance of accurate contextual understanding is the prime reason given in this article for advocating that it is appropriate to use indigenous languages, even in urban contexts, in the majority world.”



- Michael Jindra is a part of the Boston University, institute on culture, religion and world affairs
[Website: https://michaeljindra.com/](https://michaeljindra.com/)

See [here](#) for **Michael Jindra's** article, entitled: 'The Dilemma of Equality and Diversity.' In this article, Jindra unpacks ways in which contemporary political powers are concealing and ignoring a pivotal contemporary issue; that of cultural diversity. Jindra's article focuses especially on the contradiction inherent in seeking to encourage economic-equality, while ignoring the fact that people's ways of life result in very different levels of productivity.

Jindra is writing a book that is to expand on the above article. Here are his writing plans in his own words:

This book is intended as a major intervention in the debate on inequality. Instead of the top-down structural approaches found in most writing on inequality, I will offer a provocative exploration of how lifestyle diversity contributes to inequality and why it will likely only get worse, but will also offer some ways to address it. Lifestyle diversity is a deeper issue than most people recognize, and in fact creates a worldwide dilemma, largely unrecognized, that bubbles to the surface in a wide variety of places, from the increased class inequalities of the U.S, with its amalgam of subcultures from suburban hyper-achievers, to those pursuing "leisure careers," along with numerous pockets of the poor in both cities and rural areas. It can be seen in Europe in the debt crisis, the issue of the Roma, and the increasingly contentious issues surrounding immigration. In Australia, the status of the aborigines has been debated for decades, with policymakers lurching back and forth for solutions. Only by understanding lifestyle processes and the different groups and places can we fully comprehend the tensions over inequality and why ongoing social and cultural changes make any "solution" a major challenge.¹

Jindra's writing speaks deeply into vulnerable mission concerns. An important reason for advocating vulnerable mission, is because issues such as those brought to our attention by Jindra are heavily concealed. This means that the vast majority of Westerners engaging in any of a wide variety of ways with the majority world, are grossly misinformed. That misinformation can be such as to trip up if not totally disqualify the reasoning they use to justify their interventions. Interventions repeatedly flounder, but the reasons for that floundering are pushed out of sight. They are pushed out of sight, because secular Western / modern philosophy cannot deal with contemporary levels of diversity in human ways of living. The AVM advocates vulnerable mission as a way around this issue, by insisting that *some* Westerners who seek to work in the majority world NOT use outside languages and resources. That is, to self-handicap, to help them begin to acquire ears with which to grasp what is actually going on. The way the West conceals extant cultural diversity, results in the difficulty that we have in justifying *vulnerable mission* to all but the most astute Western audiences.

I highly recommend those interested in vulnerable mission to [read Jindra's freely available article](#) and to go from there ...²

¹ <https://michaeljindra.com/>

² Jindra, Michael, 2014, 'The Dilemma of Equality and Diversity,' *Current Anthropology*, 55(3), June 2014, 316-334.

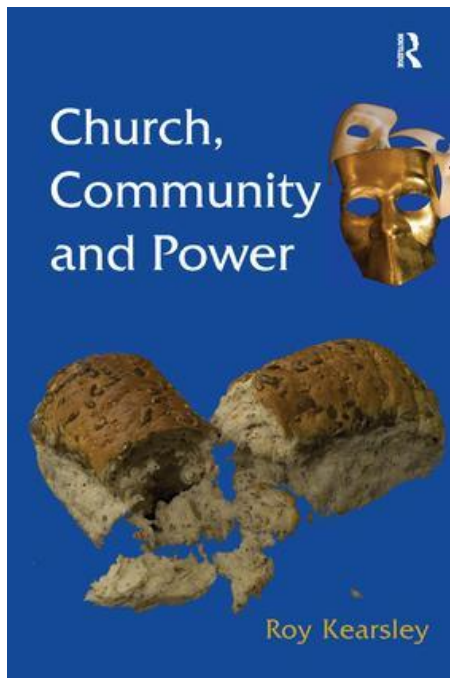
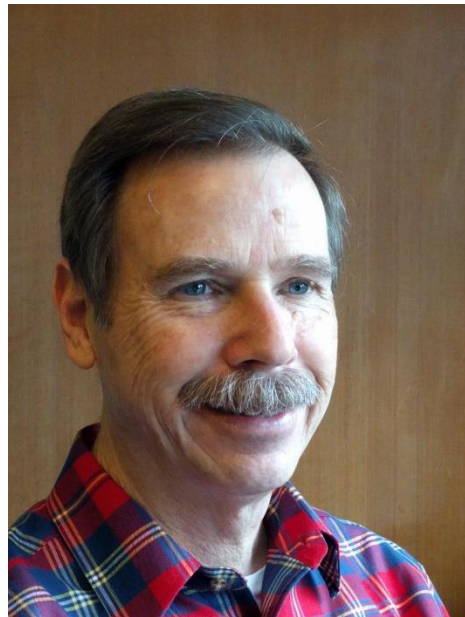
- Kearsley, Roy. (2016). *Church, Community and Power*. New York: Routledge.

Reviewed by Fred Lewis

Fred is an Executive Board Member of the Alliance of Vulnerable Mission.

Although I did not count myself among the naïve in my understanding of power, reading *Church, Community and Power* by Roy Kearsley (2008; republished in 2016 by Routledge) demonstrated how much I didn't know. The prepositions of power illuminate much: Power over, power to, power for, power of, power from, power with, power through.

Which of these are or are potentially non-Christian? *Power over* definitely qualifies: “. . . those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them” (Mark 10:42). The 12 disciples were arguing among themselves about who was the greatest. What Jesus said indicates He understood that their discussion of power relations – like ours – was framed by the political realities in which they lived. Their concept of power was influenced and formed largely by cultural concepts of what was considered normal and acceptable. Which, to be brutally honest, is true for many of us, as



well. It also describes many believers from the Global South. Jesus continued, “Not so with you” (Mark 10:43). Thus, as Kearsley says, there is no place among believers for one or some to dominate and control others; no place for the strong to impose their will on the weak; no place for pulling rank, making threats; no place for building a power base and maintaining it. The way of Jesus is *power to*, not *power over*.

My sense of Kearsley based on his handling of Scripture is that he is a believer. His book is not about power dynamics in missions but about power in the context of church. Nevertheless, his analysis of power illuminates and is consistent with the ideas of Vulnerable Mission. Dr. Kearsley is a Lecturer at Cardiff University, Wales.

If we take *power over* as a starting point for evaluating the missions practices by Westerners in the Global South, the stories we see enacted commonly increase Westerners’ *power over* non-Westerners. Therefore,

practices such as focusing only or mostly on the near term, that are fashioned for tangible/measurable results that can be shown to supporters back home, that are blind to the negative consequences of those practices for local people are forbidden. Moreover, those same practices promote power scrambles by non-Westerner believers for *power over* each other.

What are we supposed to do instead? Kearsley's analysis of power covers much more than an unpacking of those prepositions of power, and his analysis constitutes the beginning of an answer to that question. I'll simply pass over the wealth of insight that emerges from the book's non-Biblical sources in favor of what he says about Christ.

Jesus' example of weakness relative to His life in heaven before the incarnation is powerful and challenging, yet I agree with Kearsley when he says that the idea that Jesus was powerless provokes unease. Kearsley says that it's ". . . better to say that power is indeed attributed to Jesus, but power of a radically different and startling kind from that normally under view in ancient times. His was the illogical, counterintuitive power which operates after a person has laid aside every possible bid for domination" (p. 159). We can accomplish much ". . . by yielding and giving up rather than by forcing and imposing – the love that endures and suffers, also saves and heals. It has 'power to' achieve these precisely through self-emptying and self-giving" (p. 163). The way of Jesus is just totally different.

Finally, this is a great book, well-written, seriously academic, with tons of footnotes and a very good index. You can get a hardback copy on Amazon for about \$138. No kidding. Paperback is \$56 and Kindle is \$42. I got the book through interlibrary loan at my local public library and paid \$0. To move forward with VM ideas, we have to talk more about power.

- **Call for Papers**

The April 2020 issue of *Global Missiology - English* will take up the broad and multifaceted theme of "The Next Generation and Missions." Papers are welcome that take up any number of related topics, including:

- Reaching younger generations with the gospel in various parts of the world
- Participation in Christian missions by younger generations of Christians
- Defining and describing younger generations and their relationships with missions, e.g., "Millennials," "Generation Y," "Generation Z," "The Next Generation"
- Missions collaboration between younger generations, e.g., Generations Y and Z

Proposed titles with approximately 100-word abstracts are due May 31, 2019. Full manuscripts of approved paper proposals will be due January 31, 2020. Manuscript guidelines can be found on the *Global Missiology* website at <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>.

Please address all submissions and questions to globalmissiologyenglish@gmail.com.

Rev. J. Nelson Jennings, PhD

Editor, [Global Missiology - English](#)

Call for papers

2019 Conference: Missionaries: aliens, providers, or fellow travellers?

Submit abstracts asap to

jim@vulnerablemission.org

Location: All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, UK.

Dates / times Sunday 8th December 5 pm to Wednesday 11th December 1 pm.

Should the majority world be the target of patronage from rich missionaries?

Outline paragraph: Outside Christian workers who build on foreign presuppositions in work amongst indigenous communities can, especially when foreign funded and using outside languages, be interpreted as riding roughshod over indigenous sensibilities. True empowerment of local people requires getting alongside them. This necessitates vulnerability to their position and context. Such vulnerability can best be achieved if one shares the Gospel using indigenous languages utilising local resources.

We will be discussing issues such as:

Practicalities and ramifications of use of **indigenous languages** by Western missionaries.

How does **translation** into an indigenous language (and from an indigenous language) affect the fronting of the gospel and of missionary work in general?

While **finances** are needed for mission work, how can one ensure that finances do not dominate one's mission work?

What are the **good practices** that ensure a missionary's vulnerability to local context(s)?

How to engage in mission without exuding (excessive) **power**.

Organisation structures that enable vulnerability on the side of Western missionaries on the ground.

Helping **Churches** who want to engage **directly** in mission cross culturally to avoid pitfalls of power.

Tentmaking and **business** as mission models that leave the Westerner vulnerable.: How can the **commercial world** be used to 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 do we utilise all global **media channels** to promote vulnerability in our missionary endeavour?

Is vulnerability the key to **contextualisation**?

Theology traditionally draws strongly on metaphor. In the majority world, local metaphors are unfamiliar to the West. How can one then engage theology interculturally?

When **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**' simply a normal prerequisite of human social existence. What does this imply for cross cultural missionary engagement?

Is **introduction of outside technology** implicitly exploitative and enslaving? Or is it liberating? How does **technology** impact **vulnerable mission**; positive, negative, releasing, enslaving?

How can **Global-localisation** be a springboard for **vulnerable mission**?

When **short-term mission** has become **poverty-tourism** intended to adorn facebook with images of charity – what is the **way forward**?

Can Westerners relate to **non-Western missionaries** without dominating them?

While the bible is God's inspired book, are **Western curriculum**?

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