



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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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.

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- The UK conference entitled ***Vulnerable Mission: what it is and why we need it***, took place at All Nations Christian College in UK, between 31st May and 2nd June 2018. A summary of the papers presented and the ensuing discussion is given below:



[Report prepared by Jim Harries on 3rd June 2018.](#)

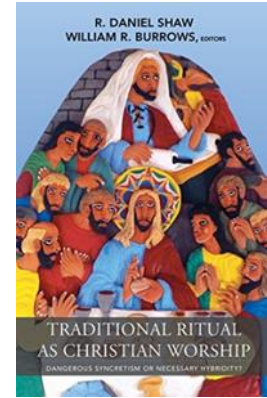
- Jim Harries and Frank Paul attended a CCD (Christian Community Development) conference near Stuttgart in Germany, 18th to 22nd June. With about 120 people in attendance from many different European countries and beyond, the conference sought to help those engaged in integral mission. Many participants were involved in the funding, management and implementation of various development and relief projects in different parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia.



Frank having attended this event on two previous occasions, and Jim on one previous occasion, we were warmly welcomed to become a part of the mainstream of proceedings. As a result, vulnerable mission became a core theme, making everyone aware of it as a means of complementing other approaches to advocacy for community development. An excellent review of *African Heartbeat* by our main conference speaker helped to facilitate the sale of a total of about 15 copies of the same. Frank and myself were given generous plenary time, as well as being enabled to lead a variety of discussion groups focused on vulnerable mission.



- Daniel Shaw, faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary, chaired the session I shared with the seminary faculty last year. Daniel can certainly be described as a ‘friend to the AVM’ (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission). Traditional rituals have often been considered a source of syncretism. Because it is hard for people to put aside their traditions, condemnation of their rituals as ‘non-Christian’ can act as a block that prevents people from accepting the Gospel. Here is the blurb that describes [this book](#):



“A necessary task of missionaries in recent decades has been to help local Christians "inculturate" or "contextualize" their faith, although the criteria for doing so often came from outside the context in which new believers developed their understanding of Christianity. Highlighting the voices of non-Western scholars, this work recognizes the importance of ritual and ceremony in the life of communities that seek to worship God in ways that reflect culturally appropriate responses to Scripture. The contributors-- some of missiology's leading lights-- discuss rituals, beliefs, and practices of diverse peoples, supporting the conclusion that orthodox Christianity is *hybrid* Christianity.” Shaw, R. Daniel and Burrows, William R., (eds.) 2018, *Traditional Ritual as Christian Worship: dangerous syncretism or necessary hybridity*. American Society of Missiology Series No. 56. New York: Orbis Books.

- Please pray for the on-going discussions among a group of five (from Haiti, WI, MN, IL, OR) from AVM and FSG (Five Stones Global) who in early June met to discuss what we might do to help the American missions world move beyond sincere intentions to wise missions’ service that embodies and promotes long-term effectiveness. How might AVM and FSG collaborate in that effort? Our first get-together at a cabin near Cable, WI produced the beginnings of an agreement and initial thoughts on concrete action steps, but much more remains to be discussed and decided. We want to proceed in ways that honor the differences and similarities of AVM and FSG.



Fred Lewis, AVM Exec. Board member



- I was recently privileged to visit [Jim Sayers](#), communications director with Grace Baptist Mission in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. I discovered that Jim has uncovered some important and fascinating insights into **biblical notions of nationhood**. Those insights are very relevant today! I was particularly glad that Jim's insights throw light on race-issues in today's world that I have been struggling with. That is to say, while we would all

agree that racism is wrong, I have found that it is also very problematic to oppose racism. Jim's insights into biblical 'nationhood' throw light onto this dilemma. See five of his blogs here:



[What is a nation?](#)

[Babel, nations and empire builders](#)

[Murder, race hatred and nationalism](#)

[Was Pentecost a global moment?](#)

[Will there be nations in the New Creation?](#)

The above is key to vulnerable mission in various ways. Being vulnerable in mission enables responses to cultural difference. To some, if one assumes different people to differ according to race, that can appear to be racist. Jim's discovery that the bible recognises *nationhood* legitimises interacting with people's differently according to their nation-identity.

- See here for some humorous take-offs of aid to Africa. I have included them in the Bulletin, although I am personally not convinced that they are all that funny! (They are a part of the secular pretence, it seems to me, that the difference between Africa and the West is entirely to do with resources, and not worldview, or the impact of the Gospel on the West over centuries.) <https://www.radiaid.com/>