



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

[www.vulnerablemission.org](http://www.vulnerablemission.org)

**Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin**

**December 2018** (Archived back-copies [here](#) Subscribe for free [here](#))

**Volume 10, Number 12.**

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 next year (2019), working title:



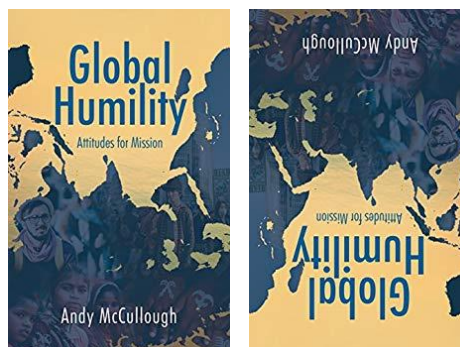
Title: **Missionaries: aliens, providers, or fellow travellers?**

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

For more details, see call for papers below (and see your *Bulletin* as it comes month by month).

- To be held at All Nations Christian College, Ware, Herts, UK. Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019 **(not this year but next year!)** 5.00pm, to Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019, noon. (*see call for papers below*).

- **Highly recommended!** Have a look at this book by Andy McCullough when you can. We hope to have a detailed review of it in this Bulletin soon: McCullough, Andy, 2017, *Global Humility: attitudes for mission*, UK: Malcolm Down Publishing. (Seeing see this book upside down helps you to see it the right way up.)



- **Social Justice 3 – Is Integral Mission as Integral as We Want? Is Social Justice as Just as We Think?**

<https://fivestonesglobal.org/social-justice-3-is-integral-mission-as-integral-as-we-want-is-social-justice-as-just-as-we-think/>

I may be biased if I say that this is an EXCELLENT blog by Jean, because she cites me (Jim Harries) in it ... I am very glad that she has turned her attention to this issue, that I think is very important and all too often neglected. Advocates for integral mission are leading us astray ...



- **Is missionary work colonialism?**

<http://www.craiggreenfield.com/blog/missionary-colonialism>

“You might be a missionary – someone called and sent to serve God cross-culturally - but chances are, you don’t like being called a missionary. That’s because, in popular Western culture, missionaries are seen as pith helmet-wearing colonialists – forcing their culture and religion on people who don’t want it.”

These are the opening lines to this blog by Craig Greenfield ...

read it to find out more.

- [Can 'voluntary colonialism' stop migration from Africa to Europe?](#) asks the BBC in this article. Should proponents of vulnerable mission be in favour of such a proposal?



local resources.

Jim Harries suggests 'yes'. The reason? So as to expose ways in which today's globalised world otherwise conceals 'African culture', e.g. in the name of anti-racism, so as to undergird secularism. As 'African culture' is concealed, so is the work of the Gospel of Jesus in people's lives.

- Of course, we would suggest that voluntary colonialism should use an African language, and

- [See here for the latest Bulletin from Servants.](#)



November 2018

## The Inside Edge

...connecting with Jesus at the social margins

**Reply to mission skeptics**

Ralph, our coordinator in Australia, has summarised many conversations over the past decade into three resonance people articulate for not joining Servants

**servants**

Our vision is to see the urban poor and their communities transformed through Christ.

Subscribe to this newsletter



- [How Zimbabwean grandmas can beat depression, according to the BBC.](#)

- **Vulnerable Missionary John Allen Chau makes world news.** John Chau gave his life to reach a prohibited tribe with the Gospel. His approach to them clearly epitomized missionary vulnerability. "*I DON'T WANT TO DIE, ... Would it be wiser to leave and let someone else to continue. No I don't think so,*" were the words of Chau.



[For a report from CBS news.](#)

[A report by Khanya.](#)



- Jim Harries is looking for comments and insights regarding a latest project, which is to post you tube videos of bible teaching in indigenous East African languages. For more details, go [here](#). To participate in discussion on this over academia.edu, go [here](#).

- This [foreword by Jan Blommaert](#) to a proposed 2019 book, speaks powerfully into vulnerable mission concerns. His first paragraph undermines 'traditional' language policies practiced by many post-colonial states. 'Languages are made by families, not by states', says Blommaert in short. See [here](#) for your html copy of this forward. The book, due in 2019, is to be entitled: ***Family language policy: Dynamics in language transmission under a migratory context.***



# New Approach to Buddhists

By Jens and Deborah Bernhard

( For more details see here: <https://bernhardcoachandtrain.com/> )

The 3 Most Common Questions About Why a New Approach to Buddhists Is So Important:

1. Why is a new approach necessary? Isn't missions doing just fine?

If church growth among Buddhists in SE Asia continued at its current rate, it would take hundreds of years to reach them! After over a decade of church planting in Thailand, it became clear to us that the reasons for this slow growth have a lot to do with the ways missionaries do things. We examined the common barriers that keep Buddhists from embracing Jesus and looked at successful examples of overcoming them. Our findings show that a new approach is necessary to see movements of Buddhists coming to Christ.

2. Don't missions organizations provide enough member care and training already?

Much missionary training focuses on language learning, church planting strategies, and familiarizing missionaries with the workings of the organization.

There is a huge lack of training in how to relate to Buddhists, local culture and religion, effective ways to share the gospel, and ongoing coaching that is not linked to the evaluation of performance. Studies show that actual change increases from 23% to 89% when followed up by coaching.

3. They already have a Bible in their language and many churches. Why don't the churches just do the work?

Most churches in SE Asia are among ethnic tribals or Chinese. The Bible was translated into difficult to understand language, using terminology that only long-term Christians are familiar with. Churches demand that new members conform to a long list of behaviors that seem foreign, producing the impression that Christianity is not for local people, and that Christians consider themselves to be better than the locals. This creates a huge gap between Christians and Buddhists, that most are not able to cross. The majority Buddhist population is completely out of reach of the gospel.

Here is an example: Gary and Kelly have now finished four years in Thailand and has seen many come to Christ who were out of reach of the church.

Gary & Kelly modeled and shared with their language helper Bamb, that Jesus is for everyone, not only Westerners. They led her to Christ. They encouraged her to pray and God answered her prayers. When her father died, Bamb felt that she was not at peace. She asked both Gary & Kelly whether her father, a practicing Buddhist, could go to heaven. Gary & Kelly wanted to answer, but instead they paused, remembering their training. They suggested to Bamb, "why don't you pray and ask Jesus?". Bamb smiled and responded, "I have been." Through a series of dreams, Bamb felt God had put her father in a good place, which affirmed her faith.

Both Gary & Kelly say that if missionaries developed people skills by taking a job for a year or more that requires one to develop relationships with strangers (like a sales job) before going to the field, it would help them understand how to better build relationships with people. There is so much Bible training, but little training in how to approach Buddhists in a way that is consistent with their culture and way of life. Several missionaries are amazed at how Gary & Kelly have developed close relationships with so many people with those in the Buddhist community in a relatively short period of time. Gary & Kelly give thanks first to God and the training He has provided through people like Jens and Deborah.

[www.bernhardcoachandtrain.com](http://www.bernhardcoachandtrain.com)

blog with writings: <https://chrisandmariebauer.wordpress.com>

email address: [deborah@bernhardcoachandtrain.com](mailto:deborah@bernhardcoachandtrain.com)

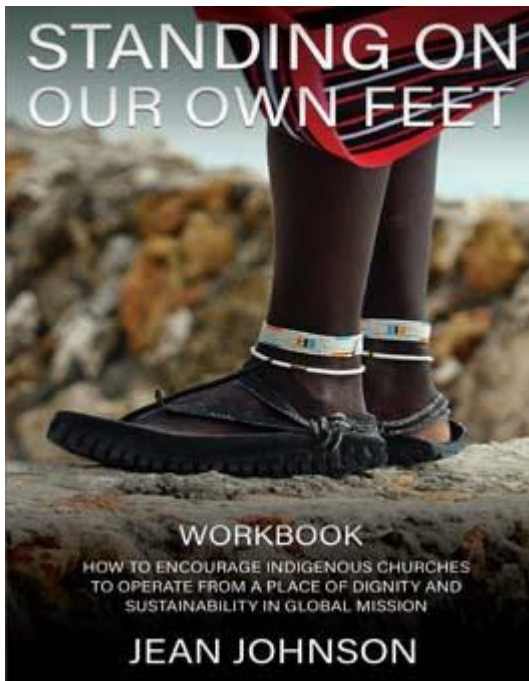
related network: [www.vulnerablemission.org](http://www.vulnerablemission.org)



Johnson, Jean, 2018, *Standing on our own Feet. Workbook. How to encourage indigenous churches to operate from a place of dignity and sustainability in global mission.*

Maitland:Xulon Press.

## Standing on Our Own Feet (Workbook)



There is a popular saying in Kenya: Nobody walks with another man's gait. A person's gait is as unique as their fingerprints or voice patterns.

To borrow someone else's gait is to become someone else. Churches in the non-Western world should not attempt to imitate the gait of Western churches, nor should we want them to. In other words, indigenous churches have the irreplaceable privilege of being God's best version of themselves—standing secure with their own unique stance and walking with their own distinctive gait.

Unfortunately, when Western Christians engage in global contexts where there is economic disparity, they readily and unknowingly assume, activate, and attract poverty. This behavior causes local churches to walk with another man's gait, lose their balance, and thus compromise God's best version of themselves.

This Standing On Our Own Feet workbook via case studies, examples, questions, and application will help you, your team, and your church to intentionally assume, activate, and attract church dignity in your global engagement.

<https://fivestonesglobal.org/product/standing-on-our-own-feet-workbook/>

The following review is by Jim Harries, November 2018

Many majority world churches, Jean tells us, do not want to become truly 'indigenous', if that would threaten their financial income. 'Poor' pastors only respond to foreigners who offer money; it seems they are happy to be controlled, if it pays! Those are just two of many challenging insights that Jean brings in this workbook. Her recommendations are very relevant to and very needed by people engaged in inter-cultural mission from the West. This being a 'workbook', reviews of it should really be on 'how well it worked'. Not being in the West where I have access to a group to 'test it out on', I would nevertheless still like to recommend it ...

The book is designed for group discussions. I would estimate, that ideally, a group should sit for 10 sessions of about 2 hours each, so as to do justice to the material in each of the 10 chapters. As someone who routinely runs into the kinds of problems that Jean is concerned about, I perceive that Jean's proposed 'work' will help typical Westerners interested in mission to gain vital insights. This is a book that very much needed to be written. I am very glad that Jean has bitten the bullet and got around to producing it.

Unhealthy dependency arises when one needs outside help to fulfill the basics of life. To avoid creating such dependency Jean suggests we juxtapose church poverty, and church dignity. In a context in which majority world churches only move when they find a foreign sponsor, for a missionary to lack money may be the best thing that can happen to them! A gift of \$20 to someone can result in their leaving a church, we are told! It is all too easy for a foreign missionary to appear to take on qualities, like omnipotence and omniscience, that rightly belong to God, Jean explains.

Many international voices are arguing for policies that will ensure dignity for majority-world Christians. To fulfill the great commission, we should help other people be God's best versions of themselves. When a convenience for a foreign missionary requires outside funds and infrastructure that locals can't access, yet a missionary should be a role model, then actually missionary convenience easily becomes the enemy of reproducibility. There are 12 ways of giving that destroy dignity, according to Jean. I add a 13th: giving that doesn't cost the giver. Often rather than being preoccupied with handouts, it's better for a missionary to insist on being hosted in homes of the 'poor,' Jean tells us.

Jean gives a humorous story of a puppet representing a pastor in a poor country, who thinks that the tangled strings that hold him up, are his lifeline. They are his prison, Jean corrects him! Jean wants to encourage Christians everywhere to be free to 'walk with their own gait'. To enable that might take some tough adjustments on 'this' (West of the Atlantic) side of the Ocean she suggests! Donors need to ask themselves some very hard questions, Jean suggests. Are they ready to do that?

I highly recommend this 'workbook' for a small (or larger) group wanting to look in depth at often-concealed but vital issues pertaining to foreign mission in today's globalized world, to avoid the West controlling more and more in unhealthy ways. Please go and buy a set of these books, read through the exercises as given, discuss in depth ... to transform today's passion for mission into one that is contextually vulnerable, viable, inspired, and effective.

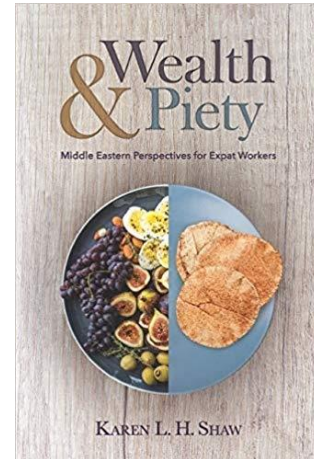


Review of: Shaw, Karen, L.H., 2018, *Wealth and Piety: Middle Eastern Perspectives for Ex-pat workers*. Pasadena: William Carey Publishing.

## Wealth and Piety

This review is by Jim Harries, November 2018.

*The reviewer Jim Harries, who has served as a missionary for 30 years in Africa, considers that patron-client systems should be sidestepped. Hence he brings his own biases arising from his own long-term field missionary experience, that are perhaps atypical for Western scholars, to his analysis of this book. Jim advocates for vulnerable mission; relating to people other than on the back of the financial superiority that comes from identity as a Westerner. (He also works extensively with Egyptians, and recently spent a few days in Lebanon.)*



Karen Shaw carries out an extensive survey, including many interviews, of a variety of people living in Lebanon, where she has herself resided for almost 30 years. Herself knowing Arabic, the latter is presumed to be her language of engagement, from which she translates into English, seeking to be accurate to the speakers' intention. Her aim is to contribute a "theology of money and lifestyle" which will assist ex-pat workers from the West engage more effectively in the Middle East. She very effectively reports, typically by citing interviewees word-for-word (through translation), a profound feeling of having met with and listened closely to people talking from a very non-Western part of the world.

Shaw begins with a Biblical-survey of attitudes and teachings about wealth and piety. Genesis (Abraham), Deuteronomy, Amos, and New Testament books are included. She finds the bible very much in favour of generosity, while dubious about those who accumulate wealth. She finds something similar reflected in the Middle East today, where there is a very widespread system of patronage, in which being a patron while being a "noble option," is also problematic. In order to be respected in Middle Eastern society, Shaw tells us, Westerners should be generous. Their generosity however, for various reasons, should be "confidential". (She does not explain how such confidentiality is to be achieved, given the need for a reputation for generosity.)

There is a tendency in the Middle East, we are told, if in doubt, "assume the worst". This means both that voluntary poverty (often considered a value in Western Christianity) is likely to be misunderstood, and that wealthy people are assumed to have acquired and to perpetuate their wealthy position by immoral means. While it is hard to always discern when Shaw is being merely descriptive, and when she is being prescriptive, she seems to be warning Westerners (she often uses the term 'workers') to avoid both the appearance of too much wealth, or voluntary poverty: "if our lifestyles inspire envy, greed, inferiority,

resentment, or self-destructive imitation, we may be undermining the ministry to which we have been called,” Shaw emphasises.

Throughout the book, Shaw remains on the fence regarding the advisability of the patron-client system. She is wise to inform Westerners of its existence and its deep roots in Middle Eastern life. She concedes at different points in the text that practice of the patron-client system is associated with poverty and corruption. She points to practices that contradict the patron-client system, such as “indiscriminate” giving by certain evangelical Christians, that had a very positive impact. Her interviewees are shown as themselves wavering between the wholesome advocacy of ‘generosity’ that underlies the patron-client system, and recognition of the system’s cruel partiality. Throughout ongoing discussion, it is made clear that certain groups of migrants, Africans, Gypsies and so on, are excluded from participation in the Middle Eastern system of patronage.

Shaw’s bibliography draws heavily on missiological and theological texts. She does not explore the implications of her advocacy in the light of wider academic reading, for example she seems to advocate for a separation between religion and politics but does not explore implications of the implicit dualism she thus presupposes. Her book is more of a cataloguing than an analysis. It is largely a-theoretical – few efforts are made to explain the historical or theoretical origins of what she finds. Shaw acknowledges that “imitating the West is a popular sport in many parts of the Middle East.” She does not consider just how historically the West has overcome much of the patron-client system, or whether the means it used should be considered of value to the contemporary Middle East. If her apparent advocacy for conformity to patron-client systems is understood as an implicit condemnation of Western individualistic and capitalistic ways of life, then she seems to be encouraging a perpetuation of dependency of the Middle East on dominant Western powers.

In conclusion, Shaw reports insights about and interpretations of what she observes and is being told. It is an excellent introduction to issues of finance, generosity, relationships, lifestyle, and patronage to new or potential workers from the West to the Middle East.

Perhaps most disappointing is Shaw’s failure to clearly articulate how the Gospel is the way forward for the Middle East. While one might have hoped that field-experience has brought new light to the issues she looks at, Jonathon Bonk’s words seem to form the conclusion to her book. Why did Shaw not use her experience and insights to draw bolder conclusions? Shaw does not clearly advocate ways for Christians of seeking to challenge the problematics of the patron-client system that is extant in the Middle East. Perhaps that will be her next book?

# Call for papers

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

Submit abstracts asap to

[jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)

**Location** All Nations Christian College, UK.  
**Dates / times** Sunday 8th December 5pm to Wednesday 11th December 2019 noon.

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

**Outline paragraph:** Outsider 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.
- Territorial 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 interculturaly?

When politics and 'religion' are not separate categories, missionaries need to be careful not to get bogged down in unanticipated conflicts. Is intrade 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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