



ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

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**Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin
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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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Advance Conference Notice: 2021.

The next UK-AVM conference is to be held at All Nations Christian College, Hertfordshire, 12th to 15th September 2021. **Call for papers below.**

Potential speakers please tell me of your plans asap, so that we can include you in PR materials for the conference (jim@vulnerablemission.org).

Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin, to jim@vulnerablemission.org

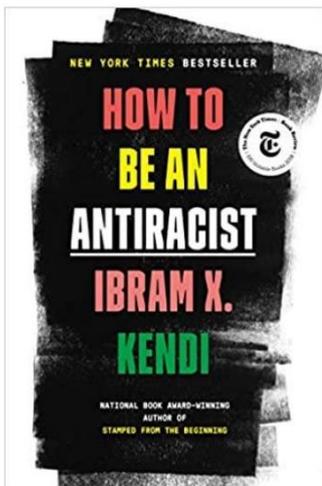
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- [Academic Taboo, “Religion Not Allowed”](#): [A Short Article Born out of Frustration](#) is the title of this short article by Jim Harries, published by William Carey International University, that seeks “to make a case in a brief, succinct, and

cutting way, for academia to take issues popularly associated with ‘religion’ very seriously indeed.”



- See this link for your copy of a review by Jim Harries of Ibram Kendi’s best-selling book, [How to be an Antiracist](#). (It is included in the AVM Bulletin, on the basis of the recognition that vulnerable mission applied to the West, seeks to displace the need for anti-racism.)

- [Some Ethical and Procedural Requirements for Research by Westerners amongst Indigenous People](#) is the title to this article by Jim Harries, just gone to press in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 48(1), 41-48, January 2021, a Lutheran Journal. The article

critically considers how one should carry out research in the majority world today. Jim recommends it to anyone wanting to engage, or evaluate, research carried out in the majority world.

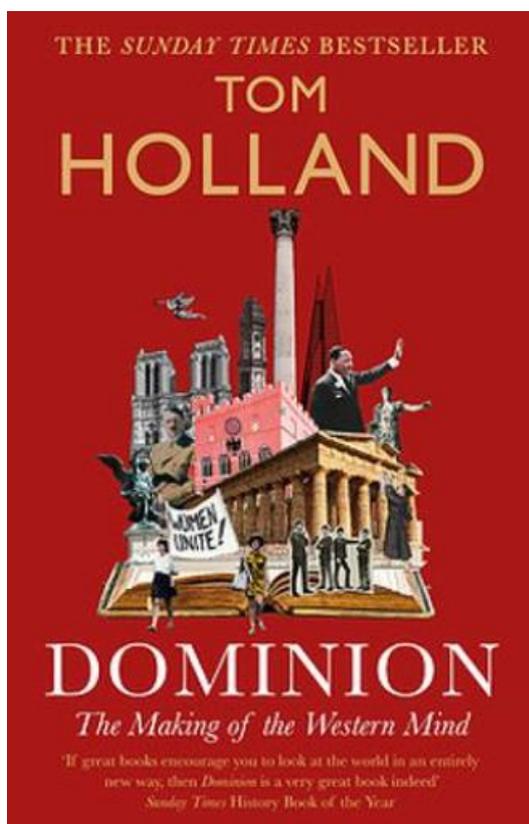


- [Perween Rahman: The Rebel Optimist](#) is the title to this challenging 1-hour video recounting the life of an incredible lady, who made great advances in promoting a low-cost sanitation model in Karachi, on the back mainly of an iron will. (She was shot and killed in 2013.)

Dominion by the Western Mind: a view from Africa.

A review by Jim Harries of: Holland, Tom, 2019, *Dominion: the making of the Western mind*. London: Little Brown.

Review published in the *Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin*, 13(1), January 2021.



December 2020

Jim Harries (PhD, theology, University of Birmingham, UK) has worked closely with African churches using indigenous languages, since 1988.

The cover of Tom Holland's book, *Dominion: the making of the Western mind*, makes no mention of Christianity. This reflects his core thesis: The Gospel that transformed the world for the better, has to many become an embarrassment. Holland pursues truth in a way that would be accepted by secular people. He writes from a perspective of a sceptic rather than as a believer in the Gospel. An accomplished historian, he wondered what transformed the brutality of

the Roman and other empires in antiquity, of which he had learned in prior research, into the contemporary Western world that is concerned for the poor and for outcasts.

As a missionary serving in Africa, I rejoice at the implications of this book, for today and for tomorrow. Holland roots tumultuous formative events in Europe over 2000 years that are nowadays widely interpreted without reference to Biblical teachings, squarely into Christian origins. Hence implicitly; secular education alone

simply cannot close the gap with African communities. Holland's book points to the Gospel as likely necessary ingredient for the empowerment of Africa.

Holland's earlier studies of antiquity revealed common-place practices that we would today unhesitatingly consider brutal: Crucifixions, impalings, *scaphe* (resulting in one's enemy being eaten alive by maggots) and other intentionally slow and painful ways of killing were in antiquity considered necessary to maintain respect for the rule of violent kings.¹ This book represents his attempt at uncovering just what it was that resulted in transformations that have made Western people to be who they are today.

Secular historians' practice of crediting the transformation of the West into what it is today almost exclusively to Greek and Roman origins, fail to explain how the practice of multitudinous human slaughterings was ever overcome. Holland fills this gaping hole in knowledge by articulating workings of the "unpredictable fissile power" of Christianity over centuries.² Christianity radically transformed Western people's world view, even in the so-called Dark Ages, Holland tells us. Amazingly, to today's historically naïve West, the basic assumption that all people are valuable, is not innate to human-kind at all. It is an outcome of Christian faith.³

Some may pout at the above claim. Fingers have been pointed at recent empires such as that of Britain, and perhaps America today. I agree with Holland that, yes, they have at times been very violent. Yet accompanying such violence has always been a "pall of anxiety" that was not there in antiquity.⁴ This pall has arisen from the fact that the very founder, Lord, and prime role model for Christian people, was an innocent man crucified as a criminal. This pall has acted towards moderation, resulting in (for example) the British having been highly instrumental in abolishing slavery – a move that cut at British prosperity. This has been, and continues to be, with the West as the world's moral watchdog, a radical departure from the wanton open unapologetic cruelty found by Holland to have been typical of prior eras.

Nowadays though, Holland tells us, the achievements of secularism often leave Christianity in the pale. Secularism has done this by living on the flesh of the

¹ See chapter 1 entitled 'Athens'.

² See the section headed: Keeping the Faith.

³ Even if theoretically speaking someone may consider all humans to be of equal value, actualising such belief typically requires the kinds of commitment and self-denial that is hard to find beyond those committed to following Christ.

⁴ See the section headed 'Sheep Amongst Wolves'.

Christianity that set its course, he explains. For example: Martin Luther's disregard for law enabled secular Princes to adopt law codes designed by the church, for use without an overt role for the church. Today's routine criticisms of Christianity, are all, Holland explains, imitating a kind of liberation and freedom to criticise that the Gospel brought in the first place, as classically demonstrated during the Protestant Reformation. So then, secularism's critiques of Christianity are themselves of Christian substance!

The close affinity between the two, means that especially in the 20th century, secularism has been the major vehicle for the global spread of Christian values. Thus, to those hoodwinked, 'religions' averse to Christianity (especially Islam and perhaps Hinduism) can nevertheless be incorporated into today's globalised visions for a peaceful and loving future for mankind. To me, in Africa, this begs a very serious question: Will African communities ever deeply appreciate this kind of global vision for love and peace, without themselves being immersed in the heart-transformative cleansing waters of life that are Christianity? If not, and I believe not, we have an urgent global priority (assuming other places outside of the West to be similarly aping only when paid to do so, and while in European languages) to expose the "conceit of secularism" and offer the full Gospel of Jesus to all.⁵

This 400-page book selling for \$20 on Amazon, being a very accessible read, replete with stories that illustrate the author's points, is as suitable for undergraduates as for advanced historians.

⁵ See the chapter headed 'Woke'.

Call for Papers. Conference.

You are invited to submit paper proposals to this event

All Nations Christian College, UK, 12th to 15th September 2021

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Vulnerable Mission: English and Dollars Powering Ministry, Good Idea?

We urge some missionaries to practice their ministry using the languages and resources of the people they are reaching. This will honour the indigenous. It is a Christ-like starting point for sharing the Gospel in contextualized ways.

We will be discussing issues such as:

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

- How does **translation** to and from an indigenous language affect missionary work?
- While **finances** are needed for mission work, how can one ensure that finances do not dominate?
- What **good practices** are there to ensure a missionary remains vulnerable in their local context?
- How to engage in mission without exuding (excessive) **power**.
- What **organisational structures** enable vulnerability on the side of Western missionaries on the ground.
- What help can we offer **churches who want to engage directly in cross cultural mission** to avoid pitfalls of power.
- **Tentmaking** and **business as mission** models that leave the Westerner vulnerable. (Can the **commercial** world 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 can mission agencies promote vulnerability, when dominant models of understanding presented by a vast **global media** are rooted in **positivism and liberalism**?
- Is vulnerability the key to **contextualisation**?
- Theology traditionally draws strongly on **metaphor**. However local metaphors from the majority world are unfamiliar to the Westerner, and vice versa. How can one then engage in theology interculturally?
- Where **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**' a normal aspect of life? What does this imply for cross cultural missionary engagement?
- Does the **introduction of outside technology** result in exploitation and enslavement? or liberation?
- **Globalisation** as a force that cripples the periphery. How can the voices of those at the periphery be heard, and their dignity guarded?
- When **short-term mission** has become **poverty-tourism** intended to adorn facebook pages with images of charity – what is the way forward?
- Can Westerners relate to **non-Western missionaries** without dominating them?

- The bible is God's inspired book, but theological training is dominated by **Western curricula**. Are there alternative paradigms for local-context training of Christian workers?

Papers should be between 4000 and 8000 words. Abstract maximum 300 words. Anyone wanting to write and present a paper other than in English, please consult.

Presentation time will be maximum ½ hour (strictly), followed by 30 to 60 minutes of discussion with those in attendance.

Submit your abstract asap, latest May 1st 2021, to
jim@vulnerablemission.org

- Please give us some information on your background / experience.
- Please contact me and let me know of your interest in writing and presenting a paper.

Conference Details

This will be a three-day residential conference. It will be held in the English country house at the attractive rural location of the UK's premier missionary training college, near Ware in Hertfordshire.

Full cost will be £300, or early bird £260. (We will recompense speakers IF we get a sufficient attendance to be able to afford to do so.)



Conference sponsors:

<p><i>Alliance for Vulnerable Mission</i> vulnerablemission.org</p>	
<p>All Nations Christian College, Easneye Ware Hertfordshire SG12 8LX Tel: +44 (0) 1920 443500 Email: info@allnations.ac.uk</p>	

Jim Harries, PhD.
Board chair, Missionary in East Africa

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