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# Alliance for Vulnerable Mission Bulletin

## September 2023

### Volume 15, Number 9

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Editor: Jim Harries, PhD, Chairman of the AVM.



AVM Board		Advisory Board
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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.



Please suggest contributions to this Bulletin to [jim@vulnerablemission.org](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.org)

This month's contents:

**'Researching Africa in the Light of the 'Religions' of Anti-racism and Christianity'**

**Review of: A Leopard Tamed.**

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**Vital book for understanding the Majority World, and Africa, today.**

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**Envy: differences between the West and Africa**

**Die Begegnung mit den Anderen / Meeting 'others' on their terms**



**‘Researching Africa in the Light of the ‘Religions’ of Anti-racism and Christianity’**

***En lieu of October webinar***

AVM chairperson Dr. Jim Harries speaks at the Centre of World Christianity at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London

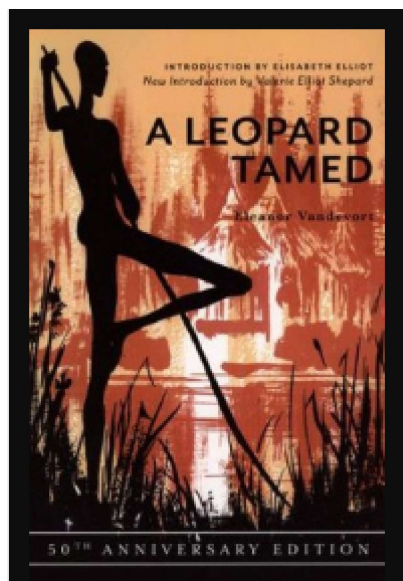
**Date:** 18th October 2023

**Time:** 12:00 pm – 01:00 pm (UCT+1)

[Sign-up](#) for free to receive Zoom link.

Click [here](#) for abstract and speaker information.

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**Review of: A Leopard Tamed.**

<https://www.amazon.com/Leopard-Tamed-C-Vandevort/dp/1683071344>

Vandevort, Eleanor. 2018. *A Leopard Tamed. 50th Anniversary Edition.*  
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

The reviews below were prepared for the AVM Bulletin by Marcus Grohmann  
(Research Coordinator for the AVM).

*'A Leopard Tamed' is a very personal account of a female, US-American missionary in the South Sudan in the 1950s and 60s. Sensitive to cultural realities vastly different from Western ways of life, Vandevort surprises by her frankness in self-critically questioning the adequacy, effectiveness and unintended consequences of the 'mission culture' of her time. In the book she looks at the complicated implications of trying to translate the gospel along with and in the context of Western civilisation at the mission station, as e.g. in the case of the mission hospital which she translates from the Nuer language as 'the house of miracles'. In the book, she follows the trajectory - sometimes inspiring, sometimes tragic - of an up and coming Nuer church leader. In its honesty, the book is an example of humility and NOT knowing it all of a Westerner in Africa but at the same time of someone deeply aware of the complexities and burdens Western mission efforts have left Africa with - along with the life-transforming and life-giving Good News of Christ. Though written half a century ago, it provides challenging thoughts for cross-cultural ministry today that can help us appreciate anew the value of vulnerability.*

*"A Leopard Tamed" ist ein sehr persönlich geschriebenes Buch einer US-Amerikanerin, die in den 1950er and 1960er Jahren als Missionarin im Südsudan arbeitete. Sie zeigt sich außerordentlich sensibel den kulturellen Gegebenheiten vor Ort, die einen massiven Unterschied zu westlichen Lebensweisen darstellen. Vandevort überrascht durch die Offenheit, mit der sie sich sehr selbstkritisch mit der Angemessenheit, der Wirksamkeit und den unbeabsichtigten Folgen der "Missionskultur" ihrer Zeit auseinandersetzt. Sie beschreibt die komplizierten Auswirkungen von Versuchen, das Evangelium zusammen mit und im Kontext von westlicher Zivilisation zu übersetzen. Exemplarisch wird das deutlich an ihrer Übersetzung des Missionskrankenhauses aus der Sprache der Nuer - dem "Haus der Wunder". Das Buch verfolgt den - teils inspirierenden, teils tragischen - Werdegang eines jungen Nuer-Leiters in der neu entstehenden lokalen Kirche. Das Buch besticht durch seine Ehrlichkeit, Demut und dem Eingeständnis als "Westler" in Afrika nicht alles (besser) zu wissen. Zugleich kann es darin Vorbild sein, sich der Komplexitäten und der Lasten bewusst zu sein, die westliche Mission Afrika vererbt hat - zusammen mit der lebensspendenden und lebensverändernden*

*Guten Nachricht von Jesus Christus. Obwohl das Buch vor einem halben Jahrhundert das erste Mal veröffentlicht wurde, hält es auch in der heutigen Zeit relevante und herausfordernde Gedanken für die interkulturelle Arbeit bereit. Es kann eine Hilfe sein, das Potential der bewusst gesuchten Verletzlichkeit in der missionarischen Arbeit von neuem zu schätzen.*

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### **‘Are we Seeing, and Hearing?’**

<https://youtu.be/4TmF9FAPkO0>

This link is to an anonymized you tube recording of Jim’s presentation to a group of missiologists based in California, that took place on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023. Jim makes the point – that it is possible to report one kind of discourse that does not fit the action on the ground. Simply listening to what is said by and about the Majority World, may not be to understand what is actually happening. Jim explores the formation of the wholistic theology of a theoretical trainee pastor from Africa. This being rooted in responses of the trainee to numerous relationships with indigenous people means that comprehending an indigenous theology requires sharing in such relationships. He goes on to demonstrate ways in which African ‘indigenous reality’ can be screened out and remixed with Western insights as a result of use of language, education, political correctness and donor requirements. This presentation is followed by Jim’s answering questions from people who attended the webinar.

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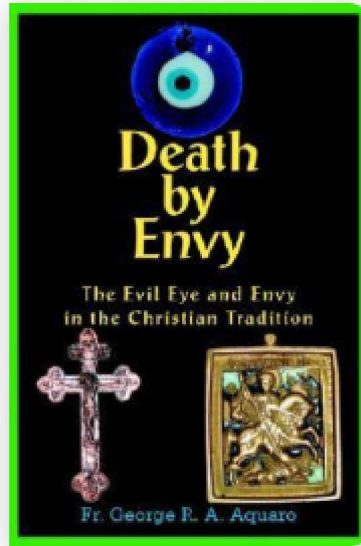
### **‘Whites Know Best’: insights from Africa**

[https://www.academia.edu/attachments/104918505/download\\_file?s=portfolio](https://www.academia.edu/attachments/104918505/download_file?s=portfolio)

This ongoing discussion on [academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/attachments/104918505/download_file?s=portfolio), launched by Jim Harries, considers the irony in and tensions associated with, the widespread assumption in Africa

and beyond, that 'Whites know Best'. Go to the above link to join the discussion.

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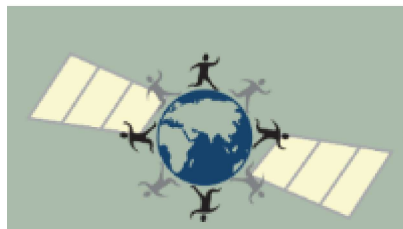


**Vital book for understanding the Majority World, and Africa, today.**

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/review/R3H9EDI2XH6UYW/ref=pe\\_1572281\\_66412651\\_cm\\_rv\\_eml\\_rv0\\_rv](https://www.amazon.co.uk/review/R3H9EDI2XH6UYW/ref=pe_1572281_66412651_cm_rv_eml_rv0_rv)

“The particular value I see in this book is in its description of the nature of envy in early Christian communities. This provides assurance that the envy these days widespread in Africa is not a racial feature, but simply natural to mankind without Christ. The book telling us how such envy was tackled [in the past] gives us clues regarding how Africa might overcome its addiction to envy and witchcraft,” Jim concludes, in the final paragraph to this review, that is published on Amazon.

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**Preventing Abuses in the International Aid Sector: A Global Effort, and a British-based Case Study.**

<http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2778/6926>

[This article is published in globalmissiology.org](http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2778/6926), July 2023. The abstract for the article is as follows: “Embarrassing international revelations of aid workers’

sexual involvement with populations they serve have contributed to major efforts at eradicating sexual and other abuses of vulnerable people in international work. With buy-in from diverse governments, the United Nations and the World Health Organization have led an endeavour at countering abuses globally, especially among those in receipt of various forms of international aid. This article provides an overall introduction to this effort, adds a case study of how the British government sees itself as taking a lead, and concludes with ways in which this endeavour impacts Christian mission work by British citizens.”

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### **Envy: differences between the West and Africa**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00918296231189123>

Jim Harries, in this article published in Missiology, considers consequential differences between how envy is understood, and enacted, between Western as against African populations. The article concludes with this paragraph: “The Christian Gospel brings relief to Africa by displacing the need for witchcraft (scapegoating) by the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14–15). To help Africans suppress their envy—a necessary step required for indigenously thought and powered socioeconomic development to occur – a Christianization of Africa is required. Some would term that to be the need for Christian discipleship. Christian instruction teaches that the person to be envied is—and in the end must be—only Christ himself. Emulation of a person who self-sacrificially gave his all out of love for others, including sinners, even when those sinners hated him enough to want him killed (Luke 23:21), is clearly, for many, part of the ultimate way to bring peace and the kingdom of God on Earth. There are no failures in the imitation of Christ, the Son of God, whose fate was to be hated by all to the point of their being determined to murder him.”

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## Die Begegnung mit den Anderen / Meeting 'others' on their terms

<https://mission.de/blog/die-begegnung-mit-den-anderen.html>

Was macht eigentlich die Anderen aus? Und welche Faktoren führen dazu, sich den Anderen anzunähern? Eines von vielen Beispielen sind die verschiedenen Sprachen, die gesprochen werden. Ein anderes ist, zumindest in Südafrika, auch heute, etwa 30 Jahre nach dem Ende der Apartheid, die Frage nach der jeweiligen kulturellen Herkunft. Marcus Grohmann fragt in seinem Text danach, was es für eine Annäherung braucht und blickt auch darauf, was für eine Begegnung auf Augenhöhe notwendig ist.

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