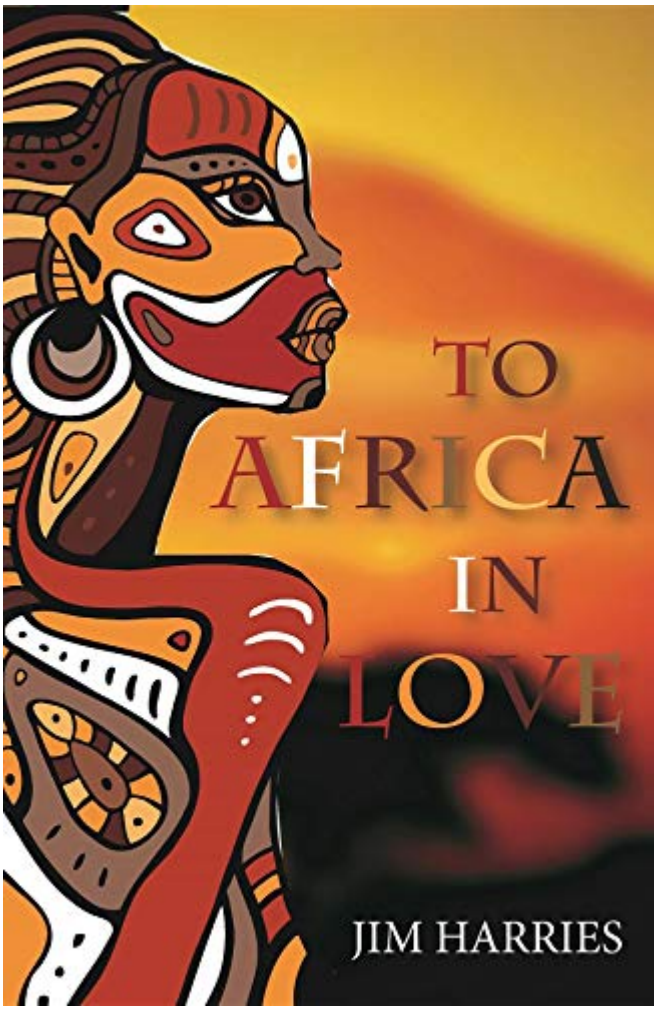
BOOKS I HAVE READ: TO AFRICA IN LOVE

Posted on August 8, 2019 by Eddie

While I tend to prefer my novels to include a few murders and a harassed detective, Jim Harries' book which explores some important contemporary issues in mission is worth a read.
Category: Observations

As regular visitors to this blog know, I read a lot of novels. I generally get through two or three a week. That being said, the majority of my fiction reading tends to be of a type; somewhere in the second chapter, someone will be murdered and a harassed detective inspector (quite possible with alcohol and/or marriage problems) will solve the crime with one chapter to go. I know my detective fiction. However, this makes me somewhat unqualified to review To Africa in LoveÂ by Jim Harries.



To Africa in Love is part love story, part missionary biography, part espionage-ish thriller and 100% supporting tract for the Vulnerable Mission movement.

> *Vulnerable mission aims to encourage cross-cultural workers to follow the humble example of Jesus, who demonstrated His vulnerability in part by living like the Jews of His time and place. Examples of humble vulnerability include but are not limited to carrying out ministry in culturally appropriate ways, refusing a high-status position, learning a local language, and avoiding the use of imported resources in favor of local ones.*

Over the years, Jim has written a number of more academic books which explore this concept and you can see my reviews of them here. Using fiction to explore and introduce a concept which people find difficult to grasp is a well-worn path and Jim is to be commended stepping out in this way.

For my own part, I struggled slightly; it's not that there is anything wrong with the book, it's just not the sort of novel I would ever choose to read. I'm sure that others will love it. Fiction is a very personal genre.

It's quite a substantial novel, running to 380 ish pages and it will set you back Â£5 for the Kindle version and Â£9 for the paperback. Who should read it? I'd suggest that anyone who wants to know more about current issues in mission, but doesn't feel like reading a missiology text-book would benefit from giving it a go.

It's hard to provide quotes from a fiction book, but here are a few which get to the heart of the issues that the book is addressing:

> *â€œWe Westerners are determined to act as global policeman, and as global advocates for human rights, development, you name it. But â€“ we have worked in the light of an enormous ignorance. That is, we have simply wanted everyone to become like us, and assumed that they will and must do as such. We have not considered ourselves to have any serious obligations to be-like-them.â€*
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> *â€œNow, we have nodded in that direction. I mean â€“ we have said we want to listen to people in the majority world. But â€“ only ever in English. We have even endeavored to recruit people from the majority world, notably Africa, into our structures. But â€“ never the reverse. It has always been one-sided. It has always been â€˜you come to us,â€™ never â€˜we come to you,â€™ culturally speaking. You, Philo, have demonstrated how to do the latter.â€*
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> *â€œWe have started to look carefully at what you have said and written. We agree with you â€“ that it is far from adequate just to rely on what majority world nationals tell us for purposes of our evaluations regarding what to do and how. We must have Westerners immerse themselves into majority world cultures. That cannot be just for a year as do anthropologists. It must be for ten years or more. And it must be on a vulnerable basis, as you have often aptly described. This is definitely more a role for Christian mission than for universities. Universities cannot do it! They are too loaded by other demands, especially by their budgets, given the way they operate. We need vulnerable people committed to serving God, Philo. People like you.â€*

In passing, I'm slightly perturbed about a missionary novel in which one of the bad guys (or less-good guys) is called Wycliffe.

The author generously provided me with a copy of this novel in return for this review. I have not allowed this kind provision to influence what I have written.