

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, videos, etc. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase.

Photo Galleries of Refugees and Protests

On February 2, 2018, *The Guardian* published a [gallery of haunting photographs](#) taken in four Rohingya refugee camps across the border from Myanmar in Bangladesh. With nothing in view but an enforced return to hostile regions of Myanmar, close to 700,000 Rohingya refugees (400,000 of them children) now face more devastation from flooding when the monsoons come. See ["Rohingya Refugees on the Myanmar-Bangladesh Border."](#)

For a disturbing look at the diminishing prospects for a peaceful resolution for the Rohingya, read an excellent background article in *The Diplomat*: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/rohingyas-and-the-unfinished-business-of-partition/>. For up-to-date information on refugees all over the world, (including an impending disaster in South Sudan), check out the UNHCR's [The Refugee Brief](#).

Business Insider's February 4, 2018 article on Iranian protests features compelling photographs and looks at the provocations that triggered the current mass demonstrations: ["5000 Were Arrested During Iran's Bloody Month of Protests."](#) *The Atlantic* ran a story January 27, 2018 evaluating three different generations of popular uprisings in Iran. See ["The Fire that Fueled the Iran Protests."](#) From George Thomas of *CBN News* comes a different emphasis that is also part of the mix of what is happening in Iran. Take a look at ["Jesus Is Building His Church Inside Iran"](#) (January 28, 2018).

China: New Surveillance and Regulations

A significant uptick in high-tech government surveillance in China has everyone concerned. Calling President Xi "the most powerful leader in the People's Republic of China since Mao," *The National Review* lays out a tightly-reasoned case for alarm in ["The Digital Emperor of China's Surveillance State,"](#) January 25, 2018. Further complicating matters for the burgeoning Christian movement are new regulations for religious affairs, circulated last fall, which go into effect February 1, 2018. One house church leader, Wang Yi of the Early Rain Church in Sichuan Province, published a statement in September 2017 (in Chinese but translated here into English) spelling out five areas to keep in mind:

Over the last fifty years, house churches in China have constantly endured political and legal pressure from this regime. Even so, they have not decreased or lost influence. On the contrary,

they have been constantly reviving and growing. In fact, they have assumed many cultural functions in society. On the other hand, as society has progressed and there have been limits on administration and enforcement, the government has lessened its use of barbarous, unlawful methods such as physically torturing and eliminating the church. The church, meanwhile, is much more willing and ready to pay the price for its faith and freedom of conscience than the government at all its levels is willing and politically able to pay...Ultimately, my position is simple. As far as faith is concerned, these new regulations are evil. As far as the constitution is concerned, they are illegal. As far as politics are concerned, they are foolish. (China Source, ["Why Christians in China Must Prepare Themselves for the New Regulations on Religious Affairs"](#) Jan 30, 2018)

Controversial Vatican-China Agreement

Vatican negotiators are nearing an historic agreement that would give over the choice of Catholic bishops in China to the communist Chinese government. In a January 29 article in the *New York Times* (["Vatican, Eager for China Ties, Asks 'Underground' Bishops to Step Aside"](#)), Ian Johnson (author of the recent *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*) writes that two legitimate bishops have already been asked by a Vatican delegation to step aside in favor of Chinese government-appointed bishops. See the report on the Cardinal of Hong Kong's news conference in *Reuters* ["Cardinal Says Vatican-China Deal Would Put Catholics in a Communist Cage"](#) (February 9, 2018). A leading conservative Catholic magazine, *First Things*, has a piece about the implications for religious freedom in China going forward in ["The Vatican's China Whitewash"](#) (February 12, 2018) and *The Atlantic* refers to a possible parallel in Hungary in the late 1940s in its article, ["Catholics Have a Messaging Problem in China,"](#) February 9, 2018:

In a recent [Washington Post](#) op-ed, Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian compared the situation to communist Hungary in the late 1940s. When the Vatican struck a similar deal there, allowing the government to select its own bishops, the Hungarian Church started to shrink. "There was a lot less energy in a church run with the Communist Party pulling the strings," Piotr Kosicki, a professor of modern European history at the University of Maryland, told Ebrahimian. If history provides any indication, the Vatican's moves in China may backfire.

A New Wave of Chinese Missions

Even more remarkable, given these conditions, is the determination on the part of the unregulated churches to send out their own Chinese missionaries: 20,000 by 2030. See ["The Great Call of China: Churches Poised to Become Major Exporters"](#) in *Christianity Today*, November 27, 2017. This fervor goes forward despite the abduction and [murder of two young Chinese tentmakers](#) in Pakistan last June 2017. Here are four recent blogs, all at this link, that look at the promise and pitfalls facing China's future missionary force, "Missions from China: A Maturing Wave": <https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/missions-from-china->

[a-maturing-movement](#). Brent Fulton, president of China Source, evaluates some of the macro changes in China and forecasts pressure points in the future. See *The Gospel Coalition's* "China's Rise and the Church's Call," January 30, 2018.

Self-care for Practitioners in Severe Trauma Settings

The Oct 2017 *EMQ* issue has some real jewels of articles. Here are a few standouts. For a thoughtful yet practical article filled with hope about how to minister in a situation of severe trauma (in this case the aftermath of the 1994 Rwanda genocide) don't miss John Steward's article "Managing Trauma's Effects on the Practitioner (as Tested and Tried in Rwanda)." Steward sets the context for us in just a few words. It's a gripping account:

In terms of human and material loss, it equated to three New York Twin Tower collapses per day for one hundred consecutive days without the external logistical and emergency medical support which accompanied that disaster. Over 800,000 Rwandan people died, both Tutsi and moderate Hutu, mostly by hand-held weapons, in 100 days among a population of seven million living in an area the size of Maryland.

Global Mapping Closes with Grace

For an inspiring article—visionary and full of hope—about an organization ending well, read Jon Hirst's personal remarks about the closing of Global Mapping: "When Endings Lead to Opportunities: Lessons from the Closing of Global Mapping International," *EMQ*, October 2017.

Can "People Groups" Lead to Rigid Thinking?

In light of this *IJFM's* article by R. W. Lewis rethinking the terminology of "People Groups" (p. 5), read Ken Baker's (of SIL, International) important article cautioning missionaries against rigid ways of thinking: "Beyond 'People Groups': Why the Term 'Communities' May Be Preferable" (*EMQ*, October 2017). He gives a startling example:

A few years ago... I encountered a young missionary couple who were entirely focused on a people group that made up less than five percent of the local population. Gifted in language, they were deeply integrated, but exclusively in relationships with this people. Although "their" people group mixed well with the local population, this couple didn't, because they didn't want to become "distracted." They viewed their approach as missiologically faultless. However, other people in the community viewed them as cold, unfriendly, and haughty. To me, this seemed like a classic case of missing the forest for the trees. I asked them what gospel they were modeling before "their" people, as well as the community, reminding them that we are always ambassadors of an all-inclusive gospel, even if we concentrate upon one people.

In ethnically-diverse contexts, attention toward a single people group risks rendering others in their context invisible, whereas a focus on community turns invisible people into neighbors (McKnight 2014, 70)...there are clearly ethnic groupings in this world; however, this is not necessarily how people would self-identify, or how they actually live. Likewise,

there has always been mixing of groups through migration, marriage, and social networking. More recently, urbanization and globalization have accelerated these phenomena such that blurred ethnic lines are the norm in many places.

New Questions and Statistics about World Christianity

From the website of the [Center for the Study of World Christianity](#) at the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity, comes a Guest Editor's blog on a conference about World Christianity held at Princeton Theological Seminary this past January 2018. Author Jason Bruner comments,

Dale Irvin, in a keynote address, argued for the importance of recognizing the three intellectual streams of ecumenics, mission studies, and world religions as being historically constitutive of the field and formative of its present shape. He positioned World Christianity as an inherently "subversive" discipline.

Don't miss the rest of this interesting post for various reflections on the singularity of World Christianity, the impact of religious demography, whether Orthodox or Catholic Christianity are represented correctly, and whether global expressions of Christianity need to become more open to self-theologizing from the edges of kingdom expansion. (See the book review in this issue *IJFM* 35:1 p. 42 on *Apostolicity*.)

A new YouTube video has been posted with a 30-minute talk entitled "The Changing Demographics of Protestantism from 1517 to 2017" by Dr. Todd Johnson from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC). Given in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it begins with an excellent historical focus on Bible translation. Also from the CSGC, new statistics have just been published for the status of global Christianity in 2018, taking a long range comparative look from 1900 to 2050. The fastest annual percentage increase is in slum dwellers, who currently number 1 out of every 6 people in the world. By 2050, their numbers will have increased (from 700 million in the year 2000) to 1.9 billion (or 23% of the world's population—almost 1 out of every 4 people in the world), according to Patrick Johnstone (*The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities*, p. 7).

"... As a Fire Exists by Burning"

From *Missiology* January–March 2018, in the perceptive article "Ecclesiology Today and Its Potential to Serve a Missionary Church," by Kristin Colberg in which she quotes from *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* by Bevans and Schroeder (2004, 7–8):

Therefore, it is the process of evangelization that is the *raison d'être* of the church. Adrian Hastings has written how the church does not so much *have* a mission—as if the church somehow existed *prior* to its task—rather it *is* mission as such, indeed, as the phrase goes, the church of Christ does not so much have a mission as the mission of Christ has a church. Perhaps, most memorable of all, theologian Emil Brunner is often quoted as saying "the Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning." *IJFM*