

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, websites, 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.

Coronavirus and Then Some . . .

In the wake of the outbreak of the coronavirus in Lebanon, a four-minute [video in Arabic](#) was produced with prayers from diverse religious leaders for the safety of the people of their country. These prayers are needed more than ever since the [devastating explosion in Beirut](#) and the [resignation of the government](#) in August, [the horrific fires in September](#), the resulting [food insecurity and explosion of COVID-19](#). Some Christians objected and asked, "Are you all praying to the same God?" See the [September 14, 2020, IMES blog](#), "Christians and Muslims Praying Together: Compromise or a Sign of Hope?"

Thankfully, there is a reported 10% slowdown of the coronavirus in many African countries. For an update, see the [BBC's "Coronavirus: Is the rate of growth in Africa slowing down?"](#) October 1, 2020. But in Nigeria, massacres and conflict have not slowed down. "In the last 10 years, an estimated six million Nigerians have fled their homes for fear of extermination, abduction . . . by the Boko Haram group in Nigeria." (See [Opinion](#) in *The Guardian*, September 3, 2020). And from an interview with a Nigerian bishop:

The walls of Jericho fell not by gunfire but by prayer. The walls of Communism crumbled not by nuclear power but by, among other things, prayer. We in Nigeria are quite at home with what prayers can do and have done for us . . . Stalin mocked the pope, wondering how many divisions the pope had. Today, we know better . . . [But] Nigerian conflict is a Molotov cocktail of anger, frustration, religious extremism, toxic politics, corruption and deep rut. (See the September 3 article in *Cruce*, "[Bishop Says Nigeria a Molotov Cocktail of Violence](#)," cited in Roundup #218, Justin Long, Beyond)

Why Missiology Needs Political Theology

What does politics have to do with missiology, especially in the Middle East? Dr. Nabeel Jabbour has released, free of charge, his 47-lecture training course online, entitled, "Islam and the Geopolitics of the Middle East." In his July 9 missiology blog, "[Circumpolar](#)," Warrick Farah says,

Much more than the title suggests, the course is full of missiology and practical advice for ministry to Muslims, not just simply on politics and Islam. But Jabbour's handling of politics demonstrates just how necessary and beneficial it is to incorporate political theology into missiology—this is often a glaring blindspot for workers in general and Americans in particular."

Uighur Scandal and Surveillance

Disney found itself embroiled in an international scandal when it became public that its latest Mulan movie variation with live actors had been filmed with the cooperation of the Chinese Communist Party in Xinjiang Province (the Uighur homeland where millions have disappeared or been incarcerated in gulags). "Disney, in other words, worked with regions where genocide is occurring, and thanked [in their film credits] government departments that are helping to carry it out." See the *Washington Post's* "[Why Disney's Mulan is a Scandal Again](#)," September 3, 2020.

For a chilling discussion of the surveillance capabilities of the Chinese Communist government, don't miss the September 2020 issue of *The Atlantic*.

The Uighurs who were spared the camps now make up the most intensely surveilled population on Earth. . . . The system was capable of detecting Uighurs by their ethnic features, and it could tell whether people's eyes or mouth were open, whether they were smiling, whether they had a beard, and whether they were wearing sunglasses. It logged the date, time, and serial numbers—all traceable to individual users—of Wi-Fi-enabled phones that passed within its reach. ("[The Panopticon is Already Here](#)," *The Atlantic*, September, 2020).

Lest you think this massive surveillance on the part of the Chinese government is only directed at its own people, think again. A Chinese high-tech company (with links to its military and intelligence networks) has been amassing data on 2.4 million people all over the world. Australia was shocked to find 35,000 of its own leading citizens on that list. See the article, "[China's 'hybrid war': Beijing's mass surveillance of Australia and the world for secrets and scandal](#)," on the website for *ABC News Australia*, September 13, 2020.

Indigenous Chinese Missions

Packed full of articles of significance and importance to frontier missiologists, the summer issue of the [China Source Quarterly](#) is squarely focused on the new cross-cultural workers being sent from Christian churches in mainland China. Don't miss: "[Doing Missions with Chinese Characteristics](#)." Another article, drawn from interviews with those currently on the field, takes up some of the specific problems facing [Chinese workers sent from China to Muslim countries](#).

Training Workers in a "Slowbalizing" World

For insights on new ways of training future cross-cultural workers, see Michael Rynkiewicz's article in *IBMR*:

There is and has been for the last four or five years, a resurgence of nationalism, racism, populism, and jingoism, in the United States and in the world at large. Today neither people nor goods nor ideas are able to travel as easily or unencumbered by restrictions as they were five years ago. While some missiologists are still trying to figure out how to be in mission in a globalizing world, the world has downshifted into an era of "slowbalization." Slowbalization is the slowing down and even the reversal of globalization. Witness the

reassertion of the importance of national borders, coupled with a reemerging sense of national identity... If I cannot prepare my students for every eventuality in the culture where they are going to be in mission, then I can... train people in critical analytic skills, both in ethnography and in historical analysis. That is, teach them how to do research so that they can figure it out for themselves." (See "[The Challenge of Teaching Mission in an Increasingly Mobile and Complex World](#)," *IBMR*, October 2020.)

A Joyful Issue

From the recent *Missiology* (July 2020) comes a group of excellent articles honoring the late Evelyne Reisacher, all oriented on the importance of joy in mission, the topic of her 2016 book, [Joyful Witness in the Muslim World: Sharing the Gospel in Everyday Encounters](#). In particular, see Amos Yong's insightful comparison of Christian and Buddhist joy: "While there is an extensive missiological literature on Christian mission in the Buddhist world, to my knowledge none has factored joy and gladness into the equation." (See "[Gladness and Sympathetic Joy: Gospel Witness and the Four Noble Truths in Dialogue](#)," by Amos Yong.)

Two Book Reviews of Interest

Take a look at the review in the [Wall Street Journal \(July 14, 2020\)](#) of the book *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and US Foreign Relations*. The reviewer, Mike Watson of the Hudson Institute, comments that

diplomatic historian Lauren Turek offers a sophisticated survey of how evangelicals think about foreign relations by showing how this amorphous, decentralized group has applied its theology to human rights and has developed advocacy and policy organizations during the Cold War and its aftermath... But at a time when voters have turned away from a robust internationalism—both the Obama and Trump administrations have adopted different forms of retrenchment—evangelicals could be powerful advocates for U.S. engagement abroad.

A new book just out examines some of the new forms of "religion" springing up. Check out the [Christianity Today article](#) (August 17, 2020) entitled "Secular Faiths are Remaking the American Religious Landscape," a review of Tara Isabella Burton's new book *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. Her research, although US-based, could be strategic to missiologists as secularism and its neo-religious consciousness impacts frontier peoples.

Burton [profiles] three movements vying to become America's new, outwardly godless civil religion: social justice culture, Silicon Valley techno-utopianism, and a reactionary alt-right. Each contender offers a totalizing—and in some cases intoxicating—narrative of the world, our place in it, and the wicked forces that need to be rooted out. Radical social justice movements build their cosmology entirely upon "nurture": the tabula rasa of humanity corrupted by the original sin of Western patriarchy. By contrast, the alt-right leans exclusively on "nature," declaring that the original sins of political correctness

and feminism have obscured certain uncomfortable, biologically grounded realities. And although it claims fewer actual adherents, techno-utopianism—with its promise of bio- and cyber-hacking our way to eternal life—boasts by far the most cash. Not inconsequentially, it also controls the platforms (and devices!) on which its two rivals wage their battles.

For a global comparison, see Ian Johnson's article "[Religion in China: Back to the Center of Politics and Society](#)." He talks about an "unprecedented religious revival" involving hundreds of millions of Chinese—who actually live in a godless nation.

Speaking of New (and Old) Religions

One African traditional religion (known as Ifa) has become very intertwined with Black Lives Matter, the organization. See the article entitled "[The Fight for Black Lives is a Spiritual Movement](#)," (Georgetown University's Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs). During a June 2020 protest in front of the Los Angeles mayor's house, African religious libations were poured out, names of murdered African-Americans were intoned, and spirits of the dead were invoked. (See "[Healing, Spirituality, and Black Lives Matter](#)" in *JSTOR DAILY*, June 10, 2020.)

First Gunshots in 45 Years between India and China

A very tense situation developed in the Himalayas last June with over twenty soldiers killed on both sides. September 7, 2020 saw warning gunshots take place, the first in 45 years. India has subsequently banned 167 Chinese apps (including TikTok and WeChat) and has demanded that there be "freedom of navigation operations," referring to the Chinese military buildup in the South China Sea. See the September 8 article in *The Economist*: "[India and China Exchange the First Gunshots in 45 Years](#)."

Peace between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain

An historic peace deal was brokered between Israel and two of the Gulf states (UAE and Bahrain) this past August. Don't miss Frederick Kempe's Op-Ed for *CNBC*, September 20, 2020: "[UAE-Bahrain Deals with Israel Offer Chance of a Warm Peace](#)." He noted the significance of

the 20-nation Arab League's [rejection](#) of Palestinian efforts to condemn this week's agreements. Despite the opposition of their leaders, Palestinians in the end could be the biggest benefactor in a two-state solution embedded in a more vibrant and integrated Middle Eastern economy.

For an explanation of the role of the US Iran policy in this deal, see "[How Trump Defied the Experts and Forged a Breakthrough in the Middle East](#)," September 15, 2020, *The National Review*. For a more pessimistic but probably realistic Arab Christian commentary on what this might mean for the region, see "[Are We Closer to a Peaceful Middle East? Politics, Abraham, and the Good Samaritan](#)," by Nabil Habibi of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut, Lebanon. **IJFM**