

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.

Missiological Reflections

What About Informal Theological Education?

With the reports of burgeoning church planting movements to Christ taking place in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, many are considering the best ways to train new leaders theologically—and more informally. Don't miss the report by Michael Ortiz, International Director of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) entitled, "[Theological Education Can't Catch Up to Global Church Growth](#)," *Christianity Today*, June 2, 2023.

Over the past three years, our constituency base has expanded significantly to include nonformal and less-structured theological education. In fact, at that time we had none of these institutions. Recently welcoming training ministries such as the Cru-based International Leadership Consortium, Trainers of Pastors International Coalition (TOPIC), and Increase Association's network of training programs for church leaders throughout Asia, ICETE honors their desire to benefit from our global interconnectedness. This includes creating relationships with the traditional seminaries to share with nonformal students the tools and short courses often associated with higher education—such as Bible commentaries, simplified theology, and innovative homiletics. . . . Standards to measure effective spiritual formation training are being developed in Nigeria and India. Oral pastoral leadership programs have started in South Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia—and will soon in Tanzania and Senegal. And regional collaboration hubs are being established in South America and Africa, to link partners in similar local contexts.

Is Partnership Inherently Western, Egalitarian, and Individualistic?

Too often Westerners have assumed that an egalitarian partnership is the best way to relate to indigenous believers. Author Rennae de Freitas offers up a vigorous argument against partnerships that overlooks power differences and a compelling proposal for a redeemed patron-client system that stands squarely against corruption. Check out, "Power and Partnership: Implications of Redeemed Patronage in Missional Context," in the [July 2023, Volume 51, Issue 3 of *Missiology: An International Review*](#):

Undoubtedly, many Western missionaries swim unaware of the power factors that make up the water of the Majority World. Robert Oh, an Asian American missiologist, observes

this ignorance in Asia in his article "[Patron-client Dynamics between Korean missionaries and Cambodian Christians](#)." (*Asian Missions Advance* # 48 (July 2015: [12–19])). Oh writes, "In many cases, Westerners who believe in the equality of persons and the virtues of independence in their culture are not prepared to understand the intricate rules and expectations of Patron-client relationships. They are not conscious of their expected role as patrons." In other words, they swim unaware of the water.

In the worthy pursuit of partnership, a serious problem emerges out of this ignorance of cultural "water." Denying the existence of the power inherent in wealth, race, education, and even citizenship removes the possibility of transformation and redemption. The historical effort to develop authentic and equal partnership in mission may have missed how the Majority World handles power imbalance across relationships.

To Be Thai is to Be Buddhist

Of interest in this same issue of *Missiology* is an article on a movement to Christ among Thai Buddhists. According to the author, Manuel Becker, "Thailand boasts the second-largest number of Buddhists in the world after China. The mantra 'to be Thai is to be Buddhist' is deeply ingrained in most Thai people." Becker goes on to recount a fascinating story of a missionary family who suffered a tragedy—the death of a wife—but allowed the Thai community around their family to help support and pray for them with many turning to Christ. Don't miss this compelling account of how a missionary widower returned to the field, married a Thai believer, became an integral part of her family, and was honored at the passing of her father to be chosen by his deceased spirit as the new head of the family. The article ends with a brief missiological examination of this network or movement of close to 3,000 Thai Buddhist followers of Jesus. ("[A Case Study of an Insider Movement Among Buddhists in Thailand](#)," Manuel Becker, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 53, Issue 3 [July–September 2023].)

Frontier Missions and Technology Questions and Answers about Technology

How will the presence of internet connection and use affect mission agencies involved in online evangelism or online scripture engagement? The [July–September Evangelical Missions Quarterly](#) is dedicated to these and more technology questions. (If you don't have a subscription, you can purchase a print copy on Amazon.) One fact jumped out from Andrew Feng's excellent lead article on digital collaboration: there are large portions of the world either unconnected to the internet or not using the internet: Afghanistan (83.3%), Somalia (90.2%), a very rural India ([only 35.87% urbanized](#)) with 50% of the Frontier People Groups (less than .1% Christian) is 51.3% unconnected. Take a look at Feng's multiple lists of excellent resources and links to a myriad of technological

efforts. Also, look for links on how to join different online prayer teams for people groups and how to engage online with unreached or frontier people groups.

"If Data is the New Oil, then I want to Own It..."

The use of data is exploding in Asia, but some countries tightly control it whereas others don't. How will this impact the witness for the gospel and the safety and security of believers in restricted access countries? Don't miss the article "[In Asia, Data Flows are Part of a New Great Game](#)," *The Economist*, July 10, 2023.

Asia saw international [bandwidth usage](#) grow by 39% in 2022. To many, the Chinese model resonates, says Deborah Elms of Asian Trade Centre in Singapore: "If data is the new oil, then I want to own it, goes the thinking."

India Leads the World in Internet Shutdowns

But whereas China and the US are competing to "build and control digital infrastructure that the other cannot access," India is simply shutting it down whenever it wants complete control. For a democracy, this is a real violation of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

For the past five years India has [led the world](#) in internet shutdowns, according to Access Now, a New York-based advocacy group. Last year the second-highest number of internet disruptions, 22, was recorded in Ukraine, many of them related to the war there. In India, there were 84. The majority of India's internet shutdowns are imposed in restive areas such as Jammu & Kashmir, which accounted for more than half of last year's stoppages. The small north-eastern state of Manipur, which has been [riven with ethnic violence](#) since early May, is entering its third straight month of internet blackout. ("[India, an Aspiring Digital Superpower, Keeps Shutting Down the Internet](#)," *The Economist*, July 5, 2023)

Genocide

The Most Globalized Genocide in the World

The chair of the US Commission for International Religious Freedom, a Uyghur dissident, was interviewed by *Foreign Policy*. Born in a detention center, he commented that:

China's campaign against the Uyghurs is the most globalized genocide in history. Products produced by [slave labor](#) end up in the homes of consumers around the world—including, as of recently, hair weaves seized by U.S. customs that are thought to be the shorn hair of prisoners.

Take a look at this interview entitled, "[The Witness](#)" (*Foreign Policy*, March 20, 2023).

In February 2023, *CNN* published a hard-hitting expose when a major cache of Chinese police documents was leaked. It is now accessible to the public with an online search engine to help expatriate Uyghurs find out what has happened to their loved ones in Xinjiang. One man left China in 2003 for an academic fellowship with the Ford Foundation. He has since become Deputy Director for the Uyghur Service broadcasts for

Radio Free Asia and just this past February, through this online search engine, discovered that twenty-nine of his immediate and extended family members had been detained—and some had been given long-term jail sentences—just because of their association with him. ("The Darkness of Not Knowing Disappears': How a China Data Leak is Giving Uyghurs Answers About Missing Family Members," *CNN*, February, 2023.)

Is the Darfur Genocide Happening Again to the Same People?

Civil war broke out again in the Sudan in April with two rival military factions wreaking havoc and leaving thousands dead and millions of displaced people in their wake. Don't overlook this poignant guest essay in the *New York Times* Opinion section written by a Sudanese graduate student at Yale, Ms. Bayan Abubakr.

The city of El Geneina, home to over half a million people, has been described by doctors as "[one of the worst places on earth](#)." Parts of Khartoum do not have [running water or electricity](#) right now. Evacuation [remains difficult](#), if not nearly impossible. As this disaster has unfolded, international leaders have once again ignored the Sudanese people. This includes the more than [8,000 neighborhood resistance committees](#), trade unions, and women's groups that participated in the [Revolutionary Charter for Establishing People's Power](#), a blueprint for a [bottom-up approach](#) to democracy. The participants refuse to cooperate with the Sudanese military, which has orchestrated genocides and violence since Sudan's independence in 1956, or with its dark offshoot, the R.S.F. ("[Sudan Will Not Be Left for Dead](#)," *New York Times*, July 7, 2023)

Relief Web commented on the number of people displaced both internally (2.2 million) and externally to neighboring countries (700,000)—40% of whom have fled to Egypt:

The continued escalation of violence is compounding an already dire humanitarian situation in the country and the region. At least 24.7 million people—about half the population of Sudan—are in urgent need of humanitarian aid and protection, one third of whom are in Darfur, where the situation is deteriorating dramatically. ("[Nearly 3 Million Displaced by Conflict in Sudan](#)," *Relief Web*, July 6, 2023)

Children as Weapons of War

China Erases Cultures and Religions

More than one million children in Tibet have been forced into year-round boarding schools by the Chinese government in a largely successful effort to destroy any vestiges of Tibetan culture, language, and religion in the next generation. This includes [fifty mandatory preschools](#) where 100,000 Tibetan children ages 4–6 are detained:

The latest salvo was revealed Monday, when three U.N. experts warned that roughly 1 million Tibetan children have been [separated from their families](#) and forcibly placed into Chinese state-run boarding schools, as part of efforts to absorb them "culturally, religiously and linguistically" into the

dominant Han Chinese culture. The scheme involves placing children from rural communities into residential schools, where lessons are conducted solely in Mandarin Chinese with scant reference to Tibetan history, religion, and certainly not [to the] exiled spiritual leader [the Dalai Lama](#). The result is that many children forget their native tongue and struggle to communicate with their parents when they return home, which is typically just for a week or two each year. ("['China's Residential Schools Separate a Million Tibetan Children from their Families,' UN Says](#)," *Time*, February 7, 2023)

It Worked in Tibet; Let's Try it in Xinjiang

More than 900,000 Uyghur children (as of 2019), some as young as four years old, have been relocated to "schools" surrounded by barbed wire with armed guards. The Uyghur language, culture, and Muslim religious practices are all forbidden. See "[The Urgent Need to Defend Uyghur Children and Their Families](#)," *Forbes*, May 8, 2023. This is on top of the forced sterilization and mandated birth control of Uyghur women—a policy of the Chinese government which has resulted in a precipitous 84% decline in population growth from 2015 to 2018 in Kashgar and Hotan, the two largest Uyghur prefectures. "In 2018, 80 percent of all net added IUD placements in China were performed in the Uyghur region, despite the fact that the region only makes up 1.8 percent of the nation's population." See the [Uyghur Human Rights Project](#), April 2023. See also "[China Panel Hears Harrowing Stories from Dissidents](#)," *Axios*, April 2023. And don't miss the detailed interviews with Uyghur parents in Amnesty International's "[Hearts and Lives Broken: The Nightmare of Uyghur Families Separated by Repression](#)" (2023).

Gender-Based Violence Targets Young Girls in the Sudan

Since war erupted again in April 2023, 1.5 million children have been displaced and 13.6 million children—one of every two children in the Sudan—are urgently in need of humanitarian aid ("[Sudan Conflict: Children Under Increasing Threat](#)," *Africa News*, July 17, 2023). To make matters even worse:

"Teenage girls are being sexually assaulted and raped by armed combatants in Sudan in alarming numbers, with many survivors aged between [12 and 17 years old](#)," said Save the Children. The children make up some of the cases of sexual and gender-based violence as a result of the escalating conflict, with incidents of rape, sexual assault and sexual exploitation being reported by women and girls who have fled the conflict in Khartoum and other areas . . . Some survivors are arriving in neighbouring countries pregnant as a result of rape, according to [UNHCR](#). There have also been reports of girls being kidnapped and held for days while being sexually assaulted, and of gang rapes of girls and women. ("[Sudan: Children as Young as 12 raped and assaulted](#)," reliefweb, Khartoum, 7 July 2023)

Ukrainian Children Kidnapped by Russia Virtually Untraceable

The horrific methods the Russian Federation is using to destroy the Ukrainians' will to fight eerily resemble the brutal genocidal policies of the Chinese Communist government against the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, just not at the same massive scale quite yet. But, more than 15,000 Ukrainian children, ages four to eighteen years, have been removed from their families by Russian soldiers and taken to Russia to be "reeducated" in camps, placed in orphanages, and put up for adoption.

Ukraine says it has documented nearly 20,000 cases of deported or forcibly transported children. But that number could be as high as 300,000, according to the Ukrainian president's advisor on Child Rights Daria Herasymchuk.

See the heart wrenching photos of Ukrainian babies being taken away by Russian soldiers supposedly to protect them from the war in "[Where are Ukraine's Missing Children?](#)" (*NBC News*, July 1, 2023). But as is made clear in a July 3rd article in *The Atlantic*:

Russian authorities have gone so far as to make what appears to be an official, concerted effort to cover the tracks that may lead to the Ukrainian children's eventual recovery. Processed into the Russian system, the children no longer go by their given names, practice the religions they were raised in, or communicate with their families. They are entered into an adoption system that takes pains to cover up their provenance, an effort that Ukrainian advocates say not only makes the children untraceable, but forms part of a larger project of cultural erasure. ("[The Children Russia Kidnapped](#)," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2023)

What Can Christians Do to Help the Uyghurs?

On the website Neighborly Faith, Chelsea Sobolik, the policy director for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, has written an excellent article summarizing the plight of the Uyghurs and suggesting responses that Christians can take:

William Wilberforce, who famously worked for years to abolish the slave trade in the UK, stated, "You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know." There's no denying that an ongoing genocide is occurring against the Uyghurs, and each one of us must answer the question, "How is the Lord calling me to push back against the darkness and love my Uyghur neighbor?" We should earnestly pray over how the Lord is calling us to get involved in this current season of our lives.

Check out this blog for a list of six practical ways to pray for the Uyghur people and two practical suggestions for advocacy. ("[A Christian Response to the Uyghur Genocide](#)," *Neighborly Faith*, 2023.)

Note that the Uyghurs, estimated to be [11,768,000](#) strong, are one of the thirty-one largest Frontier People Groups with less than .1% Christians among them. See [Joshua Project at joshua-project.net/languages/uig](#) for a list of resources available in the Uyghur language. **IJFM**