

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. Finally, please note that this October–December 2014 issue is partly composed of material created early in 2015. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.

Different Views of the Prophet Muhammad

In the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings in Paris, ostensibly provoked by a satirical cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad, many scholars and journalists have taken a long, hard look at historic representations of the Prophet in media. *The New Republic*, in an article entitled “What Gandhi Understood About Inflammatory Depictions of the Prophet Muhammad,” led off with a recounting of the assassination in India of a Hindu publisher in 1929 following the distribution of a derogatory pamphlet called “The Colorful Prophet.” Meanwhile, in her meticulously researched *Newsweek* article, “The Koran Does Not Forbid Images of the Prophet,” University of Michigan art historian Christiane Gruber took issue with this commonly-held notion.

The Connection Between Islam and Violence

In late February 2015, the Muslim World League sponsored a three-day conference in Mecca on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. One of the main speakers was Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Sunni Islam's most respected Islamic university, the al-Azhar in Cairo. *The Atlantic* in “An Anti-ISIS Summit in Mecca” quoted him as saying that after discounting poverty, social marginalization, and incarceration as the primary causes of radicalization, “the most prominent source of radicalization among Muslims is the historical accumulations of extremism and militancy in our heritage.”

John Azumah, an associate professor of World Christianity and Islam at Columbia Theological Seminary, has written a brilliant piece for *First Things* on the connection between Islam and violence. Entitled “Challenging Radical Islam,” his cogent analysis of the four main schools of Islamic jurisprudence is significant to an understanding of the roots of Islamic extremism. He asks, “How is it that groups so widely condemned as heretical by Islamic authorities receive so much tacit support from the mainstream Muslim world?” He then turns to evangelicals and claims that we have

contributed to the invisibility of Christian presence and witness in Muslim lands [by not] . . . openly challenging the criminalization of Christian missions and evangelism in Muslim contexts . . .

Powerful questions that deserve thoughtful answers.

The Middle East is Not Just Muslim

Dr. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, has written a short background article for the BBC on “How Christianity's Eastern History Has Been Forgotten.” It recounts many centuries when religious minorities peacefully co-existed but also mentions historic devastations such as those perpetrated by Tamerlane, which “hideously foreshadow” the ISIS attacks. A February 27, 2015 *New York Times* article entitled “ISIS Onslaught Engulfs Assyrian Christians” details how more than 350 Assyrian Christians have been abducted, over 30 of their villages decimated, and priceless Assyrian museum artifacts in Mosul systematically destroyed. To top it off, ISIS began bulldozing the UNESCO World Heritage site of Nimrud (NYT, March 5, 2015). For links to recent scholarly presentations about religious minorities in the Middle East, check out www.Middle-East-Minorities.com/videos.html.

Prophetological Worldviews Make the Front Page

Into the dispute of whether radical jihadist movements are truly Islamic comes a lengthy and hotly contested article published online in *The Atlantic* called “What ISIS Really Wants.” The cover story for the March 2015 print edition, this article has drawn reactions from all over the world, including some disturbingly approving tweets from ISIS supporters. For Graeme Wood's comments on them, see “What ISIS Really Wants: The Response.” Two days later, *The Atlantic* published the first Muslim pushback in which the author, Caner K. Dagli, claimed ISIS was just cherry-picking Qur'anic texts with which it agreed and ignoring those with which it disagreed.

Middle Eastern Missiologists Respond to *Atlantic* Article

What are Middle Eastern missiologists saying about these prophetological worldviews? Martin Accad responds to *The Atlantic* article in a blog called “Beating Back ISIS,” while Nabeel Jabbour blogs on the same article, giving ten credible reasons why young Muslims all over the world are joining the Islamic State. The last sentence of Jabbour's piece links to a newsletter by Ramez Attalah, director of the Bible Society of Egypt, which was written after twenty-one Egyptian Coptic Christian young men were beheaded in Libya.

The Witness of the Egyptian Martyrs

No sooner had ISIS released its video of the beheadings by the sea than the Bible Society of Egypt set out to produce a tract for Egyptians that would counteract the message of terror. In the first week alone, a record-breaking 1.65 million copies of “Two Rows by the Sea” were distributed to Muslims and Christians alike. Jayson Casper, in his *Christianity Today* article entitled “How Libya's Martyrs are Witnessing to Egypt,” writes that this tract

contains biblical quotations about the promise of blessing amid suffering, alongside a poignant poem in colloquial Arabic [which ends with]: *Who fears the other? The row in orange, watching paradise open? Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?* IJFM