

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 April–June 2015 issue is partly composed of material created later in 2015. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.

Is the Term “Unengaged Peoples” Just a Mobilization Gimmick?

Here's the link if you missed the provocative article by Ted Esler in the April 2015 *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* called “[The Unengaged: An Engaging Strategy... or Not?](#)” One of Esler's bones of contention is that “in defining unengaged, there is an unstated assumption that full-time missionaries are the only (or at least best) way to reaching the people group.” Paul Eshleman notes that some may have mistakenly thought “full-time workers” in this definition meant expatriate workers. In “[A ‘Straw-man’ Case?](#)” he points out:

1,213 new people groups have been engaged since 2006... Nearly 295 churches and organizations have sent out 14,810 full-time workers and are coordinating the ministry of 47,514 bi-vocational workers and part-time workers. *Of these workers, 96% are nationals from the country of the UUPG [Unengaged Unreached People Group].* (Italics ours)

For the historical roots of the 50-year controversy over the very definition of unreached people group, see [Greg Parson's article “Will the Earth Hear His Voice?” in IJFM 32:1.](#)

Crowdsourcing Bible Translations

Most of the men in the room had, up until recently, been bomb-makers, special operatives, and senior leaders of terrorist networks in the Middle East. Now, as disciples of Jesus, they had been appointed by their church leaders to translate the Bible.

When movements to Christ are multiplying fast, how do you disciple new believers quickly enough to prevent syncretism and the rise of cults? Surely access to excellent translations in mother tongue languages is critical. The newest *Mission Frontiers* (Sept/Oct 2015) takes up the theme of Bible translation and technology with its cover story “[Setting the Scriptures Free in a Digital Age.](#)”

The Impact of the Explosion of Christianity in Nigeria

From a book review in *Books and Culture*, July 2015, comes a penetrating analysis by Philip Jenkins entitled “[The Nigerian Jihad.](#)” In his critique of the book *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamic Insurgency* by Virginia Comolli, Jenkins

commends her for her excellent historical research, but notes there is strategic information missing: data about the growth of Christianity in Nigeria over the past century—data that he feels helps explain why Islamic insurgencies have surfaced.

We are in fact dealing with a religious revolution among Christians as well as Muslims. Back in 1900, the lands that became Nigeria had a population of some 15 million, of whom 25 to 30 percent were Muslim. Christians at that point scarcely existed, representing perhaps one percent of the whole, but they grew explosively over the following decades. By 1970, Muslims had grown to perhaps 45 percent of Nigeria's population, roughly the same proportion as Christians, and that rough parity continues today in a country with over 180 million people. Complicating this picture is that the religious groups are not equally distributed: the north of the country is chiefly Muslim, the east largely Christian... Now look at this transformation from the standpoint of northern Muslims. A hundred years ago, it seemed obvious that the whole region was naturally destined to be Muslim... History was clearly moving in an Islamic direction. By the end of the 20th century, though, growth, progress, and wealth were badges of the emerging Christian Nigeria, and aggressive evangelism even threatened to make inroads into the Islamic heartland.

Update on the Disappearance of Christianity in the Middle East

In the Spring 2015 issue, we mentioned the catastrophic demolition of world heritage sites and the murder of many Assyrian Christians on the part of ISIS. Fast forward to August 2015, and we have more daunting footage of [the destruction of irreplaceable temples in Palmyra](#), the beheading of [one of the foremost \(Syrian\) archaeologists in the 21st century](#), and the abduction of hundreds more Assyrian Christians in Syria. In an excellent article in the *New York Times*, July 22, entitled “[Is This the End of Christianity in the Middle East?](#)” author Eliza Grizwold puts faces and names to genocide. She also recounts a haunting history of Christian presence in the Middle East. Bookmark it.

Geopolitical Risk Predictions

Crisis plans, sudden missionary expulsions, kidnappings, or murders—geopolitical risks are rising and mission agencies are having to adapt. In its May 2015 issue, the *Atlantic* has an article entitled “[The Disintegration of the World.](#)” Primarily focusing on what this means for large corporations, the author quotes Ian Bremmer, an expert in the assessment of global political risks, who characterizes our time as

a period of geopolitical creative destruction—the glue that is holding the world together no longer sticks. The last time this happened was the end of World War II. The level of geopolitical risk as a consequence of this transition—which is just starting—is absolutely going to be a big deal. **IJFM**