

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 January–December 2017 issue is partly composed of material created later in 2017. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.

Central Asian Spring?

With the death of its president last year and the landslide election of a new reform-minded leader, many analysts are cautiously predicting the beginnings of an economic boom in Central Asia's reclusive Uzbekistan. A Nov 28 *Voice of America News* article (“Uzbekistan Is Opening the Door . . . a Crack”) sees great potential in a country rich in oil, gas, and cotton. The encouraging signs? New start-ups are pouring in. Currency reforms have been instituted. Exit visa restrictions have been lifted. Professional medical and academic people are no longer being sent to harvest cotton. Just last month, Uzbekistan hosted an international high-level conference on security and development. Over 500 people attended, including European Union officials tasked with Central Asia issues. Details on many regions of the world are available to subscribers to Justin Long’s *The Weekly Round Up*: <http://www.justinlong.org/>.

Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar

This Dec 2, 2017 *New York Times* article “No Such Thing as Rohingya’: Myanmar Erases a History,” gives the backdrop for the tragedy engulfing the Muslim Rohingya in Buddhist Myanmar. Brutal genocidal tactics have been used to drive more than 650,000 Rohingya out of Myanmar. For US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, this constitutes ethnic cleansing. Religious violence began to spiral out of control in 2012 with the alleged rape of a Buddhist woman by a Muslim man. See the full story in *The Atlantic*’s “The Misunderstood Roots of Burma’s Rohingya Crisis.”

The Balfour Declaration Turns 100

Nov 2, 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the document that conveyed vague promises by Britain about the possible future of a Zionist state. See the October 26th article in *The Economist*’s “The Balfour Declaration still offers lessons to Israel and the Palestinians.”

For a link to the declaration itself, click on http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp. For the repercussions one hundred years later, see the *New York Times* article “Balfour Declaration of Support for Jewish Homeland Still Divisive at 100.” Ruth Wisse, professor of Yiddish and Comparative Literature at Harvard, offers a personal retrospective from a Jewish point of view in this *Wall Street Journal* article “When Britain Renewed the Promise to the Jews.” But for a poignant essay addressed to Christians by an Arab Christian himself, read “It Is the Centenary, But No One Is Celebrating” by Elias Ghazal, Institute of Middle East Studies at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon.

If Uttar Pradesh Were a Country

Filled with helpful graphs and charts, Quartz Media’s startling article “If Uttar Pradesh Were a Country” examines India’s most populous province (200 million people, of whom nearly 19% are Muslim.) Last March, the pro-Hindutva party BJP swept the elections in Uttar Pradesh. After winning 3/4 of the constituencies, the BJP immediately appointed a right-wing Hindu Chief Minister. For more details about the role of religious hate speech in these elections, see “UP Elections: Hatred Won, Development Didn’t” in *Forward Press*. This rise in religious intolerance in India against Muslims and Christians has been noticed by its Muslim neighbor, Pakistan, in the *Daily Times* article “The True Face of India’s Secularism.” (Is the pot calling the kettle black?) For a report on the rise of worldwide religious intolerance, scan the *Huffington Post*’s article entitled “Religious Intolerance Surges Worldwide, US Studies Confirm” and the Pew Forum’s report pointing out the reversal of what had been a downward trend: <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-reversing-downward-trend/>.

A Crown Prince’s Aggressive Foreign Policy: Reckless or Reforming?

The Saudi crown prince has had a busy November 2017: the Lebanese prime minister was forced to publicly resign November 4, 2017, an action he rescinded three weeks later; over 200 leading Saudi politicians and businessmen were arrested the same day; and over 1700 private bank accounts frozen. Four days later began a blockade of Yemen that threatens to bring massive starvation to over seven million people. What’s the youngest Saudi crown prince up to? *The Economist* has devoted a lengthy piece to this prince in “The Rise of Muhammad Bin Salman.” *Business Insider* (Nov 16)

explores the urgent economic crisis facing the Kingdom with the 2015 plunge in oil prices in its article [“The fragile balance between Saudi Arabia’s ruling class and its people is ‘unsustainable.’”](#) A *New York Times* article speculates that the king is suffering from dementia in [“The Upstart Saudi Prince Who’s Throwing Caution to the Winds.”](#) One US official said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was at its most fragile in over 50 years, but ironically, *Foreign Policy* reports that Saudis are overwhelmingly supporting this 32-year-old “reformer” who is taking on Iran. See the *FP* article [“Saudis are hoping Mohammed bin Salman will drain the swamp.”](#)

Former President Saleh Confirmed Murdered by Iran-Backed Rebels

The former president of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, has been confirmed dead at the hands of the Houthi rebels when his home in Sana was bombed December 4, 2017 ([“Yemen’s Ex-President Killed as Mayhem Convulses Capital” *New York Times* Dec 4, 2017](#)). This comes just days after Saleh had signaled a critical change in his position, indicating a willingness to work with the Saudis again.

Are African Migrants Who Are Denied Access to European Countries Being Sold as Slaves?

A huge uproar developed when CNN published a video showing a slave auction of African migrants in Libya. See the Nov 20, 2017 article in the *New York Times*, [“UN Chief ‘Horrorified’ at Reports of Slave Auction in Libya.”](#) In a Nov 28 press release, [“High Commissioner for Refugees Calls Slavery, Other Abuses in Libya an ‘Abomination,’”](#) Filippo Grandi said,

more than 116,000 people had crossed the sea from North Africa to Italy in 2017, many of them refugees. The international community’s inability to prevent and resolve conflict was at the root of their flight, he explained, adding that they were exposed to appalling harm, including torture, rape, sexual exploitation, slavery and other forms of forced labour. More than 17,000 refugees and migrants were currently detained in Libya, and many more were held by traffickers under the protection of well known militias.

Check out *The Daily Beast’s* hard-hitting expose, [“When the Way Out of Boko Haram is an Ancient Slave Route.”](#)

Two Books of Note

Don’t miss Darrell Whiteman’s review of [*Living in the Family of Jesus: Critical Contextualization in Melanesia and Beyond* \(*International Bulletin of Mission Research* Oct–Dec 2017.\)](#) Melanesia, Whiteman points out, is a great place to

test contextualization theories because “with less than nine million people, [Melanesia] is home to the world’s greatest linguistic and cultural diversity.” He goes on to mention that “one of the goals of *Living in the Family of Jesus* is to document concrete expressions of contextualization based on the metaphor of family, which is foundational to Melanesian societies.” As Jesus movements among Muslim peoples rise in number—many of them contextualized in extended family networks—it behooves us to learn from older (non-Muslim) movements elsewhere. Why did they occur? Did some totally disappear? If so, why? Whiteman recommends this book for Bible schools and seminaries in other parts of the world “who also face the need to connect the whole gospel to the deepest part of peoples’ worldviews.”

Rory MacKenzie’s new (Dec 2016) introductory textbook on Buddhism entitled [*God, Self, and Salvation in Buddhist Contexts*](#) also merits consideration. Kang San Tan, executive director of Asia CMS, calls it “the best Christian treatment on Buddhist worldviews to date.” Tan describes MacKenzie as “that rare person who combines profound faith in Christ and practical field experience with years of love and personal friendship with Buddhists.” From the Amazon blurb: “Informed by Karl Reichelt’s contextualized approach, the book advocates friendship with Buddhists but at the same time maintaining missionary encounter.” See also [Jens Bernhard’s article](#) (this issue) for a perspective on the problems that arise from different mission narratives among Buddhists. **IJFM**