

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.

A Divisive New Statement on Social Justice

Missionaries have historically been at the forefront of concern for social justice on the field. But what about the home front? Mark Galli, editor of *Christianity Today*, writing in response to a controversial new statement on social justice, exposes some vulnerabilities at the base of evangelical mission today. (See his September 13, 2018 article, "[Evangelism is a Work of Social Justice](#).") But Michael Gerson writing in the *Washington Post*, objects strongly to this statement with some forceful examples from history. (See "[Christians Are Suffering from Complete Spiritual Blindness](#).")

Revival of Religion in a Secular China

"China is undergoing a spiritual revival similar to the Great Awakening" says Ian Johnson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting and author of the book *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*. In a new article entitled, "[Religion in China: Back to the Center of Politics and Society](#)" (for the quarterly, *Religions & Christianity in Today's China*, vol. VIII, no. 3, 2018), Johnson points out that most Western Christians are only informed about the terrible persecution of Christians in Communist China.

But focusing on oppression can blind us to a greater truth: that China is in the midst of an unprecedented religious revival, involving hundreds of millions of people—best estimates put the figure at 300 million: 10 million Catholics, 20 million Muslims, 60 million Protestants,^[1] and 200 million followers of Buddhism or traditional religions in China.... Progress is not linear—churches are demolished, temples run for tourism, and debates about morality manipulated for political gain—but the overall direction is clear. Faith and values are returning to the center of a national discussion over how to organize Chinese life.

What drives this growth? I would argue that hundreds of millions of Chinese are consumed with doubt about their society and turning to religion and faith for answers that they do not find in the radically secular world constructed around them.

Johnson goes on to say that despite the fact that China's minorities (10% of the population) number over 100 million people

... the brutal reality of China is that ethnic Chinese, also called Han Chinese, dominate China's economic, political, and spiritual life—even in these border lands. For better or worse, it is the spiritual journey of the ethnic Chinese that will determine the soul of the new superpower.

"At First They Came For . . ."

It appears that to be a Muslim Uighur is to have an [infectious disease](#) that must be eradicated. (See [chilling excerpts](#) from a 12-minute audio Uighur recording made by Communist officials and broadcast on WeChat.) Conservative estimates place the number of adult Muslims detained at 1.5 million, but [Chinese Human Rights Defenders](#) maintain it could be as many as three million. According to a *New York Times* article September 18, 2018, "[China is Detaining Muslims in Vast Numbers](#)," officials have adopted

methods reminiscent of Mao's draconian rule—mass rallies, public confessions and "work teams" assigned to ferret out dissent. They have also wired dusty towns across [Xinjiang](#) with an array of technology that has put the region on the [cutting edge of programs for surveillance cameras](#) as well as facial and voice recognition.

See the riveting September 10, 2018 *Al-Jazeera* article, "[Escape from Xinjiang](#)." A May 2018 *Washington Post* article "[Former Inmates of China's Muslim 'Re-Education Camps' Tell of Brainwashing, Torture](#)," quotes a German expert on the Uighur crackdown as saying, "China's pacification drive in Xinjiang is . . . the country's most intense campaign of coercive social re-engineering since the end of the Cultural Revolution." [Congressional leaders](#) have written the White House demanding sanctions be imposed for such gross human rights violations.

Marginalized Ethnic Groups: Lessons from North African Church History

Two Norwegian Lutheran missionaries with field experience in Mali and Ethiopia have written a pertinent article looking at both the early Berber church and the Ethiopian Amharic believers. Their thesis deals with the religious identity of marginalized ethnic groups (surely there are striking parallels today!). Read the Lausanne Global Analysis September 2018 paper entitled "[Lessons from North African Church History: Embracing a Theology of Unity in Diversity](#)."

Crackdown on Dissent, Crack-Up of Democracy?

In a response to the arrests late August of prominent activists on spurious charges provoked by (unrelated) caste violence, India's Supreme Court issued a memorable warning: "Dissent is the safety-valve of democracy. If it is not allowed, the pressure cooker will burst" (the *Economist*, September 13, 2018, "[Ten Indian Activists are Arrested over a Far-Fetched Conspiracy](#)"). Congress party president Rahul Gandhi, the opposition party leader, agreed. He compained in a tweet, "There is only place for one NGO in India and it's called the [RSS](#). Shut down [all other NGOs](#). Jail all activists and shoot those that complain. Welcome to the new India" (the *Economic Times*, August 28, 2018, "There is place for only one NGO in 'the New India'"). **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ The number Ian Johnson quotes for Christians refers only to those in the 3-Self movement. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimated in 2015 there were close to [120 million Christians](#) counting both the Han house movement and the 3-Self movement.