

A WORLD IN MOTION



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Donald Trump has begun the process of selecting key advisors and cabinet members as his nation and the world contemplate what the future may look like under his presidency.

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As Iraqi Christian towns like Qaraqosh and Bartella are liberated from the Islamic State, returning Christians seeking to restore the Church face multiple challenges.

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Understanding and Freedom, a book and DVD set by Dr Daniel Shayesteh, addresses Islamic doctrine and beliefs from a Christian perspective.



THE NUMBERS: US ELECTION RESULTS



+/-130 MILLION

The number of voters who participated in this election (57.9% of those eligible, down from previous two elections)



290

The number of Electoral College votes for Mr Trump (270 needed to win) to Secretary Clinton's 232



47.1%

The percentage of the popular vote for Mr Trump, compared to 47.9% for Secretary Clinton



75%

The percentage of Americans polled who were surprised by Mr Trump's victory

THE UNCHARTERED WATERS OF THE TRUMP ERA



US President-elect Donald Trump has defended his handling of the transition to the White House, amid reports of disarray in his team. Mr Trump tweeted that the process of selecting his new cabinet and other positions was "very organised". He has already replaced New Jersey Governor Chris Christie with Vice-President-elect Mike Pence as head of the transition team. Mr Trump has spent the week since his election holed up in the Manhattan skyscraper that bears his name. He's been looking to fill key posts in his cabinet, but the early indications are it's proving a less-than-straightforward task. (*BBC News*)

Historic election

Dr David Aikman, political analyst and former *TIME Magazine* journalist, described the recent US elections as "the ugliest [the US] has ever had in the last century" but also the "most important election in American history". Divisions between Republicans and Democrats ran rife, and minutes after Mr Trump was announced as the 45th president of the United States, both the Canadian and Australian immigration sites crashed due to the excessively high number of visits by people who were considering fleeing the country rather than dealing with the reality of a Trump presidency.

As the dust settles, the question now on everyone's lips is what the 'era of Trump' will mean to Americans and to the world. Will the president-elect give concessions to keep the nation from further political division, or will he stand firm on campaign promises? Will he really be a "president

for all Americans", bringing to reality the promises of unification made in his victory speech, or will the protests against his election and the anger expressed on social media become a movement that he cannot manage?

What is certain is that few presidents have had an opportunity quite like the one today: both houses of Congress have a Republican majority, and the Supreme Court has one empty seat, with a standing tie between four liberal and four conservative justices that President Obama was not able to break with his nominee.

Socio-political shifts

Socio-political shifts in the US have been highly evident in this historic election. While Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton won the 'popular vote' (by a small but significant majority of 60.8 million votes compared to Mr Trump's 60.3 million), Mr Trump won the key battleground states that gave him the upper hand in the electoral college that determined his appointment as Commander-in-Chief.

Beginning January 20th, the US government will undergo a major facelift. The last time that both houses of Congress had a Republican majority with a sitting Republican president was during President Calvin Coolidge's term of office (1923-29). More recently, Democrats achieved this balance under President Jimmy Carter (1977-81), with Democrats enjoying a steep majority in both the House and the Senate.

What sets the 'Trump era' apart from any other in recent US history is the mood of the American electorate concerning the presidential candidates. According to data from *Gallup*, never before have people wanted their candidate to win so badly while disliking the other so intensely. With this election, the 'net unfavourable' percentages for both candidates (measured by *Gallup* since 1956) were "the worst in presidential polling history" (before the elections, these stood at 52% for Secretary Clinton and 61% for Mr Trump). In



Tens of thousands of hard-line Muslim protesters in **Indonesia** (usually a moderate nation) recently rallied to demand the resignation of the governor of the capital, Jakarta, who they said had insulted the Quran. The protesters called for Basuki Tjahja Purnama, a Christian and the first ethnic Chinese in the job, to be jailed for blasphemy. They say he insulted the Quran by dismissing a political attack by his opponents who urged Muslims not to vote for Purnama by citing a verse from the Quran.



A pro-Russian candidate for president of **Moldova** has won the race, following a campaign in which he vowed to slam the brakes on seven years of closer integration with the European Union. Another potential blow to the European Union brand, **Bulgaria** - which also held a presidential vote - elected a pro-Russian candidate by a large margin, according to exit polls.



Israel has formally rejected France's invitation to take part in a Middle East peace conference in Paris later this year, saying it was a distraction from the goal of direct negotiations with the Palestinians. Israel wanted nothing to do with the effort to revive talks that last broke down in 2014.

comparison, former president George W. Bush held a 39% unfavourable rating as the Republican nominee, and Mr Obama polled at 37% in the 2012 election.

Early signs of leadership decisions

After the election, Mr Trump stated that his most important legislative issues will be border security, healthcare reform and the economy. Within the US system, which was designed with checks and balances to limit power and influence, Mr Trump's agenda may turn out to be achievable. Yet there are also signs that he may adapt some of his campaign policies to public opinion – this seems to have happened with his position on the Affordable Healthcare Act (Obamacare), which he had promised to "repeal" but now has said he would reconsider. Although it is still early days after the election, there are signs that Mr Trump may be listening to advice to look at things from a different perspective. For some of his supporters, this may be criticised for being 'over-conciliatory', while for opponents, it comes as something of a relief.

This early sign of cooperation may signal an understanding and a decision by Mr Trump and his team to apply the Republican majority with prudence. Applying a limited immigration policy for Muslims and seeking the prosecution of a former first lady would have deep repercussions, and Mr Trump appears to now be shying away from both of those campaign positions. The situation, however, is complicated. From the outset of Mr Trump's campaign, his supporters rallied around shared complaints about foreign policy, energy, healthcare and the economy (among other issues). Having been elected on the basis of promises made, does Mr Trump have a mandate to carry out for the people who voted for him?

A key concern of states like West Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania is the energy policy – a touchy subject for Republicans for the past eight years. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Majority Leader, is now excited to implement a new policy shift to restore the coal industry and to push forward the disputed Keystone XL pipeline to boost the domestic oil enterprise. This is only one of the challenging issues that Mr Trump now faces.

Domestic and foreign policy

Ian Bremmer, political scientist and president of the *Eurasia Group*, described Donald Trump as "the single most unfit person to run a country". Many will have had similar thoughts in the days following the election, considering how 'green' Mr Trump is in terms of public office and shaping foreign policies. Much will be determined by who he positions around him for guidance. In recent days, Mr Trump appointed Reince Priebus (Chairman of the Republican National Committee and a 'Washington insider') as his Chief of Staff, and the highly controversial Stephen Bannon (of the 'right-wing' Breitbart News) as senior counsel and chief strategist.

In terms of foreign policy, implementing the positions espoused by Mr Trump during his campaign is all uncharted waters. French President Francois Hollande warned that the Trump presidency would "open up a period of uncertainty". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was more positive, calling Mr Trump a "true friend of the State of Israel" and expressing his hopes that under Mr Trump, US-Israel relations would reach "greater heights". The fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the first world leaders to congratulate Mr Trump came as no real surprise, as Moscow appears hopeful about gaining an ally and restoring East-West relations.

As Mr Trump formulates his foreign policy, he will need to make critical decisions about unresolved issues that he inherits, such as the conflict in Afghanistan. To this day, Afghanistan remains dangerous for American forces – on the Saturday after the elections, four Americans died in an attack on the Bagram Air Base (the largest military installation in the country), a full 15 years after the first American soldiers arrived to counter the Taliban. Then there is Iraq, still locked in conflict that traces back to decisions made by the Bush administration, and the war in Syria, in which Russia plays a complicated role that directly opposes US interests in the conflict.

A *BBC News* report indicates that Mr Putin has already discussed diplomatic matters with Mr Trump, even before the transition from the Obama administration began. Ukraine is also an issue between Russia and the US, but the effort that Mr Trump is making to communicate with Russia may be an early indication of where his priorities lie. He may know that Russia will not easily budge from its interests, but as the Islamic State may soon be excluded as a major contender for regional influence, new deals may be struck. It is tenable that Mr Trump's administration may soon be able to focus on a diplomatic, multilateral solution to the Syrian crisis – one that allows Russian influence with the current regime of Bashar al-Assad staying in power, or a Syrian leadership under the auspices of Russian control.

If the Trump administration achieves a cooperative position with Russia in the Middle East, and if the current push against the Islamic State proves to be successful, there would be room for greater focus on accomplishing major legislative goals. In order to understand how these legislative goals could be tackled, it is important to consider the leadership of Congress. The leadership of the House, or the lower house of Congress, centres on the office of the Speaker of the House, a position currently held by Paul Ryan who is set to remain in office for the near future. With Ryan there, the Republican leadership may have its way with the Affordable Healthcare Act, the Keystone XL legislation and more, and with Priebus (a long-time friend of Ryan) as Chief of Staff, this advantage may be solidified. With the Republican Party poised to establish itself so firmly for the next four years, it seems to counter Mr Trump's campaign promises to remove Washington's elites from power and to 'shake up the Hill'.

NEWS HEADLINES



An International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of possible war crimes by US forces in Afghanistan is not "warranted or appropriate," the US State Department said after prosecutors in the Hague found initial grounds for such a probe. The US State Department said the US is not a party to the Rome Statute that created the ICC and had not consented to ICC jurisdiction. It also stated that Washington had a robust justice system able to deal with such complaints.



Myanmar police will begin arming and training non-Muslim residents in the troubled north of Rakhine State, where officials say militants from the Rohingya Muslim group pose a growing security threat. Human rights monitors and a leader of the Rohingya said the move risked sharpening intercommunal tensions in a region that has just seen its bloodiest month since 2012.



Islamist rebels have intensified their attacks in **Somalia**, detonating larger, more sophisticated devices, bringing in more foreign expertise and doubling the death toll from last year, experts said. The surge in violence threatens an upcoming presidential vote and the reconstruction of a nation whose population is already leaving in droves, swelling a global migrant crisis.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

During the presidential campaigns, Donald Trump pushed the limits of what Americans have come to expect from prospective leaders, often using vulgar language or offensive references and aggressively attacking his opponents. The October 'bus tape' scandal almost derailed his campaign, with some calling for Mike Pence (an openly Christian conservative) to replace Mr Trump as the Republican candidate. But some believe that as vice-president, Mr Pence will be able to keep the president in check. Ben Carson, another devout Christian (who earlier ran as a Republican candidate), is also set for an appointment to Mr Trump's cabinet, and it is hoped that there will be sufficient Christian influence on executive decisions.

The United States today still sends out more missionaries to the unreached world than any other Christian nation. Donald Trump's election will unquestionably impact this – both the sending capacity of the America Church, and the reception that Western missionaries experience in 'closed countries' like Iran, North Korea and China. Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Islamic State have already vowed to renew their efforts against the West and to target minority Christians in their own

countries. Persecuted Christians will be looking to the new leader of the biggest Christian nation in the world to advocate on their behalf. So, time will tell whether Mr Trump's impact is positive or negative, and what new challenges or breakthroughs American (and Western) missionaries and minority Christians experience as a result of Mr Trump's election.

Donald Trump has declared that he is a Christian, something confirmed in June 2016 by James Dobson (founder of *Focus on the Family*), who said that Mr Trump had recently come "to accept a relationship with Christ". During an interview with columnist and author Cal Thomas, Mr Trump said the following: "Jesus to me is somebody I can think about for security and confidence. Somebody I can revere in terms of bravery and in terms of courage and, because I consider the Christian religion so important, somebody I can totally rely on in my own mind." Many have doubted the sincerity of Mr Trump's words, but at this critical time for America, it is important to trust that God knows what He is doing. Mr Trump is the president-elect, and God will work out His purposes through him.

PRAY >> That God guides Mr Trump's choices for his cabinet > That Mr Trump addresses the right issues at the right times, and that he picks his battles wisely > That God uses Christians around Mr Trump to influence domestic and foreign policy for good > That the American Church will be a voice of peace and unity at this time

HOPE FOR NEWLY-LIBERATED QARAQOSH



In the half-burned church of St Mary al-Tahira in Qaraqosh, several dozen Syriac Catholics held mass in Aramaic amid the wreckage left by [the Islamic State]. Christians are still traumatised by the disasters of the last two-and-a-half years. When IS took Qaraqosh on 8 August 2014 it had a population of 44,000, almost all Syriac Catholics, who fled for their lives to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Some 40 percent of these have since migrated further to countries like Australia and France or, within the Middle East, to Istanbul and Lebanon. Christian fighters who liberated the Christian town of Qaraqosh have sworn to rebuild their homes, churches and the community. (*The Independent*)

Enduring 'prayer request'

For many Christians around the world, the name "Qaraqosh" will be familiar. On 5 August 2014, a message by Sean Malone – then head of Crisis Relief International (CRI) in Iraq – was sent asking supporters to pray for the dire situation facing the

Church in Qaraqosh. IS was closing in around the city, threatening its Christian inhabitants. The private message found its way to social media and has since been re-sent countless times over the past two years. According to the message, IS was "beheading children systematically" and was 10 minutes away from where the CRI team was working.

Although the original message from CRI was not a hoax, and the Christians of Qaraqosh were indeed forced to flee to Erbil in Kurdistan, the content of the message soon became 'old news' but people forwarded it as if it was current, which was evidence of people's willingness to re-send messages without any attempts to verify truth or accuracy.

Lack of follow-through

The 'Qaraqosh message' prompts questions about why bad news spreads so much quicker and further than good news. The thought of IS waging a violent campaign against Christians drew much interest and raised countless prayers, but when the town was liberated in recent days and Christians started returning, reports were only found on secular media and there were no messages of praise or thanksgiving. A vast majority of people who forwarded the prayer requests did not know that the town had been liberated, and very few will actively seek ways of helping with the restoration of the Church in Qaraqosh. The original Qaraqosh

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

INcontext Website:

www.incontextministries.org

Please visit our website for up-to-date information on events around the world.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



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message awakened in people a desire for justice for persecuted Christians, but in the long run, it will do little to aid today's need of returning and rebuilding.

In general, there was a major lack of 'follow-through' to the original forwarded message (i.e. keeping an eye on the media for updates about the situation), which would have enabled Christians to pray more specifically and with more up-to-date information. Follow-through would also have helped to prevent the 'old news' being forwarded so often and for so long (to the point that it resembled a hoax). The sad reality is that many Christians pray for those who are persecuted in places like Qaraqosh and then never think of them again.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

As smaller Iraqi Christian towns like Qaraqosh and Bartella are liberated as part of the quest to win back Mosul from IS, returning Christians seeking to restore the Church face multiple challenges in a country devastated by war and terrorism.

INcontext asked a Christian worker in Iraq (Jonah*) about the future of the Church after the defeat of the Islamic State, and he said that the priority of the Church is to respond to the disillusioned millions who are questioning their faith: "Not only Christians fled Iraq because of IS, but millions of Muslims too. War does not differentiate between religion and ethnicity, it

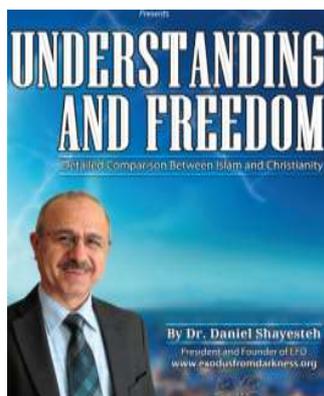
affects everyone at the same time." Both Muslims and Christians have suffered greatly, and few have faith in governments, militaries or international intervention, which creates an opportunity for the Church to offer a real and living hope. A leading Coptic Bishop in Egypt said that "IS has done more for the expansion of the Gospel than the Church has done in 100 years," referring to how the Islamic State's extreme violence in the name of Islam has caused many Muslims to lose heart and to question their religious teachings, and in this 'faith vacuum', the Gospel has more of an open door.

Jonah also said that praying for the return of Christians to the Nineveh plains is a high priority. The restoration of the Church in Iraq will speak of a God who does not forsake His followers. In Christ, there is hope, there is a future, and there is certainty of new life. Now is the time for the Church in the West to not only pray for the restoration of the Church in Iraq, but also to actively partake in its restoration (see "Project Hero" on the INcontext website for a way to get involved in this restoration vision).

* Not his real name

PRAY > For Christians returning to their homes and attempting to rebuild > For the larger Christian community to support their brothers and sisters in Iraq > For the returning believers to be a testimony of the Lord's faithfulness

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

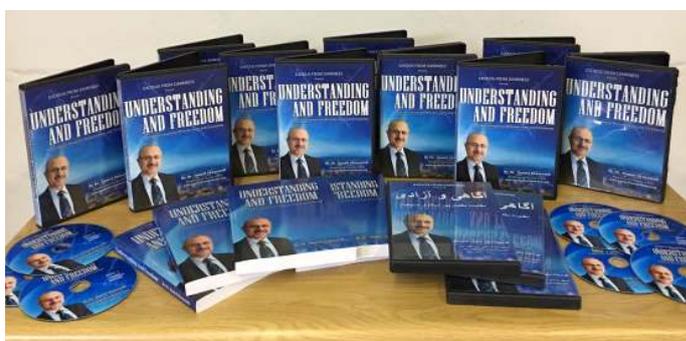


UNDERSTANDING AND FREEDOM (BOOK & 4-DISC DVD SET)

Muslims are taught from childhood that Islam is the last and perfect religion. For Christians, we know this is not the case.

Understanding and Freedom, a book and four-disc DVD set by Dr. Daniel Shayesteh, helps Muslims to 'unchain' themselves from Islamic doctrine by learning about other religious and cultural worldviews (Christianity in particular).

Dr. Shayesteh, a former radical Muslim teacher and politician, is now an apologist and evangelist for Jesus Christ. With two decades of worldwide travel and untold numbers of conversations with Muslims and others of diverse beliefs, Daniel is uniquely gifted and equipped to touch the minds and hearts of people and to share the love of Christ in a powerful way.



R250 for the set of DVDs and the book (postage excluded)

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