



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Journal of the International Institute for Religious Freedom

The IJRF aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on religious freedom and persecution. It is an interdisciplinary, international, peer reviewed journal, serving the dissemination of new research on religious freedom and contains research articles, documentation, book reviews, academic news and other relevant items.

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Subscriptions 2025

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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
VOLUME 18, ISSUE 1, 2025

ISSN 2070-5484 · eISSN 2790-0762 · ISBN 978-3-86269-319-1 · IJRF 2025-1

DOIs Journal: doi.org/10.59484/IJRF6391 · Issue: doi.org/10.59484/QEGS4143

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Acknowledgement of Sponsors

We would like to thank the sponsors who supported the editing, printing and distribution of this issue of IJRF. Their views and opinions are not necessarily those of IIRF and vice versa.

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Note to librarians: IJRF is also available as an ePublication from Sabinet (www.sabinet.co.za). The first full volume of IJRF appeared in 2009. There was only one pilot issue in 2008. Volumes 6 to 15 contain both issues in one volume.

Graphic Design and Typesetting: Ben Nimmo (Solid Ground), www.solidground.training

Language editing: Dr Bruce Barron, Colorado Springs, CO, USA

Proofreading of layout: Barbara Felgendreher, South Africa

Cover Art

This poster art was created by artist Ewald Krijnen, with assistance from the AI image generator Midjourney. The image is inspired by Deuteronomy 32:11 (“like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft”). It evokes interesting feelings such as resilience.

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ISSN 2070-5484 · eISSN 2790-0762

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Editorial

Christian missions and FoRB

The genesis for this special issue on Christian missions and Freedom of Religion or Belief was a symposium at Fjellhaug International University College in Oslo, Norway, in September 2023. Many of the students at Fjellhaug are training to be missionaries, so the topic was of great interest to both faculty and students. A rich variety of papers was presented, and only a small sample have made it into this issue.

We start with two opinion articles. The first comes from Anna Hampton, a pseudonym for a former missionary to Afghanistan who now develops training resources for a theology of risk. Hampton distinguishes between a theology of suffering and a theology of risk, arguing that missionaries in sensitive regions need both of these. The second opinion article, by Amy West, addresses a theology of suffering, complementing Hampton's contribution.

The first peer-reviewed article is my overview of international human rights law and advocacy on freedom of religion or belief. It urges organizations and training facilities to ensure that missionaries are properly trained in all aspects of religious persecution, including legal matters.

Carsten Polanz examines the 2019 Catholic-Sunni Document on Human Fraternity. He has provocatively titled his article "Is the glass half full or half empty?" because he addresses both the positive aspects of this document for inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims and also the possible restrictions it might impose on Christian missionary activities.

Wolfgang Häde, a noted expert on Turkey, looks at negative perceptions of Christians as portrayed in Turkish newspapers. He notes that suspicion of Christians is exacerbated for political gain. His article is a valuable case study because many of the roots of religious discrimination and persecution in Turkey are similar to those in other countries.

In a similar vein, Torbjörn Johansson analyzes theological responses to totalitarianism, starting with German and Norwegian Christian leaders' statements on Nazi Germany. He then considers ways in which modern welfare states are adopting totalitarian tendencies to control thought and speech. This development has negative implications for mission as the state limits certain types of religious speech that it finds offensive.

Christof Sauer explores the feasibility of establishing a Mission Hostility Index, which would be useful in preparing missionaries for work in sensitive and hostile areas.

Finally, Anja Hoffman analyses the chill on religious expression in secular Europe. Her data shows that religious views are not acceptable in many settings, including universities. Christian students self-censor so are less likely to share their Christian faith with others.

I commend to you the usual Noteworthy section. Many annual surveys of FoRB have been published in the first months of 2025, as well as country and regional updates. There is also an excellent selection of book reviews.

This issue has some important contributions for addressing challenges to religious freedom and Christian missionary activities. I hope it will encourage missionaries to be well-prepared for work in sensitive regions.

Yours for religious freedom,
Prof Dr Janet Epp Buckingham
Executive Editor

Guidance for Graduate Students

International Institute for Religious Freedom

The International Institute for Religious Freedom can provide guidance for students who are writing a thesis or dissertation on a topic related to religious freedom. The IIRF can also assist with publication opportunities.

Please send a letter of interest to info@iirf.global.

Tribute to Donald LeRoy Stults (1946-2024)

Dr. Donald LeRoy Stults (Roy) was a member of the Editorial Board of the International Journal for Religious Freedom longtime as well as a member of the Academic Board of the International Institute for Religious Freedom. He was a missiologist who later focused on persecution issues. His most recent article in the IJRF was a theology of persecution (14(1/2):25-37).

Thomas Schirrmacher comments: “Roy helped us very early on to bridge the general commitment to human rights from a philosophy of religion perspective with the emphasis that the global South, e.g. Korea, was way ahead in developing a scholarly theology of martyrdom, both in line with Scripture and with modern human rights ideas. This was an important contribution to the distinctive identity of the IIRF.” Christof Sauer adds: “Roy diligently edited the PhD dissertation of Young Kee Lee, *God’s mission in suffering and martyrdom*. The publication in a series of IIRF is still pending.” Protracted illness kept him from engaging more with IIRF in later years.

Stults earned a B.A. in Religion and an M.A. in Theology from Olivet Nazarene University, followed by an M.Div. from Nazarene Theological Seminary. He continued his academic journey earning a Doctor of Missiology degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Manchester, England.

Stults worked as an elementary school teacher, psychiatric social worker, and U.S. Army soldier before dedicating his life to pastoral and missionary work. He served congregations in Floyd, VA; Jacksonville, FL; Columbus, MO; and Arlington, VA. His passion for education led him to teach as a missionary professor in South Korea, the Philippines, and Germany, as well as at Southern Nazarene University, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, and Olathe College Church of the Nazarene as a Sunday School teacher. Stults also served as the editor of World Mission Magazine and coordinated theological education for the Church of the Nazarene’s Global Ministry Center. In his later years, he created curriculum for The Voice of the Martyrs and traveled domestically and internationally on behalf of persecuted Christians.

Stults’ life was a testament to his faith, his love for his family, and his unwavering curiosity about the world. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Christine Schirrmacher

“Let there be no Compulsion in Religion” (Sura 2:256)

Apostasy from Islam as judged by
contemporary Islamic Theologians



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Religious Freedom Series 4, VKW: Bonn, 2016. 620 pp. ISBN: 978-3-86269-114-2. €49.80

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