

The Ralph D. Winter Lectureship 2021

After the death of Ralph Winter in 2009 it was decided to host an annual lectureship series in his memory. Noted missiologists like Andrew Walls, Rene Padilla, and Dudley Woodberry have shared, and topics like disease, urbanization and creation care have been addressed. The lectures for 2021 focused on the legacy of Karl Ludvig Reichelt of Norway and China for current Buddhist-Christian engagement. This issue of *IJFM* is devoted to the presentations and discussions of that event, which was held virtually from February 24–26, 2021.

Notto Thelle of Norway was the key resource person for this event, and his contributions are central to the papers in this issue of *IJFM*. Thelle had brief encounters with Reichelt as a child, as recounted in the pages that follow, due to his father's role as Reichelt's most-valued colleague. Thelle also recently completed a comprehensive biography of Reichelt in Norwegian. Terry Muck, Rory Mackenzie, and Amos Yong brought decades of experience in the Buddhist-Christian interface to their contributions and interactions. All records of their oral contributions to the lectureship event have been edited for publication and approved by each contributor; the oral tone will still be noted in reading some of these pieces.

Buddhist-Christian Encounters: Today's Realities in Light of the Pioneering Work of Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952) in China (the official title for the lectureship) is presented here as a significant contribution to missiological thought (*not* merely missiological thought focused on Buddhist issues, but much more widely). Each reader will no doubt be impressed by different aspects of the papers and discussions presented here, but this editorial introduction will summarize a few key points that should not be overlooked.

First, there is still much gold to mine from records of past frontier mission work. Karl Reichelt was an amazing man who did unprecedented things in developing deep, respectful relationships with Chinese Buddhists and Taoists (among others) in the first half of the twentieth century. It is good that we have entered a post-colonial world, and Reichelt's world had collapsed by the time of his death in 1952. But reflecting on the character (not flawless!) and actions (not perfect!) of this great man is good for the hearts and minds of all followers of Jesus who in the 21st century seek to move beyond Christendom to meet with people of other traditions in the name of Jesus Christ.

Second, simplistic statements and theologies of interreligious encounter are not adequate to the dynamic realities of current times. The pages that follow promote neither a clear mental paradigm nor a universal call to action, except in the broadest meaning of those terms. It is not at all clear what "Buddhism" means to the average "Buddhist," let alone what exactly in that complex set of heritages comes into conflict with the spirit and teachings of

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Jesus and the Bible. We might like access to a Google map that says "turn right in half a mile," but such detailed instruction is impossible when image-bearers of God from differing cultural and linguistic and spiritual backgrounds meet in deep human encounters. Perhaps the central desired outcome from the lectureship and this publication is the releasing of people from inadequate paradigms into situational dependence on wisdom from God. This wisdom is not cheap, rather it is bought at the cost of years of careful listening, study, reflection, and engagement, as seen in the resource people who contributed to this lectureship and publication.

Third, new patterns of discipleship to Jesus need to develop across the world, particularly where "other religions" hold sway. Christianity grew out of a particular set of cultural contexts and has been reformed and revived many times over, yet still bears the mark of its Greco-Roman (and to a lesser extent, Jewish) heritage. The "Latin captivity of the church" is a major stumbling block, perhaps even the most major of all stumbling blocks, among peoples who see Christianity as an undesirable foreign religion.¹ Karl Reichelt gave his life to erasing this foreignness, engaging with Buddhists and Buddhist practices in ways that shocked and offended some of his colleagues.

How far he succeeded, and whether he always proceeded in wisdom, are certainly topics of vibrant discussion (even in what follows in this journal). The Buddhist engagement of the writers interacting with Reichelt in the papers and discussions here is no less controversial, and also provocative of needed discussions and decisions as Buddhist-Christian encounters continue forward.

Finally, questions of interreligious encounter and dialogical engagement always come home to what is in the heart and mind of the disciple of Jesus. Notto Thelle leaves us in the end with generosity and friendship as the keys (he expounds and illustrates that many times over, complemented profoundly by the other contributors). Are we generous towards people of other faith traditions? Are we genuine friends or merely passing acquaintances with work to do and a mission to accomplish? Seventy years after his death some of Reichelt's weaknesses are apparent; may we learn and see some of ours in time to make changes.

Frontier Ventures, which publishes this journal and has organizational stewardship of the legacy of Ralph Winter (the US Center for World Mission name having been changed in 2015), has made commitments to a fresh focus, without neglecting Muslim peoples, on the Hindu

and Buddhist peoples of the world. If the issues of Christ and the Buddhist world raised in this issue stir your heart and compel action, please reach out to us for ongoing discussion and interaction towards appropriate engagement of disciples of Jesus and Buddhist peoples.

In Him,

H. L. Richard

H. L. Richard, Guest Editor

Endnotes

¹ The "Latin captivity" phrase is taken from Robin Boyd's 1974 book, *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church*, about the failure of the gospel to adequately engage Sanskritic contexts.

The *IJFM* is pleased to serve our guest editor, H. L. Richard, and the 2021 convening committee of the Ralph D. Winter Lectureship in providing this compendium of those presentations from earlier this year. Dr. Richard is an independent researcher who over the past four decades has focused on the Hindu-Christian encounter, but more recently turned North American attention to current missiological studies of Buddhist-Christian encounter in the life of Karl Ludvig Reichelt.

Brad Gill, Senior Editor, *IJFM*

The *IJFM* is published in the name of the International Student Leaders Coalition for Frontier Missions, a fellowship of younger leaders committed to the purposes of the twin consultations of Edinburgh 1980: The World Consultation on Frontier Missions and the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions. As an expression of the ongoing concerns of Edinburgh 1980, the *IJFM* seeks to:

- ☞ promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- ☞ cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- ☞ highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- ☞ encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- ☞ foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- ☞ advocate "A Church for Every People."

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go, yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." (Acts 26:18)

Subscribers and other readers of the *IJFM* (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the *IJFM* for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.