



Justice and Human Rights in the Pursuit of Global Health

We are pleased to have completed five years of quality publishing in the convergence of global health and Christian faith. This convergence has been called a “discomfiting paradox” but also an important connection to recover and magnify for justice and global health.¹ For this issue the journal editors called for papers on Human Rights and Justice related to Global Health on the grounds that the Christian faith-based community needs to be heard on these questions.

We commend to your interest five submissions on this theme. An editorial by [Matthew Santosh Thomas](#), director of the Emmanuel Hospital Association of India introduces the theme, commenting on human rights in general as deriving from the dignity of human beings created in the image of God, but also on the biblical emphasis on the duty of the privileged towards those in need, as opposed to merely the promotion of rights. He surveys some of the conflicts and conundrums associated with health and healthcare rights in other cultural contexts. [Robert Aronson](#) looks at these questions from a public health perspective where the focus shifts from individual behavior to social conditions and systems that promote and sustain inequality in health and healthcare. He offers reasoning based on a biblical understanding of Old Testament policies of land use, New Jerusalem eschatology with a focus on social justice and Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God. [John Patrick](#) examines the presuppositions behind contemporary ideas on global health, human rights, and justice and finds that their success is dependent upon a Judeo-Christian world view, as well as developing a moral framework early in subsequent generations. Readers may find his conclusions challenging.

We also move beyond purely theoretical considerations of this theme and offer two papers whose authors apply these principles in their global

contexts. [Mark Crouch](#), a cross-cultural physician educator in Papua New Guinea, offers practical thoughts on the collision of rights to healthcare and personal responsibility in a setting where resources can be very limited. [Lois Armstrong](#), who has been involved in health care work in South Asia for over 15 years, contributes keen insights on how culture influences a society’s conception of rights. She suggests, from a biblical perspective, ways in which the differences between honor-shame culture, fear-power culture, and guilt-innocence culture can be leveraged to promote effective healthcare in the absence of an explicit notion of healthcare rights.

Rev John Lunn proposes a novel visual model for inculcating spiritual understanding into care for patients in [Spiritual Care Visualized](#). Spirituality in healthcare is also the subject of the Balbonis’ new book [Hostility to Hospitality](#), reviewed with extended commentary by Alan Gijbers. Two articles by Hunter York (a pseudonym) movingly detail the suffering and travail of treatment-resistant depression, an increasing global health problem, first in a unique autobiographical clinical [case report](#), then in an insightful [biblical reflection](#) on the mutual identification with Jesus’ passion and suffering.

Three papers explain how faith-based organizations working in co-operation with secular groups to advance public health and healthcare in various circumstances. [Karen Mathias and Michael Burke](#) describe the effectiveness of faith-based approaches to social justice and treatment of people with psycho-social disability in North India, being the recipients of the annual Dignity and Right to Health Award which acknowledges leadership, service to marginalized communities, successful program outcomes, and personal piety. [Perry Jansen](#) gives an analysis of how the unique cooperation between Samaritan’s Purse and



Doctors Without Borders helped provide effective care and containment during the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic in Liberia. [Kristen Alford and Jamison Koeman](#) offer a case study on the opportunities and challenges of cooperation between a faith-based and a secular organization in providing sustainable sources of safe water in Liberia.

We offer reviews of recently published books dealing with various aspects of global health. This issue contains a review of Reena George's [One Step at a Time: The birth of the Christian Medical College, Vellore](#), and insightful reviews of two books by journal contributor Raymond Downing: [Global Health Means Listening](#), reviewed by Prof Adamu Addisie from Ethiopia, and [Such a Time They Had](#), a history of medical missions in Africa reviewed by Prof Christoffer Grundmann from Germany. The review of *Hostility to Hospitality* was mentioned above. We also include an excellent review of WCC's recent *Contact* Issue on [Primary Health Care Revisited](#) by Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Roopa Verghese. Jacob Blair's

submission, [Jacob's Pharmacy](#), is a creative recasting of John 4: 4-15 into a medical context in Peru. Finally, a poem relating justice to the personalized dying process entitled [My Mother Weakens](#) by Sarah Larkin rounds out the issue.

Please be sure to read the most recent call for papers, [Focusing on the Formative First Years](#). This is an extremely important and emerging area for global health, poverty alleviation, and development, needing more documentation and innovative approaches from faith-based actors. It also corresponds to a recent Lancet series, this year's focus of the Moral and Spiritual Imperative, and the human capital project of the World Bank Group. We are also preparing a call for papers on **mission hospitals**, building on the past, highlighting the present, and strategizing into the future.

References

1. Holman SR. Beholden: Religion, global health, and human rights. New York: Oxford, 2015, p.5.

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