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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the First Issue of the Journal of Religion and Public Life

Chris Sugden 1

Welcome to the first issue of the Journal of Religion and Public Life (JRPL), the new journal published by the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life.

This will be a conversation of scholars, serious students and activists in the area of public life to give a globally accessible voice to scholars and activists from the Global South on key issues. We stand for religious and academic freedom. We espouse a conservative Christian perspective that focuses, with ecumenical engagement, on the mission of the church that transforms the whole of life.

The purpose of JRPL is to give visibility to and distribute more widely the fruits of the work of the OCRPL international research community of faculty, graduates, students and supervisors. There are 10,000 academic institutions globally that are interested in the kind of work we are engaged in. Multiply that by the number of their students!

OCRPL's mission is to equip resource, strengthen, and empower the Church's life and ministry to deal with the challenges of Christian life and witness in religiously plural contexts where Christianity is a minority religion and faces hostility, and Christians are suering or are marginalised, and to witness to the transforming power of Christ. This will be achieved through research, The Shepherds Academy (which provides undergraduate-level and short courses), masters programmes, consultations and publications. The journal will be part of the communication strategy.

We plan to publish stimulating articles and invite scholars, public leaders and activists to respond with key contributions from their context. As a conversation it will be scholarly but will not necessarily rigidly follow the formats of established scholarly journals.

We plan to cover among other topics Religious Freedom, Human Rights, Extremism, Religion and State, Faith and Economics, the Security of Religious Minorities, Religion and Refugees, Religion and Globalisation, and Corruption.

There is much on the international stage to encourage biblically based Christian reflection: intractable wars in the Middle East and Eastern Europe with religious groups ranged on all sides; increasing secularisation in Western societies acting with imperialist

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intent to impose their ethics on religious societies in the Global South through withholding major grants if governments and organisations fail to comply with their recasting of the moral law; increasing pressure and persecution of Christians and other religious minorities who face hate crimes, harassment and violence particularly in South Asia and West Africa.

Our current issue includes an examination of the Biblical foundations of the values of righteousness and justice in relation to the cultures of Biblical times and of the present day. The history of the development of the first public library in India by Danish Lutheran Missionaries demonstrates how the Protestant concern that people be able to read the Word of God started a process of promoting literacy by which common people from all walks of life could have access to accumulated and classified knowledge, previously kept by those with religious and political power. It addresses the practical response by Christian communities and the state to the problems posed and faced by people migrating to Europe, and how the tension in the South Sudanese context, where two religions are in conflict might be addressed by developing a neutral public space in which representatives of different religions might dialogue productively.

We hope that these reflections are a blessing to you and to the wider Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.