



Global Faculty Initiative

**The Faculty Initiative
seeks to promote the integration
of Christian faith and academic disciplines
by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars
across the spectrum of faculties
in research universities
worldwide.**

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net

Preview Response

CREATED ORDER / SOCIAL SCIENCES

Joerg Friedrichs

Associate Professor of Politics, Department of International Development, University of Oxford
Official Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford

This is excellent, and highly readable. My only comment is that, in the section on moral law and international relations, a recognition might be in order that some respected and respectable thinkers in the tradition of political realism (including Reinhold Niebuhr, a protestant theologian) have a tragic view whereby what is in line with God's order might be clear to a Christian leader's conscience yet their responsibility towards constituents in a fallen world may make acting in line with that insight not only impractical but also unconscionable towards those very constituents whom no leader is allowed to betray.

Thus, a Christian leader may be caught in a double bind: on the one hand, they believe and clearly understand God's ethical imperatives, but, on the other hand, they must understand that following these precepts may clash with the best interest of their constituents, voters and/or citizens.

There are at least two reasons for this. First, in a fallen world, third parties may exploit acting according to God's will. Converting swords into ploughshares, short of the second coming, may lead to military disaster. Second, at the domestic level, voters and/or citizens may not always appreciate their leaders acting according to God's will. Giving away one's possessions to feed the poor may be pleasing to God and a Christian leader is free to do so, but a Christian leader giving away a conspicuous share of the national income for development aid may not meet public approval; indeed, how can we be sure that God approves it when leaders spend their constituents' income without their consent? In a democracy, doing so may even be politically self-defeating.

Such considerations are already implicit and partly even explicit in the text but could perhaps be made even more transparent.

For more information

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net