



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

LAWYERS' COURAGE AND PRUDENCE UNDERWRITE THE GOOD SOCIETY

Karen Kong (江嘉恩)

Former Principal Lecturer in Law, University of Hong Kong

Legal issues often involve resolving moral dilemmas. Law has its limitations, discretionary or grey areas. The extent to which just and fair decisions can be made depends not only on how good and comprehensive the law is, but also on how the legal personnel interpret and practice the law and how they exercise discretions within the legal system.

Judges and legal practitioners need to have the courage and prudence to uphold the rule of law, advocate and develop the law, make good judgments, and choose what is fair and just when exercising discretionary powers. Courage enables lawyers and advocates to voice and challenge established norms that are unfairly favoring the privileged or prejudicial against the minorities.

In scholarly life, intellectual virtues enable a legal academic to choose to research in areas that deepen understanding of issues that contribute to human flourishing but may not easily lend itself to publication in prestigious journals or greatly enhance the research profile of the academic. Wisdom enables an academic to allocate his time and resources well for the service of the institution, the students, and the community for human flourishing.

However, the extent to which such virtuous decisions can be consistently made depends on the virtue ethics of the legal practitioners or academic. As Professor Herdt highlighted, Christian virtues are infused and cultivated. At the same time, political, legal and institutional pressure can force a person to choose to pursue self-preservation driven by fear rather than human flourishing out of love. The political, legal and institutional will can often be motivated by self-preservation or human pride of those people behind the institutions.

At some critical moments, Christians may face the choice of whether to continue to stay on to practise virtues against institutional or political pressure at a high cost and a risk of their own fallenness and stifling, or to sever from those institutions and authorities and find a more nurturing place that enable them to better promote human flourishing. Perhaps more can be discussed on how to support Christians in public and scholarly life in this decision-making process.

For more information

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net