



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 / PHYSICAL & BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Ian Hutchinson

Professor Emeritus of Nuclear Science and Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Thank you for a hint of fascinating and insightful ideas relating justice and the created order of the natural world. I respond with outlines of some personal affirmations and contrasts, keyed to subsections.

The Good is what is in harmony with God's eternal character. Christian theology answers the Euthyphro dilemma, [1] routinely promulgated by secularists to problematize transcendent ethics, by saying that The Good is neither God's arbitrary command, nor an independent prior quality, but God's eternal nature. This is reflected in the natural world that science investigates; and even secular scientists often sense the goodness.

The Moral is when we humans, by conscious choice, act in ways that reflect in even greater fulness The Good.

Freedom at some level is fundamental to choice. Modern physics does not support the rigid deterministic view of the universe that once seemed to be implied by the success of classical dynamic theory. (Despite naive atheistic arguments about deterministic equations.)

Political Order based on social contracts can also justify rebellion. While a higher (e.g. God's) authority certainly can justify it, those who follow Hobbes would surely argue that rebellion might be justified when contracts were never agreed to, or are repudiated by either side. Christians must, I think, acknowledge that there are political risks believing in higher moral authority. It can be corrupted to a hegemony that is human (or evil) not divine. So the challenge is to reconcile different opinions about what is The Good.

International Relations: this paragraph addresses the challenge, but it is not just international; it is local and national too.

Academic Vocation these days is rarely articulated as being "the discovery of the truth of reality", let alone "as given by God". Christians might therefore be regarded as quaintly old fashioned to say so. In the natural sciences self-interest and pride are plentifully present, but so also, up till recently at least, have been epistemological principles that effectively detect untruth. That is one reason why Marxism and Postmodernism have barely penetrated the natural sciences.

End Note

- [1] From Plato's Socratic dialog asking "Is something good (holy) because the gods love it, or do the gods love it because it is good."

For more information

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net