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

ON WHAT UNIVERSAL MORAL GROUNDS CAN YOU INTERVENE TO RESCUE GIRLS FROM BROTHELS?

Judith M. Dean

Professor of International Economics, School of Business and Economics, Brandeis University, USA

I found this Preview wonderful in its concise reminder that God's creation is value-laden, and thus moral law follows from this created order.

Regarding international relations, Biggar notes that "even where there are no contracts between different peoples—where there is no international law—moral law still obtains." There is an interesting example of this in economic development, particularly among those passionate about solving global poverty. For example, many who have no particular faith are strong advocates that more wealthy individuals and countries have an obligation to help the less fortunate, and that policy choices in rich countries that harm poor countries are not right. That is, they assume that values such as the dignity of human life, and the importance of "loving your neighbor" are globally true and need no justification. I see this as a recognition of those values imbued by God in His created order. They are indeed "visible," even to those who do not believe in God.

When I was on the faculty at another university, several student groups jointly invited Gary Haugen (president of International Justice Mission) to give a lunchtime talk. It was a very diverse group, and I was sitting next to a professor of international law. I knew that he had rejected his Catholic upbringing long ago. Gary challenged us when he said that to do IJM's work, you need to think about the basis upon which you form your values. E.g., on what grounds can you say that you should intervene in another country to help rescue girls from brothels? Who says your values are the same as theirs? He explained that his own basis was his Christian faith. Interestingly, the international law prof leaned over to me and said he'd been trying to get them to think about this same issue--the basis upon which one can even construct international law--and he had found it very challenging.

For more information

www.globalfacultyinitiative.net