

like Plantinga, Wolterstoff, and Swinburne are each given place, even as all the major philosophers of the Western tradition receive an entry. Moreover, big philosophical themes like “Enlightenment,” “logic,” “pragmatism,” “selfhood,” “truth,” “foundationalism,” “ethics” are also given attention. This book is up-to-date and demonstrates a well-grounded understanding in contemporary philosophy of religion. Important theologians are treated as well.

While this is not an apologetics manual, inasmuch as the volume treats many areas where philosophical matters intersect with apologetics, any believer interested in defending the faith will find this a valuable tool. Thiselton’s book is a fine resource and will prove exceedingly useful to professional philosophers, pastors, and students.

—J. Mark Beach

David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*. Studies in Christian Social Ethics and Economics, Number 1, ed. Anthony B. Bradley. Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2006. Pp. iii + 75. ISBN 978-880595-23-0. \$6.00.

In *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, Dr. David VanDrunen of Westminster Seminary California presents the first volume in a series of short books published by the Acton Institute on the application of Christian ethics to realms of church and society. If this first volume is any indication of the rest, this series has a place in the marketplace of ideas. VanDrunen’s writing style is as clear as his method, stating what he attempts to do, laying out his evidence, and summarizing his findings — no doubt a testament to his training in law.

In the introduction, he gives a general definition of natural law as “the moral order inscribed in the world and especially in human nature, an order that is known to all people through their natural faculties (especially reason and/or conscience) even apart from supernatural divine revelation that binds morally the whole of the human race” (1). Natural law, VanDrunen shows, is a basic aspect of theology in both Roman Catholic and Protestant systems. It is here that VanDrunen’s interlocutor comes into

view. Contemporary Protestant authors, including Reformed thinkers, have eschewed natural law on the grounds that it 1) detracts from the authority of Scripture, 2) makes human nature our moral authority, 3) does not take seriously the noetic effects of sin, and 4) presents a monolithic moral standard that is not sensitive to the progress of redemptive history (3-4). This opening catalog of objections illustrates one of the few criticisms of this book. The lack of footnotes is understandably a downside of a series of short, introductory books such as this one. Nevertheless, it would have benefited the reader had the editor included more documentation in order to examine and weigh the reasoning behind these objections.

The rest of the book is VanDrunen's explicitly *biblical* defense of this classic, yet forgotten, doctrine. Chapter 2 on "Natural Law and Human Nature" makes its starting point not the oft-repeated texts in discussions of natural law in Romans 1:19-20 and 2:14-15, but the image of God. This pedagogical turn is commendable as it lays aside the preconceived objections of those opposed to natural law and enters this subject in a fresh way. VanDrunen, then, moves away from any abstract doctrine of natural law to its source, saying, "The foundation for speaking about natural law is not nature but the creator of nature, God himself" (8). Since God is righteous and just, our creation in his image means that in the beginning we by nature had the capacity for righteousness and justice. Natural law is not something outside of God found through independent reason, but is the way God "wired" us according to the very nature of God himself. This is also evidenced by the classic Reformed idea that Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 show that salvation in Christ is a re-creation of the original image of God, in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge. This seems to create a problem, though. If redemption is re-creation, then sin has obliterated the image and therefore the natural capacity to do righteousness, holiness, and know God. As bad as the fall has affected us, fallen man nevertheless still continues in some sense in the image of God (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Appealing to Romans 1:18-32, VanDrunen states that rebellious, sinful man is inexcusable before God, whether Jew

with special revelation or Gentile with only creation. All men know God exists and that there are certain moral absolutes. In fact, Paul even speaks of one sin as “against nature” (1:26; cf. 2:14-15).

Chapter 3, “Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms Doctrine,” follows another line of argument in showing the biblical teaching on natural law. God rules over all things, but in two different ways: he rules the civil kingdom (Calvin)/kingdom of the left hand (Luther) as creator and sustainer of temporal, earthly, and provisional matters, while he rules the spiritual kingdom (Calvin)/kingdom of the right hand (Luther) as creator, but especially as redeemer of the eschatological kingdom. This reviewer believes this chapter is especially instructive for understanding the theology of the Reformed confessions. We see this two kingdoms doctrine of the Reformers, for example, in the *Belgic Confession*, article 36. Whereas the opening words in the received English translations say, “We believe that our *gracious* God, because of the depravity of mankind, has appointed kings, princes, and magistrates,” the Latin text actually speaks of God as the *Optimum Maximum*, that is, the Highest/Greatest Good. This is classic language used by the Roman philosophers Lucretius and Cicero and used in Christian polemics by Augustine, for example, to speak of God as the “highest good” (*summum bonum*). In the opening words of his work, “On the Nature of Good Against the Manicheans,” Augustine said, “The highest good, than which there is no higher, is God” (*Summum bonum, quo superius non est, Deus est*. Cf. *Confessions*, 2.6.12, 7.4.6; *The City of God*, 8.3. In 1.4.4 of his *Confessions*, Augustine speaks of God as the *summe optime*). The *Belgic Confession* follows this classic teaching, grounding the civil government in God’s goodness, not his grace, in creation, not redemption.

While VanDrunen’s cursory survey of the two kingdoms doctrine in the history of the church is helpful, the rest of chapter 3 is incisive. Reading like a primer on classic covenant theology, VanDrunen traces these two kingdoms through Old and New Testaments. After the Fall, God called Adam and Eve as his redeemed people and, despite cursing the elements of the creation

mandate of Genesis 1:26-27, these things would continue in the world. Genesis 4 shows the two kingdoms beginning to take shape. Cultural development took place in livestock, music, and metalwork while God's people called upon his name. The justice of the civil kingdom protected even Cain, who had been cursed by God. After the Flood, we read of God's covenant with all creation, as he would preserve it. In contrast, the covenant made with Abram and later with Moses was with God's special people. Here VanDrunen shows how the two kingdoms related. Despite the religious particularity of the people of God, they still lived as citizens of the world. Thus Abram fought in wars alongside kings of the earth to combat injustice (Gen. 14), made treaties with kings (Gen. 21), and entered into commerce with them (Gen. 23). What is most insightful is how VanDrunen shows that despite these two kingdoms coming into one under Moses in a theocracy, when the people of God were outside the Promised Land, they dealt with their neighbors not according to the covenant at Sinai, but the covenant after the Flood. He cites the examples of David and Solomon (2 Sam. 10:2; 1 Kings 5, 10), the exiled community in Babylon (Jer. 29), and the life of Daniel. Under the New Covenant, God made his covenant with the church, not a particular ethnic people. Therefore, there is no holy place nor a holy geopolitical institution like the theocracy of Israel as the church lives as exiles like our forefathers in Babylon and the patriarchs before them.

Chapters 4-5 go on to discuss natural law in the realms of these two kingdoms, respectively. Chapter 4 deals with "Natural Law in the Civil Kingdom," a kingdom that is not religious yet is not morally neutral either. This means that Scripture is not the norm for the civil kingdom, but natural law is. The main reason given for this is that the moral instruction in Scripture comes in the context of the indicative-imperative structure. Thus, it addresses those in the covenant community, the recipients of the indicative (cf. Ps. 147:19-20; Col. 3:1ff.). Here VanDrunen cites *Westminster Confession of Faith* 19.4 in a footnote to show how the 17th century English Reformed theologians expressed this truth relative to Israel. This leads to another comment of constructive

criticism. The book would have benefited with more interaction with or at least reference to the Reformed confessions, especially in light of Reformed objectors to natural law. For example, the language of the *Canons of Dort*, especially III/IV, 4, speaks of totally depraved humanity still retaining “the light of nature.” The “glimmering” of this light gives man some knowledge of God, natural things, the difference between good and evil, and regard for virtue and good behavior.

VanDrunen then gives a helpful explanation that despite natural law being the basis of the civil kingdom, it has “limited and sober expectations” (40). What he means is that natural law “gives no reason to expect the attainment of paradise on earth” – a truth that needs hearing by those seeking transformation of society.

What exactly, then, is the teaching of natural law in regards to the civil kingdom? VanDrunen gives three areas: 1) the acknowledgement of things “not to be done,” 2) the fear of God, and 3) a common humanity. That natural law teaches of things “not to be done,” VanDrunen illustrates from Abraham’s interaction with Abimelech in Genesis 20. There the pagan king makes a moral claim against a man in covenant with God, entering into a meaningful ethical dialog about the fact that passing off a wife for a sister is “not to be done” because it caused her to be the wife of two men. In Genesis 34 the tables turn with the covenant people using this argument against a pagan king in his land that rape should “not be done.”

Returning to Genesis 20, VanDrunen illustrates “the fear of God” aspect of natural law, where Abraham confessed that there actually was fear of God in Gerar, while his lie was directly attributable to the fact that there was not. As VanDrunen says, the fear of God was not meant to speak of a redemptive relationship to God (the “fear of the *LORD*”) but “that the people have some sense of accountability to one greater than they and that this sense constrains their wicked behavior” (46). He goes on to say that this is what the *Egyptian* midwives (following the work of David Novak in his work, *Natural Law in Judaism* [Cambridge University Press, 1998]), based their refusal to practice infanticide upon in Exodus 1.

The fear of God leads to a “common humanity” because it implies the fact that we are to have respect for fellow image-bearers. Using Job 31:13-15, VanDrunen shows that Job’s “realization that he must answer for his earthly conduct to a heavenly judge, constrained his behavior toward other people” (50). His evidence of this aspect of natural law from Amos 1:3-2:3 is brilliant. After reminding us that Israel was a theocracy, in which the two kingdoms were one, he shows that when Amos rebukes the nations around Israel, Amos does not appeal to the Decalogue but to “a treaty of brotherhood” (51). This “treaty of brotherhood” forbade the selling of other humans into slavery. And since this phrase signified a relationship of parity in the Ancient Near East (Shalom M. Paul, *Amos*, 61-2), this shows the nations of the earth recognized natural law.

Chapter 5 wraps up the argument of the book by dealing with “Natural Law in the Spiritual Kingdom.” After summarizing that redemption is a re-creation, in which “Christians are reestablished as the kind of creatures that can be what God originally intended his creature to be” (56), VanDrunen turns to the ways Scripture point to the natural world to teach the ethics of the spiritual kingdom. This is certainly one of the most intriguing parts of the book begging for more development. Scripture, VanDrunen says, speaks of things being unnatural by pointing to things that are unnatural in creation (e.g., Prov. 26:1; Amos 3:3-8). Scripture also teaches ethics by using natural analogies. Laziness is contrasted with the industry of the ant (Prov. 6:6-8). Israel’s unfaithfulness to their Master is contrasted with the obedience of some of the most unintelligent of the animal kingdom, the ox and the donkey (Isa. 1:2-3 cf. Jer. 8:7). As well, there are other appeals to the natural order of things in Isaiah (29:16), Jesus (Matt. 24:32-33), and Paul (1 Cor. 11:14-15).

Finally, the ethics of the world inform the ethics of the spiritual kingdom. Citing recent scholarship, VanDrunen shows that the laws of Exodus 20:23-23:19 bear a striking substantive and structural resemblance to the Code of Hammurabi (63-5) as well as the fact that parts of the Proverbs depend on parts of the proverbs of Ahiqar (65-6). Thus God, who “often issued the most

severe condemnations against the surrounding nations ... saw fit to incorporate significant sections of their legal documents into Israel's wise, holy, and righteous law" (65). Here VanDrunen could very well have cited the work of Mendenhall and its application in M. G. Kline in showing that the entire covenant/treaty structure used by Yahweh with Israel was also borrowed and adapted from Ancient Near Eastern sources. Furthermore, the New Testament borrows the world's ethical substance and structure in the household codes of the epistles (e.g., Col. 3).

VanDrunen's little book comes at a needed time for the church in her relation to the world. We live in a day when Christians, including those in the Reformed tradition, struggle with social problems and finding a place at the cultural table. This book is a helpful beginning. What VanDrunen shows us is that instead of turning to a "the Bible says" approach, which marginalizes the Christian faith from society, Christians need to interact with the world as the patriarchs of old, appealing to their creation in the image of God and to their innate sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice. This will not only keep the civil kingdom from expecting too much from its endeavors, but more importantly, it will keep the spiritual kingdom from placing its energies and expectations ultimately in a kingdom which shall end.

—Daniel R. Hyde

Jasper Vree and Johan Zwaan, eds. *Abraham Kuyper's Commentatio (1860): The Young Kuyper about Calvin, a Lasco, and the Church*. Vol. 1: *Introduction, Annotations, Bibliography, and Indices*. Vol. 2: *Commentatio*. Brill's Series in Church History, 24. Vol. 1: pp. xii, 256. Vol. 2: pp. 404, with Latin and Greek texts. Leiden: Brill, 2005. ISBN 90-04-14940-6 (cloth). €149.00. US\$199.00.

This two-volume primary source introduces and presents the previously unpublished text of Abraham Kuyper's prize-winning essay examining the ecclesiologies of John Calvin and Johannes a