

generalist. At many points these essays are helpfully challenging, and they should provide points of discussion for future debates.

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Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law

David VanDrunen

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014 (582 pages)

With *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, David VanDrunen completes the second part of a planned three-part project in Reformed Protestant social ethics. Following on his historical study, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* (Eerdmans, 2010), and with a practical volume yet to come, this volume constitutes the biblical-theological part. Here VanDrunen argues that the existence of natural law is both explicitly and implicitly affirmed in Scripture. Although this is a rather traditional claim in Christian theology, VanDrunen develops it with a Reformed accent by considering the natural law through the lens of the biblical covenants. Part 1 covers the natural, protological law as it applies to humanity in general in the first creation. Part 2 covers the natural law as it applies (or may not apply—more on this below) to God’s redeemed people in the covenants of grace and, therefore, looks at the new creation and its eschatological realities. This two-part structure is also visible in the way he structures the relationship between nature and grace: “(common) grace preserves nature and (saving) grace consummates nature” (34).

VanDrunen appropriately begins with the covenant of creation, which is a natural relationship that God instituted by creating human beings in his own image. This covenant and its obligations are then, in a standard Reformed move, also identified as the covenant of works, which was meant to lead to the eschatological new creation had the first human pair obeyed. Adam and Eve’s breach of this covenant put the eschatological new creation out of the reach of sinful humanity, which set the stage for the Noahic covenant, which, it seems fair to say, is the hinge on which VanDrunen’s entire biblical theology of the natural law turns.

In the Noahic covenant the original creation covenant is adapted to a world ravaged by sin. God did not make redemptive promises in this covenant but instead unconditionally promised to preserve the world and to withhold final judgment for sin “while the earth remains” (Gen. 8:22 ESV). This covenant of preservation, VanDrunen argues, contains a minimalist natural-law ethic, and because it is made with Noah as a representative of all human beings and with all of creation, this ethic endures until the eschaton. The minimalist natural-law ethic consists of the commands to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 9:1, 7 ESV), to not eat animals with their life still in them (Gen. 9:4), and to exercise proportionate retributive justice (Gen. 9:6). These explicit obligations for all of humanity imply deeper natural-law obligations regarding human sexuality and marriage, the

right exercise of human authority over the animal realm, and the proper exercise of civil justice. As VanDrunen notes, his interpretation of the Noahic covenant as a covenant of preservation and not as a redemptive covenant has clear precedent in the Reformed tradition. What may not have such clear precedent, however, is VanDrunen's claim that the discontinuity between the Noahic covenant and the covenant of grace is so stark that the Noahic covenant runs, as it were, on a completely different track. Despite VanDrunen's articulate exegetical defense of this view, such stark discontinuity still seems unlikely, especially considering that it is through Noah and his line that God preserves the promised redemptive seed of Genesis 3:15.

The natural-law ethic of the Noahic covenant is developed in chapters on Abraham and the prophets. There is also a chapter on perhaps the most important New Testament text for natural law: Romans 1:18–2:16. VanDrunen's defense of a natural-law reading of this passage is generally compelling, although his eagerness to see the Noahic covenant reflected in this passage seems exegetically unwarranted. The largest chapter of the book, however, is on the Mosaic covenant. Here VanDrunen argues that "*one* of the chief purposes of the Mosaic covenant was to make Israel's experience a recapitulation of the creation, probation, and fall of Adam" (282, emphasis original). Israel was therefore a microcosm of humanity's plight under the natural law. To fully understand the significance of this chapter, the reader should know that in VanDrunen's denomination (the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) the controversy *du jour* is regarding precisely this issue—namely, whether the Mosaic covenant is a recapitulation of the covenant of works. Expect this chapter to serve as fodder for many interminable reviews and internecine battles.

VanDrunen's most controversial claim, however, may be his insistence that Christians, in an ultimate sense, are no longer under the natural law because they are partakers of eschatological life by their union with Christ. The natural law has been "penultimized," or relativized, by Christ's redemptive work, and so the Christian must continue to obey the natural law even though they are not under it. Despite the nuance, the claim is still difficult to swallow if in fact the natural law is *natural* and if, as VanDrunen himself argues, it is rooted in humanity as created in God's image. Although VanDrunen contends that the New Testament gives moral commands that transform or refract the natural law, it is not clear why the Christian must in any sense obey the natural law, rather than some new, completely distinct law of love. A completely distinct New Testament law would actually fit quite well with the notion of a stark discontinuity between the Noahic covenant and the covenant of grace. VanDrunen only compounds the problem by insisting that the New Testament instructs believers to live according to the eschatological order of grace and mercy and not the protological order of retributive justice. Also, he gives almost no consideration to whether the Reformed third use of the law—the Christian use of the moral law expressed in the Mosaic covenant—is still valid, and he relegates this important matter to a footnote (469n71).

Despite—or perhaps because of—such curiosities, VanDrunen's book ought to be widely read and discussed. Moreover, it uniquely brings Reformed covenant theology into the natural-law conversation. One stylistic note is in order: The excessive internal

references and summaries in the form of “As I showed in chapter *x*” and “As I will argue in chapter *y*,” sometimes at the rate of nearly one per paragraph, are, frankly, annoying. Ultimately, while the most vociferous engagement with this book will probably occur within VanDrunen’s denomination, the volume is a significant contribution to the field of Christian ethics and natural law and, therefore, deserves consideration and scholarly engagement far beyond the conservative Presbyterian enclave.

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Offering Hospitality: Questioning Christian Approaches to War

Caron E. Gentry

Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,
 2013 (200 pages)

In *Offering Hospitality*, Caron Gentry challenges three contemporary Christian viewpoints on issues of war and peace: Christian realism (Reinhold Niebuhr), pacifism (Stanley Hauerwas), and the just war tradition (Jean Bethke Elshtain). Her attempts at deconstruction are rooted in feminist and postmodern approaches. Her ultimate aim is to promote a sacrificial ethic of hospitality as the appropriate Christian approach to war in our time.

Her critique creates a false dichotomy, however, juxtaposing *agape* against the power of the state. She proposes that powerful states should help sustain peace in failed states by engaging in securing the welfare of “others” (strangers) through hospitality instead of pursuing the state’s own interests. Her attempt to construct a Christian response to the problem of failed states is a legitimate one, as is her questioning of the responsibility of states regarding power toward marginalized populations in failed states. She is at her best in the three chapters that carefully analyze the Christian realist, pacifist, and just war traditions. She criticizes their imperfection based on love, despite the fact that neighbor-love (*caritas*) is a key category for just war thinking.

Gentry derives her theological basis for “offering hospitality” as a form of practicing *agape* in international relations from Romans 12:9–18 (NIV), which up through verse 13 reads:

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

While naming *hospitality* as one of the primary elements of practicing love for one’s neighbor, this passage also requires Christians to “hate what is evil” and “cling to what is good.” Doing so involves making a choice to avoid evil whether it be in the form of a neighbor’s evil practices or within oneself. It should include withholding hospitality