

By engaging in dignity and development's political, economic, historical, sociological, and philosophical implications, Tom Palmer and Matt Warner wrote a book worth reading no matter your disciplinary background. The writing is engaging and packed with compelling stories. Anyone interested in humane solutions to poverty should read this book.

— Joshua D. Ammons (e-mail: jammons3@gmu.edu)
PhD Student, George Mason University

Politics after Christendom: Political Theology in a Fractured World

David VanDrunen

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020 (400 pages)

David VanDrunen constructs a comprehensive political theology in *Politics after Christendom*, the third work in his series addressing covenant theology, natural law, and two kingdoms doctrine. The book assesses politics and public life through the lens of the Noahic covenant (NC) and creates a useful framework for Christians seeking to faithfully navigate turbulent political times. VanDrunen begins outlining a broad, biblical conception of the role of government. He then builds his novel contribution to political theology through the NC. In the latter half of the book, VanDrunen applies his approach to various areas related to politics and public life.

The phrases “legitimate, but provisional” and “common, but accountable” summarize VanDrunen’s political theology. He recognizes government as a *legitimate*, God-ordained institution. But he notes that civil government is *provisional*, as it will not continue into the eschatological era. Next, VanDrunen argues that government is *common*, in the sense that the benefits of government should be accessible to all people, regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliation. For government to be accessible to all people, VanDrunen argues, the scope of government actions should be narrowed so people with conflicting value systems do not feel excluded by state policies that might lean toward one side or another. VanDrunen then limits the implications of government’s commonality by recognizing its moral *accountability* before God. VanDrunen’s phrasing creates a sense of balance and prevents the reader from taking a single aspect of God’s design for government beyond its biblical foundation. Taken together, these elements urge the reader to recognize the good purposes for which government exists without putting too much hope in government, and to acknowledge that government exists for all people without concluding that government is morally neutral.

According to VanDrunen, the Noahic Covenant is uniquely suited for public theology because of its three overarching characteristics: it is universal, preserva-

tive, and temporary. First, the NC is universal because it covers the entire created order—humans, animals, and the cosmic order itself. The covenant was made with Noah as humanity’s representative. God did not intend it for a specific subset of humanity such as a specific people group or those confessing a particular religion. Consequently, the NC applies to all humans and their common life together, making it a useful starting point for public theology. Second, the NC is preservative in nature because it promises to sustain and maintain the world. It does not promise to end evil or redeem creation. Third, the NC is temporary because it will remain in place until the final judgement and the new creation.

Next, VanDrunen draws three ethics from the NC. The NC calls on humanity to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, to pursue creativity and technological innovation, and to administer rectifying justice. Each ethic implies the need for humanity to develop institutions and associations in its fulfillment: familial institutions for the first ethic, enterprise associations for the second ethic, and judicial institutions for the third ethic. Additionally, the ethics are related. For instance, advances in food production are needed to feed a growing population, and justice is needed to create an ordered society where people can engage in commerce and parents can raise their children.

The second half of the book is concerned with applying these ideas. VanDrunen covers a range of issues, starting with a discussion on pluralism and religious liberty, and then moves to family and commerce, justice and rights, customs and laws, and authority and resistance. In the final chapter, he argues for a modest form of conservative liberalism as the ideological framework best suited to fulfill humanity’s obligations under the NC. On the one hand, liberalism’s focus on pluralism and tolerance coincides with the NC. However, the NC rejects the liberal’s claims of moral neutrality in political and social life, and the NC’s emphasis on rectifying justice is incompatible with the liberal conception of justice as fairness. On the other hand, conservatism’s belief in the objectivity of the moral order fits with the NC. However, the NC rejects the conservative tendency toward perfectionist goals, arguing instead for a more modest shared moral framework.

Some will be unconvinced by VanDrunen’s use of the NC and argue that he concludes too much from such a vague passage of scripture. VanDrunen attempts to head off those criticisms by first explaining the “common, but accountable” and “legitimate, but provisional” framework, how it is supported by numerous biblical texts, and how the NC coincides with it. Others will voice concern over VanDrunen’s conclusions in support of limited government, and they may have a point. While VanDrunen does emphasize the moral accountability of government, his emphasis on limited government for commonality’s sake may go too far. He is too dismissive of Paul’s call in Romans 13 for government to reward good actions. Consequently, VanDrunen’s argument may undercut a range of legitimate government activities related to promoting moral norms that are foundational for healthy families (thus

promoting the first Noahic ethic) or playing even a minor role in directing economic activities (thus promoting the second Noahic ethic). VanDrunen may be weakening Paul's call for government to punish evil, too. His vision of justice seeks to deter harm through the threat of punishment and then, after harm occurs, rectify injustices through punishment of perpetrators and compensation for victims. Alternatively, VanDrunen's political theology should consider if governments may rightly include regulatory frameworks that inhibit someone from being harmed in the first place, whether that harm is inflicted by others, societal trends that subvert the Noahic ethics, or even themselves (thus promoting the third Noahic ethic).

Politics after Christendom is a significant contribution to the literature on political theology. VanDrunen's use of natural law, the two kingdoms framework, and the NC offers a refreshing alternative to the transformationalist approaches to public life that populate the field. While the transformationalist tendency to think in terms of redeeming the world through politics misrepresents the role of the state in the current age, viewing political responsibilities through the lens of the NC allows Christians to participate in political life in a God-honoring way and avoid the mistakes associated with immanentizing the eschaton, to borrow Eric Voegelin's phrase, and other vain attempts to insert the ethic of the Church—justice fulfilled through Christ's work on the cross—into modern politics. Overall, VanDrunen's thesis is well-constructed and convincing.

—Michael N. Jacobs (e-mail: michael.jacobs@gordon.edu)
Gordon College

The Age of AI: And Our Human Future

Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Daniel Huttenlocher

New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021 (254 pages)

In *The Age of AI*, former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, former Google chairman and CEO Eric Schmidt, and Daniel Huttenlocher, Cornell University dean of the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, proclaim that artificial intelligence (AI) “has become a reality.” Moreover, AI, and its characteristics to learn, evolve, and surprise, will disrupt a multitude of industries and various facets of human life, ranging from education to art to national defense. Machine learning—the process the technology undergoes to acquire knowledge and accelerate analytic capability—has been continually expanding into logistics, manufacturing, marketing and advertising, and medicine. In chapter 1 (“Where We Are”) Kissinger, Schmidt, and Huttenlocher (hereafter referred to as Kissinger et al. or “the authors”) persuasively argue that unlike previous technological change in human history, AI promises to transform all realms of human experience. This transformation, “will ultimately occur at the