van schepselmatige structuren meekomt of wellicht in eerste instantie zelfs een hoofdrol speelt.

De vermelde kritiekpunten doen niets af van de grote waardering voor dit boek. Het zou te betreuren zijn indien het niet ten onzent een ruime verbreiding kreeg. Dat de lezers van Genoodzaakt goed te wennen dit boek niet mogen missen, spreekt van zelf. Voor een nieuwe generatie biedt dit boek een ideale kennismaking met het werk van Goudzwaard. Ik denk in het bijzonder aan jongeren die niet de gelegenheid hebben gehad zijn lezingen bij te wonen. Het speciale van die lezingen was het verschil tussen begin en einde. De spreker placht wat aarzelend te beginnen, nog op zoek naar zijn stem en nog onzeker van zijn gehoor. Halverwege groeide bij het publiek het besef iets bijzonders mee te maken; en tegen het einde kon je een speld horen vallen. Misschien maakte wel de meeste indruk hoe hij bij actuele onderwerpen de Schriften opende. Het is een groot compliment voor Mark Vander Vennen en David van Heemst dat zij in hun samenwerking met Bob Goudzwaard dit aspect niet weg gereditoer hebben, maar veelal alle ruimte gaven.

S. Griffioen


In this solid and penetrating study, ensuing from his dissertation, Stephen Grabill addresses the important issue of the role of natural law in Reformed theological ethics. This topic has received much theological attention during the last couple of decades, partly because of the revitalized ecumenical consciousness among Protestants. According to Grabill, there are at least three reasons for the still common negative attitude toward natural law that can be found among Protestants. First, Barth’s epistemological critique of natural theology as well as his divine command theory have led to the neglect of the natural law tradition. Second, it is often thought, among others by G.C. Berkouwer and Herman Dooyeweerd, that natural law originates in and is essentially connected to Roman Catholic theology, which, then, is considered as a good reason to reject it. Third and finally, nineteenth century liberal German theology, with its anti-scholastic and anti-metaphysical tendencies, has strongly influenced Protestant orthodox theology.

Let me make two preliminary remarks on the aim of this book. This volume, Grabill says, offers a historical rather than a systematic argument in favor of the idea that natural law is useful as a way to discuss moral topics in public settings (p. 17). Unfortunately, Grabill fails to elaborate on the important issue of how precisely his discussions of the theologies of John Calvin, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Johannes Althusius, and Francis Turretin, that are offered in the following chapters, are thought to give credence to this main thesis. This is crucial, for what he offers in those chapters, is, I would say, rather a defense of the view that some representatives of Reformed thought did to some extent adhere to the concept of natural law and that their adherence to it was well integrated into the rest of their (Reformed) doctrine. It is not clear, however, how this demonstrates that natural law was and is in fact useful in public settings. What he should have showed in order to support his main thesis, is that natural law has been and is in fact fruitfully used in ethical debates in public settings and that certainly is not what he has done. Fortunately, elsewhere in the book, he seems to contend that the main thesis in the book is a different one: “(...) the argument of this book is that historically, in fact, Calvinists have made good use of the natural-law tradition, but that it ceased to exist in twentieth-century Protestant
theological ethics for a variety of reasons (…)" (p. 52) This, I am inclined to say, is a position for which he offers some strong arguments in this book.

Another problem related to the goal of this study is that Grabill claims to give support to the idea, originally championed by Russell Hittinger and John T. McNeill, that early Protestant — both Lutheran and Reformed — tradition passed on the doctrines of natural law and the natural cognition of God as non-controversial legacies from the early and medieval church. This view is voiced, for instance, on p. 175: "The preceding chapters have shown that the Reformed wing of the magisterial Reformation inherited the natural law tradition as a noncontroversial legacy of late medieval scholasticism (…)". In the ensuing chapters, however, the only early Protestant theologians considered are John Calvin and Peter Vermigli, which is utterly insufficient to establish anything about the early Protestant or Reformed tradition as a whole.

Let us now have a more detailed look at each of the six chapters of the book. In the first chapter, which deals with Barth’s view on natural law and post-lapsarian knowledge of God, Grabill briefly describes the famous 1934 debate between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, and Barth’s influence on later Protestant theologians, such as Jacques Ellul, Henry Stob, John Hare, and Richard Mouw. The second chapter portrays the development of the natural-law tradition through the high Middle Ages. Also, Grabill argues that nominalism, voluntarism, and divine command theory are often, but wrongly identified with each other or considered to be fundamentally wedded. I agree that, on some understanding of ‘nominalism’, ‘voluntarism’, and ‘divine command theory’ this is correct, but in order to show this, one will have to be very precise about what one means by each of these terms. It is, therefore, somewhat disappointing that Grabill fails to offer clear definitions of these views, as well as of other issues that are discussed in these and following chapters, such as rationalism, intellectualism, realism, and the extra-calvinisticum.

The third chapter is dedicated to Calvin’s view on human natural knowledge of God as creator, the first conjunct of the duplex cognitio Dei (the other conjunct being the knowledge of God as redeemer). Grabill, rightly as it seems to me, interprets Calvin as taking a modified naturalist theological stance: natural law, written on humans’ heart, functions competently in the spheres of politics, economics, and ethics, although it is preferable for awareness of moral obligation to be generated on the basis of the written divine law as revealed in Scripture, since the latter is clearer and not as susceptible to corruption as the natural law is. In the course of this chapter, Grabill raises the interesting question of whether, according to Calvin, unbelievers have a genuine knowledge of God (p. 78), but in the end this question is left unanswered. Although I fully agree with Grabill’s interpretation of Calvin — over against Barth’s interpretation of the Genevan Reformer —, there are two problems with this chapter that return in the following chapters. First, Grabill does not clearly distinguish natural knowledge of God (Rom 1) from natural knowledge of good and evil (Rom 2). Now, I am aware of the fact that these two kinds of knowledge are closely related to each other and that they share several important characteristics. However, it does not follow from this that they are identical. The title of the third chapter — “John Calvin and the Natural Knowledge of God the Creator” — suggests that it concerns people’s natural knowledge of God, but the main subject of discussion turns out to be man’s post-lapsarian ethical knowledge. Grabill could have easily avoided such confusions by distinguishing the two kinds of natural knowledge from each other and by explaining their mutual relationships. Second, Grabill frequently uses expressions such as ‘natural law’, ‘natural knowledge of God’, ‘natural revelation’, ‘natural theology’, etc. without defining these terms or stating explicitly what each author — Barth, Calvin, Vermigli, Althusius, and Turretin — means by these terms. This as well makes it difficult to follow Grabill’s argumentation in these chapters.

The fourth chapter discusses Vermigli’s use of natural law. Vermigli, who has been profoundly influenced by Thomas Aquinas, stresses, like Calvin, the non-salvific