

NATURAL LAW:

*A Brief Introduction and Biblical
Defense*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	i
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PART I: THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NATURAL LAW

David Haines

1 INTRODUCTION, DISTINCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS	2
2 THE DIVINE FOUNDATION OF NATURAL LAW	11
3 THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATION OF NATURAL LAW	23
4 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF NATURAL LAW	40
5 A SUMMARY CONCLUSION	46

PART II: AN EXEGETICAL CASE FOR NATURAL LAW

Andrew A. Fulford

6 INTRODUCTION AND HYPOTHESES	50
7 THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES	52
8 EXTRACANONICAL JEWISH LITERATURE	69
9 THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES	81
10 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY	116

INTRODUCTION

“IN THE BEGINNING, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Christianity teaches that God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). In accordance with the Jewish Scriptures, the teachings of Christ, and the witness of his Apostles, one of the foundational Christian declarations of faith, *the Nicene Creed*, begins, “We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.”¹ Furthermore, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, one of the crucial creeds to be produced by Protestant theologians proclaims,

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visi-

¹ Cf. Philip Schaff, *The History of Creeds*, vol. 1 of *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. David S. Schaff, 6th ed. (1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 27.

ble or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.²

In the opening lines of the Bible and in the Church's creeds, we learn that God is the source of all creation, and that all created things were, in their divinely instituted natural states, *good*. As we will see, the very fact of divine creation seems to point towards what has been traditionally called *natural law*: the notion that there is, because of the divine intellect, a natural order within the created world by which each and every created being's goodness can be objectively judged, both on the level of being (ontological goodness), and, for human-beings specifically, on the level of human action (moral goodness). Ontological goodness is the foundation of moral goodness.

But, some might wonder, is not the doctrine of natural law an invention of Roman Catholic theologians—one both unbiblical and rejected by coherent Protestant theologians? It is true that natural law has not always been well received within Protestant ethics, and it seems to be less accepted today than ever. Whereas some Protestant works on Ethics do not even mention natural law,³ other works, written by important Evangelical thinkers, seem to imply that the claim that unregenerate humans can discover what is good through some form of natural law departs from a truly Protestant theology. For Cornelius Van Til, the Roman Catholic approach to ethics is immediately disqualified from “either stating or defending a true Christian

² “The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647,” in Philip Schaff, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed., ed. David S. Schaff (1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 611.

³ R. K. Harrison, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Ethics* (New York: Testament Books, 1992).

INTRODUCTION

doctrine of human behavior,” because the Catholic theologian

admits that the natural man who makes himself the goal of his efforts, who uses his own experience instead of the will of God as the criterion of his undertakings, and who has not faith as the motivation of all that he does, is yet able to do what is right without qualification in certain areas of life.⁴

For Van Til, only the Christian theologian, who takes divinely inspired Scripture and the triune God of Christianity as his starting point, is able to approach what might be called a form of natural law.⁵ Indeed, when it comes to knowledge and the study of anything “natural,” Van Til states that “the truth of Christianity appears to be the immediately indispensable presupposition of the fruitful study of nature.”⁶ Karl Barth and Stanley Hauerwas,⁷ simi-

⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 38.

⁵ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint, 4th ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 78.

⁶ Van Til, *Defense*, 279.

⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Bromiley, Campbell, Wilson, McNab, Knight, and Stewart, ed. Bromiley and Torrance (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), II.2:528–35. Note, for example, Barth’s comment to the effect that, “The order of obligation built on the order of being cannot as such be a real order of obligation, or at any rate of a divinely imperative obligation.... If obligation is grounded in being, this undoubtedly means that it is not grounded in itself, but ontically subordinated to another, and noetically to be derived from this other.... But on this presupposition it is quite impossible that it should confront him, his being and his existence with an absolute challenge; that it should dominate him and claim him with absolute sovereignty....” (*Ibid.*, 532). Cf. Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of*

larly, reject general revelation altogether, and natural law along with it. Others, such as Stanley Grenz, seem to think that natural law theory is refuted by the “so-called naturalistic fallacy”,⁸ and, therefore, reject it out of hand. Grenz later proposes that any form of natural law theory should be rejected, because “our pursuit of the true ethic requires that we reject the wisdom of the world—including the philosophical tradition.”⁹

This hostility towards natural law is misplaced; as we will show in this book, natural law is both biblical and philosophically coherent. Indeed, the doctrine of natural law seems to be taught, not only by the Scriptures, but also by the Creeds and Confessions, and by great theologians throughout the history of the Church. Thus, the first section of this book explains the philosophical foundations of natural law, and the second section argues, in keeping with the predominant Protestant interpretation of Holy Scriptures, that the whole Bible presupposes and even teaches natural law.

Because the bulk of this book will be considering the biblical perspective of natural law, we will not belabor the point here. However, it is worth noting that Romans 2:14-

Christian Witness (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 146. Here Mangina notes that, for Barth, “There is no ‘natural law’, no minimal set of standards that applies to all human beings and that may be known apart from revelation. Barth rejects natural law for the same reason he rejects natural theology: both abstract from the concrete situation of the human being who lives under God’s grace.” Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 63, 17.

⁸ Stanley Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations for Christian Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 46. More on this later.

⁹ Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 163.

INTRODUCTION

15 has been traditionally understood as teaching natural law:

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.
(Rom. 2:14-15)

We will explain, later, how this verse teaches natural law, but it will prove helpful, by way of introduction, to examine how some important Protestant theologians have approached these verses.

In his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, John Calvin states that, in these verses, Paul “teaches us that they [the gentiles] carry, engraved on their hearts, a warning and judgment by which they discern between right and wrong, between honesty and villainy.”¹⁰ He continues: “Men, therefore, have a certain natural knowledge of the law, which teaches them and tells them, in themselves, that one thing is good, and the other detestable.”¹¹ Calvin was

¹⁰ Jehan Calvin, *Commentaires sur l'épître aux Romains*, in tome 3 of *Commentaires de Jehan Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Librairie de Ch. Meyrueis et co., 1855), 39. My translation. In French we read, « donnent à cognoistre qu'ils portent engrave en leurs cœurs un avis et jugement par lequel ils discernent entre le tort et le droit, entre honesteté et vilenie. »

¹¹ Calvin, *Commentaires*, 40. My translation. In French we read, « Les hommes donc ont quelque intelligence naturelle de la Loy, laquelle intelligence les enseigne et leur dit en eux-mesmes qu'une chose est bonne, et l'autre détestable. »

not alone in interpreting these verses as referring to natural law; Martin Luther's commentary on Romans summarizes his answer to the question, "How do the Gentiles show that the work of the Law is written in their hearts?"¹² with the statement, "All of this proves that they know the Law by nature, or that they can distinguish between good and evil."¹³ In fact, not only do Calvin and Luther understand Romans 2:14-15 to be speaking about natural human knowledge of true moral principles, but so do the great majority of important biblical exegetes, including but certainly not limited to, Origen,¹⁴ Ambrosiaster,¹⁵ John Chrysostom,¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas,¹⁷ Robert Haldane,¹⁸ Charles Hodge,¹⁹ John Murray,²⁰ F. F. Bruce,²¹ Douglas

¹² Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (1954; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979), 60.

¹³ Luther, *Commentary*, 60.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Patout Burns, Jr., trans. and ed., *Romans: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 49–50.

¹⁵ Burns, *Romans*, 46–47.

¹⁶ Cf. Jean Chrysostome, *Homilies sur l'épître aux Romains*, vol. 8 des *Œuvres Complètes de S. Jean Chrysostome*, trans. Abbé J. Bareille (Paris: Librairie de Louis Vives, 1871), 252. Here he says, « Ce mot ‘naturellement’ signifie l’application à suivre la raison naturelle. » My translation: “This word ‘Naturally’ signifies the effort to obey natural reason.”

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *ST II-II*, Q. 94, A. 6. In the *Sed Contra* of this article Aquinas states, “the law that is written on the hearts of men is the Natural Law.” This is, at once, a reference to a quote from Augustine, and a reference to Romans 2:14–15.

¹⁸ Robert Haldane, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Florida: Mac Donald Publishing Company, 1958), 90.

¹⁹ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, revised edition (1864; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 56-59. Hodge notes, in his section on the doctrine taught in these verses, that “The moral sense is

INTRODUCTION

Moo,²² Ben Witherington III,²³ and many others. It almost seems as if the denial of natural law within Protestant theology was more a result of the influence of the decline of the Aristotelian understanding of natural teleology and of the Kantian critique of reason, than of well-informed biblical interpretation.

Thus, not only does Scripture, as traditionally interpreted, teach natural law, but the great majority of Protestant theologians have found at least some place for natural law in their theology. Furthermore, the great Christian theologians from the second century down to the end of the Middle Ages taught natural law. Even most Puritan theologians firmly believed in natural law and appealed to natural law frequently in their theological treatises on various subjects.²⁴ The Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, a major opponent of the Puritans, concurred with their affirmation and defense of natural law.²⁵

an original part of our constitution, and not the result of education” (*Ibid.*, 58).

²⁰ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 72–79.

²¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, revised edition (1985; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 84.

²² Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 148–153.

²³ Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 73–84.

²⁴ Wallace W. Marshall, *Puritanism and Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 22.

²⁵ Cf. Richard Hooker, *Divine Law and Human Nature: Or, the first book of Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Concerning Laws and their Several Kinds in General*, ed./trans. W. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Moscow, ID: The Davenant Press, 2017).

Perhaps most surprisingly, natural law made it into various Protestant creeds and confessions. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, for example, seems to teach the doctrine of natural law when it states that

there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered *by the light of nature* and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.²⁶

The *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* (The French Confession of Faith), prepared by John Calvin, and delivered by Theodore Beza, is even more explicit. Here we read that fallen man “can still discern good and evil,”²⁷ without the help of Holy Scriptures.

We propose, therefore, that natural law is a necessary element of true Christian belief. We wish to invite the contemporary reader on a journey of discovery, in which we will introduce them to the philosophical foundations of and the Biblical teachings concerning natural law. We will demonstrate that natural law is both founded in human nature—as designed and created by God—and clearly taught in the Bible, the inspired Word of God.

²⁶ “The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647,” in Philip Schaff, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. David S. Schaff, 6th ed. (1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 604. Italics are mine. Cf. *Ibid.*, 600.

²⁷ “The French Confession of Faith, A.D. 1559,” in Philip Schaff, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, vol. 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. David S. Schaff, 6th ed. (1983; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 365.

PART I:
THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF
NATURAL LAW THEORY

I:

INTRODUCTION, DISTINCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

THE DOCTRINE of natural law can be found not only in the Bible, as we maintain in this book, but also in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and the other Stoics, St. Augustine and most of the church fathers, Thomas Aquinas, and most pre-Kantian Reformed thinkers. Arthur F. Holmes suggests, rightly, that natural law theories depend, for their truth, upon the metaphysical theories which undergird them.¹ Two forms of natural law theory, founded on two very different ontologies, have been popular in the history of Christian moral thought: that of the Stoics and that of Aristotle.² The Stoic system finds the foundation for moral laws in reason alone, whereas the Aristotelian system finds the foundation for moral laws in the very nature of being (i.e., in human nature itself). In this section, we will consider the philosophical foundations of what we take to be a consistent Christian natural law theo-

¹ Arthur F. Holmes, *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 63.

² Holmes, *Ethics*, 62.

ry—that which flows out of Aristotelian metaphysics. We will begin by making a number of distinctions and definitions. We will then go into greater detail concerning the two metaphysical foundations of natural law, and, finally, some epistemological elements of natural law, which flow out of the metaphysical foundations. We hope to show that a coherent natural law theory depends upon a particular philosophical position, and, secondly, that this philosophical position and the natural law theory which it supports are defensible.

We must first provide a proper definition of natural law. To do this, we must understand the various elements which go into its definition. First of all, *Nature*, or *Natural*, has come to mean many different things. It may refer at least (a) to the way in which a thing normally acts (whether this be the normal attitudes, actions, and reactions of a human individual; the normal actions of some created but non-rational thing; or even the normal actions of an artifact, or otherwise non-sentient thing—such as the “sin nature”); (b) to the personality, character, or identity of rational (or quasi-rational) beings; (c) to the created universe, including human beings; (d) to the created universe in exclusion of human beings; or (e) to the “that which something is,” which not only determines how we classify the something in question, but which also determines how that something acts and develops over time (this is sometimes called the “essence”). In natural law theory, the term *natural* refers to that which makes X to be X and not something other than X. This has frequently been referred to as the *nature* of X, the *essence* of X, or the *form* of X.

INTRODUCTION, DISTINCTIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

The term “law” likewise admits of many definitions. It may refer to a *descriptive* statement, which tells us what every X *will* do in certain circumstances. We talk about the law of gravity, for example. In natural law theory, though, “law” refers to a *normative* dictum which tells us what every X *should* do, in certain circumstances. Note that in the case of a descriptive law, we are describing how X always acts; but, in the case of a normative law we are describing how X should, but may not, act. Thomas Aquinas provides us with the following definition of a normative law, “Law is a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting.”³

J. Budziszewski sums up the preceding observations well,

Law may be defined as an ordinance of reason, for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated. Nature may be conceived as an ensemble of things with particular natures, and a thing’s nature may be thought of as the design imparted to it by the Creator—in traditional language, as a purpose implanted in it by the divine art, that it be moved to a determinate end. The claim of the theory is that in exactly

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, I-II, Q. 90, A. 1*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1948), 2:993. All other quotations from the *Summa Theologiae*, unless otherwise noted, will be from this translation, and will be referenced, according to the traditional method, as follows: *ST*, Pt..., Q..., A...

these senses, Natural Law is both (1) true law, and (2) truly expressive of nature.⁴

By *natural law*, then, we mean that order or rule of human conduct which is (1) based upon human nature as created by God, (2) knowable by all men, through human intuition and reasoning alone (beginning from his observations of creation, in general, and human nature, in particular), independent of any particular divine revelation provided through a divine spokesperson; and, thus (3) normative for all human beings. Jacques Maritain seems to agree with this definition, as he notes that

the genuine concept of natural law is the concept of a law which is natural not only insofar as it expresses the normality of functioning of human nature, but also insofar as it is naturally known, that is, known through inclination or through connaturality, not through conceptual knowledge and by way of reasoning.⁵

Note that Maritain also distinguishes between two aspects that must be involved in any genuine theory of natural law: (1) the *metaphysical* element—immutable natures upon which natural law is based, and (2) the *epistemological* element—the way in which in humans obtain knowledge of natural law.

⁴ J. Budziszewski, *The Line Through the Heart: Natural Law as Fact, Theory, and Sign of Contradiction* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011), 10-11. See also Ralph McInerny, “Ethics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209.

⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Natural Law: Reflections on Theory and Practice*, ed. William Sweet (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001), 20.

PART II:
AN EXEGETICAL CASE FOR NATURAL LAW

VI. INTRODUCTION AND HYPOTHESES

THE BIBLE everywhere assumes, and in some places explicitly appeals to, natural law. The written book of God constantly bears witness to God's other book, the book of nature. To prove this, we will walk through Genesis to Revelation, noting some important sights along the way.

Apart from the question of natural law's biblical foundation and veracity, readers might wonder what the profit of pursuing this question could be. We will return to this query in the conclusion of the book, but there are in fact several ways recognizing natural law can help Christians, as will hopefully become evident throughout the rest of the argument: in apologetics, it helps us to demonstrate the goodness of God; in ethics, it provides Christian thinkers with clarity on subjects both addressed by Scripture and not; in history, it helps us to understand why post-apostolic Christians adhered to natural law from the outset of the church; in engagement with the world outside the church, it allows believers to recognize the goodness that has existed in the human race and its products throughout history; in law and politics, it provides a logical foundation for the unique kind of civilisation that Protestant Christianity produced; in exegesis, it clarifies the inner logic of the

New Testament's approach to the laws of the Old; and in Christian practice, it helps us to see the kind of maturity believers have been called to.

MY HYPOTHESES

Given the conception of natural law which was presented and defended in the previous section, the remainder of this book will be to be used to show that Scripture presupposes this concept as reflecting reality. To be more specific, I will attempt to prove the following propositions are supported by the Bible:

(N1) that there is an objective order to the universe of the kind described above;

(N2) that this order is objectively visible, there to be seen, whether one is wearing the spectacles of Scripture or not;

(N3) that at least some unregenerate people perceive this order.

One final comment, regarding the relation between these hypotheses. The principles of justice suggest that if N1 is true, the other two must be as well. That is, if God has established an order that intrinsically binds people morally, then he cannot hold them accountable for failures to abide by it unless he also makes it known to them. For the rest of this survey we will not focus on this logical connection between the premises; its cogency, however, adds strength to the argument as a whole.

VII: THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

THE WEALTH of evidence for natural law in Scripture surpasses my ability to catalogue it, at least in a reasonably brief period. What follows is only small sampling of what the Scriptures contain. It is however representative, and, by the end of the survey, I trust readers will be able to readily detect other evidence themselves.¹

GENESIS

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. At the end of the seventh day, he rested, having pronounced his work *good*. This is the first proclamation of the doctrine of natural law. Anything that would destroy or

¹ The work of John J. Collins in his *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), and Markus Bockmuehl in his *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids: T & T Clark, 2003), are useful for study on the subject of this series. In the past, I have also consulted James Barr's book *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991: Delivered in the University of Edinburgh* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

corrupt this good created order, logic would dictate, would be bad or evil.²

Genesis 2 gives us another piece of evidence. God saw lonely Adam, and said this was “not good” (Gen. 2:18). What could this statement mean? It must communicate something like, “Given the nature of Adam, given his intrinsic properties, his remaining without a complement-woman will harm him.” God evaluated the kind of being Adam was and judged he was not in a good situation. Adam’s male form was intrinsically directed toward a female companion that he lacked and needed for his fulfillment.

So already, after the first two chapters of the Bible, we see an affirmation of an objective order (N1), a natural law.

EXODUS

Bockmuehl³ mentions the case of Jethro in Exodus 18. During his visit with Moses, Jethro noticed people bringing cases to judge consumed all of the prophet’s time. He responded: “What you are doing is not good.... For the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone” (vs. 17-18).⁴ Jethro’s basic criticism was that Moses was failing to steward his time: in this regard, his actions were

² The possibility of violating this created order does not contradict an Augustinian, Thomist, or Calvinist view of providence and grace, of course. The kind of freedom human beings have is freedom to violate what Thomists would call the antecedent will, or the Reformed the revealed will, of God, not his consequent or secret will. The natural law is the revelation of God’s moral will, and it is no violation of Augustine, Thomas, and Calvin’s doctrine to say this will can be resisted.

³ Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 91.

⁴ This and all following biblical quotations come from the English Standard Version.

“not good.” Here we have an example of someone outside of the visible assembly of God’s people (though most likely a God-fearer of some kind), who offers moral wisdom to God’s lawgiver himself, Moses. Jethro’s suggestion could not have been derived from the Torah, or else he would not have needed to give it. His advice is simple common sense. Moses needed to delegate and divide the labour; his time and energy simply could not handle the workload. And he was certainly able to delegate. Jethro perceived the problem and solution where no explicit divine law addressed the issue. Now of course, one could say that Jethro’s advice is derived by extension from some more basic Mosaic principle, but just as obviously, this advice is common sense.⁵ It surely strains credulity to suggest that only someone who had read Moses’ law could come up with this suggestion. And yet it obviously benefitted Moses, and so fulfilled the natural law, which points people toward their own good. This example thus conforms to N1, and probably suggests N2. If Jethro was unregenerate, it proves N3.

DEUTERONOMY

Collins highlights⁶ Deuteronomy 4:5-6, where God tells Moses:

⁵ As G. A. Chadwick notes, “From the whole of this narrative we see clearly that the intervention of God for Israel is no more to be regarded as superseding the exercise of human prudence and common-sense, than as dispensing with valour in the repulse of Amalek, and with patience in journeying through the wilderness.” See *The Book of Exodus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 263. Cf. Herman J. Keyser, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1940), 256–57. Keyser notes that Jethro’s advice was a fruit of his “eastern wisdom.”

⁶ Collins, *Encounters*, 101–2.

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’

If Israel keeps the law, God says the nations will conclude it is a wise and understanding people. What is the logic of this promise? It must be that the nations will look on and see how obeying this law leads to flourishing, to human good. But this assumes several things. Firstly, it assumes there is an objective human good. The contrary assertion would be that good is whatever the law says it is and nothing more. But then, the peoples' statement would mean nothing more than: “Surely this is a nation that lives according to its laws.” Obviously, this is nonsense. Rather, it must assume, secondly, that the pagans know what human flourishing is, and that they can see that obeying God's law leads to it. This certainly proves N1. It may even prove N3, unless we assume only regenerate Gentiles draw this conclusion from their observations.

ISAIAH

Bockmuehl highlights the polemic against the nonsense of idolatry in Isaiah.⁷ Chapter 44 contains a detailed description of the folly of this practice, beginning with a narration

⁷ Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 92.

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