Evangelicals in the Public Square: Four Formative Voices of Political Thought and Action (Book Review)

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Another example is found in the essay “Reading Machiavelli.” Although I commend Mouw’s intention of calling Christians in leadership to follow the example of Christ, and not the realism of Machiavelli, this does not go far enough. The “servant leadership” Mouw advocates assumes that the economic and social structures within which this leadership happens are appropriate. Do we pray, seek God’s will, and read scripture in the context of the existing structures? Or do we recognize the prophetic calling of the Christian community to imagine a new reality made possible by Christ’s resurrection and the hope of the new creation? Christian “servant leadership” in oppressive economic and social structures does not seem to be the best solution, nor is it the Biblical solution advocated by such characters as Moses, Elijah, or Jesus.

*Praying at Burger King* is a thoughtful book in which we are invited to enter into the experiences of the author and those whom he has encountered. These experiences are inspiring as they give a human face to the lofty beliefs of the Reformed tradition. Mouw gives us a few snapshots of what faithful living looks like: pictures that embrace humanity, the original goodness of creation, and the hope and restoration that come only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are left to ponder, however, what it means to be the Christian community in what Mouw refers to as the “post Christian” age (125). What does it mean to be the prophetic community, and, to borrow from Walter Brueggemann’s *The Prophetic Imagination*, how do we imagine new possibilities for the world in the midst of brokenness, violence, and despair? What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean for Burger King?


This composite volume mostly contains material initially presented at a conference sponsored by the Ethics and Public Policy Center and held at Prouts Neck, Maine. Editor J. Budziszewski is Professor of Philosophy and Government at the University of Texas in Austin. The “Introduction” is written by Michael Cromartie, and the “Afterword” is written by Jean Bethke Elshtain, both political scientists. The work’s central portion, which is written by Budziszewski, consists of his reflections on the “four formative voices” mentioned in the sub-title: Carl Henry, Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer, and John Howard Yoder (39-121). Thereafter, Budziszewski’s reflections on these four thinkers receive responses from David L. Wecks (Professor of Political Science at Azusa Pacific University), John Bolt (Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary), William Edgar (Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary), and Ashley Woodiwiss (Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations at Wheaton College) respectively (123-194). Without disrespect to either Henry or Yoder, readers of *Pro Rege* will probably be most interested in what Budziszewski makes of the reformed thinkers Kuyper and Schaeffer.

For Budziszewski, Kuyper is an “evangelical Calvinist” (55), a characterization that runs the risk of being misleading. As might be expected, the discussion focuses on the concept of “sphere-sovereignty” (55-62). In Kuyper this concept, says Budziszewski, is derived not so much from scripture as from “general revelation.” Kuyper draws inferences “not from what the bible tells us about the order of creation but from what we can observe about it” (63). Ultimately, Budziszewski finds Kuyper’s discussions of “sphere-sovereignty” to be “cloudy”—lacking in precision and unworkable (62, 64, and 69). As to those who came after Kuyper and who inherited and valued his insights, such as Herman Dooyeweerd, they are regarded as engaging in a hopeless endeavor to find ways around “natural law” (72, n. 119).

This reviewer regrets that Budziszewski, for his part, is not clearer as to precisely what he means by “natural law.” The concept itself has an extensive history and is certainly not free of problems. Exactly what is it? Is it truly the same for everyone? What is nature? How may “the law of nature” (*ius naturale*) instruct moral conduct? How is “natural law” to be rightly discerned by sinners? Is it not entangled in natural / supernatural, general / special dichotomies? In truth, how “natural law” has been understood has reflected the deeper motives arising in the human heart and at work in history. The closest Budziszewski gets in this volume to articulating his view is at pages 33-37, where he makes some pertinent comparisons between evangelicalism and historic Protestantism. But this is hardly a positive exposition of the basis of his standpoint. Perhaps he too readily assumes that readers are already familiar with his earlier works, *Written in the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (1997) and *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (2004).

John Bolt, in his response to Budziszewski on Kuyper, does not come to our aid here. He responds to arguments presented by James Skillen elsewhere – in the *Calvin Theological Journal* (147-149) – and generally endorses Budziszewski’s critique of Kuyper’s articulation of sphere sovereignty, agreeing that in his *Lectures on Calvinism*, Kuyper was expressing a vision rather than aspiring to theoretical precision (145). Bolt’s appropriation of Kuyper is congruent with his own patriotic affirmation of American civil-religion and exceptionalism. Bolt mobilizes Kuyper for such contestable latter-day purposes. He seems to have

Although the words do not appear in the title, charitable behavior is the central focus of Brooks’ book *Who Really Cares*. Certainly charitable behavior is a familiar concern to the readers of *Pro Rege*. Most of us have been enjoined from childhood to give offerings to worthy causes, not only to those of church and school but also to civic causes such as the United Way or tsunami relief. Indeed, we are aware that the Bible speaks much more about charitable behavior than it does about creation, hell, or the end times.

Despite that familiarity, we rarely cross paths with analytical discussions of charitable behavior. Usually the concept comes up in matters of solicitation. Also, we understand charitable behavior as a particular expression of gratitude, a God-encouraged way to convey our thanks for the incredible gift of salvation that has come to us through Jesus Christ. Typically our empirical concerns are as simple as asking, “How is the ABC fund drive going? Has the goal been reached yet?” However, this book is based upon huge archival-data sets about contribution behavior and volunteer efforts that are cross-classified.