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Sources of bioethics: *Lex Naturae* versus *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Gratia*? A response to Vorster

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To argue that the concept of *natural law* can be regarded, with certain conditions, as a credible and useful tool in the Reformed paradigm, as Vorster did, may at first seems to be in conflict with the Reformation's emphasis on *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*. Vorster, however, argues very convincingly that the general revelation of God and creational gifts can be a source for bioethics within the reformed tradition. He does this by relying on Calvin and Bavinck's appreciative theologies and in reaction to Barth and Welker's critique to the notion of natural law. In this article I will further Vorster's argument by identifying some critical points in his argument, analyse the critique on these points and broaden the discussion by incorporating an eschatological perspective and the anthropology of the Protestant philosopher, Paul Ricoeur. The aim is, as Vorster states in his conclusion, to provide Christian ethics with opportunities and means to formulate applicable and relevant moral codes that can be utilised in the bio- and eco-ethical debates of today.

Introduction

In the first part of the article, J.M. Vorster's statement (see Vorster 2016) that natural law – specified as God's revelation in creation and his creational gifts – can be regarded, with certain conditions, as a credible and useful tool in the reformed paradigm, will be analysed. The conditions set out by Vorster, namely that the principles based on natural law may not contradict Scripture and God's revelation in the Word that became flesh, are an indication of the reservation in reformed thought about the acceptance of natural law as a source for ethics. Vorster's argument throughout the discussion of Calvin, Barth, Welker and Bavinck is a fine balancing act of preserving *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia* in light of accepting *lex naturae*. It will first be traced how this is done, and then the argument will be built upon. Secondly, a more future-orientated approach to the consideration of natural law in reformed tradition will be explored. Vorster argues for the acceptance (albeit qualified) of natural law as a source for bioethics by offering mainly a historical view: he focuses on God's general revelation and on creational gifts. While this perspective is a crucial aspect of understanding natural law, it is been argued that it can be complemented with an eschatological one. The focus is then not only on the *arche* of ethics (and a static natural law), but also on its *telos* (which makes natural law more dynamic). Thirdly, the focus will be on the important distinction between anthropology and soteriology in Calvin's theology (which is crucial for Vorster's argument) and link it to the Protestant philosopher, Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology. This is done in an effort to see how the fallibility of humankind can be reconciled with the notion of natural law. The overall purpose is to advance Vorster's argument about the credibility and utility of natural law within the reformed tradition.

Lex Naturae vs. *Sola Scriptura* and *Sola Gratia*?

The premise of Vorster's article is very important. He revisits the idea of natural law as a possible basis for the development of Christian moral codes applicable to bioethics in particular. This revisit is within the context of the reformed tradition – with its doctrine of, among others, sola scriptura – where natural law has become contentious due to the views of especially Karl Barth and his followers. Barth's criticism against natural law is that it undermines the principle of *sola scriptura* as the most authoritative source for Christian life. Barth accuses Brunner, for example, of not being consistent when he, on the one hand, upholds the capacity for revelation in nature as a source God's knowledge and his work, and on the other hand upholds the principle of *sola scriptura* (Brunner & Barth 1946:81). When Vorster thus considers the possibility of assessing natural law as a credible and useful tool within the reformed tradition, he has to overcome this apparent opposition of *Sola Scriptura* to *Lex Naturae*. He does this by focusing on two authoritative reformed theologians: Calvin and Bavinck. This choice is not only telling, but imperative for the aim of his argument, namely to be convincing in a reformed context. With this reformed tradition

in mind I think Vorster's argument is overall convincing due to the following crucial decisions he makes.

The first decision Vorster makes is to use the concepts of *general revelation* and *creational gifts* instead of natural law. He does this in order to counter the excesses of natural law such as 'natural theology' and 'natural order or creation order' (Vorster 2016:1, footnote 1). This is fruitful in the sense that it discerns 'natural law' directly as a gift or revelation of God and not as a totally independent source of the common good that can be exploited by human reason and can function as a moral law apart from God's law, for example as Aquinas understood it (Calvin 2008:2.7.1; Vorster 2016:2). The opposition between *Sola Scriptura* and *Lex Naturae* as two separate independent sources is in this choice of concepts largely dissolved, because God is acknowledged as the source of both. The relation between them and the question of which one should get priority, then becomes a secondary question that Vorster answers mainly at the end of his article. The important point throughout his article is to make natural law (in his qualified sense of general revelation and creational gifts) a credible source for reformed ethics.

For Vorster, Calvin's perspective on God's common grace to all people and his view on creation of man's *imago dei* lays the foundation for an understanding that 'all people received creational gifts as a result of the common goodness of God' (Leith 1989:184; Vorster 2016:2). Calvin says that, although the *imago dei* was blemished by the fall, it was not lost or destroyed (2008:1.15.4). People therefore maintain a dignity that brings with it certain moral responsibilities (2008:3.7.6), or a 'natural moral law' that rules over both the spiritual and civilian kingdoms (2008:2.7.1). According to Calvin this moral law is engraved in people's conscience as an inclination for justice and just laws. The purpose of this creational gift from God is for humanity to maintain a certain level of morality and civil justice. Calvin thus acknowledges that it is possible for people to derive universal ethical norms (for example, in order to prevent creation from collapsing into total disorder) due to God's creational gifts and his revelation in nature. Although this exposition might sound convincing, it leads to two questions: the first is about the biblical message of total depravity of humankind (and the question of *sola gratia*), and the second is about the relation of *lex naturae* to *sola scriptura*. It is on these two points where the important second choice in Vorster's article comes into play.

The second important decision Vorster makes in his argument is to engage Karl Barth as one of the most stringent critics of the concept of *natural law* in the discussion. If Vorster wants to maintain that natural law can be a credible tool in the reformed paradigm for bioethics, his notion must be able to resist the harsh critique of Barth. Barth's critique acuminates on the two questions listed above: the depravity of humankind and the authority of Scripture. The first problem is that to attach a certain authority and legitimacy to natural law (i.e. that humankind has an engraved inclination for justice), runs against the doctrine of *total depravity* of humankind. If total depravity is denied, it opens up the possibility that humankind can redeem itself and this will create a contradiction in reformed theology with its doctrine of *sola gratia*. *Sola gratia* means that one confesses the biblical message of the total depravity of humankind and the redemption in Christ through grace alone. Therefore, Barth refutes any form of innate knowledge of God based on natural law. In short, for Barth it is impossible to reconcile evangelical theology with natural theology, because it will contradict the doctrine of *sola gratia* and it will eventually lead people astray from the foundations of evangelical theology (Brunner & Barth 1946:94). Barth's second problem is that the acceptance of natural law and natural theology creates the problem of authority with regard to Scripture. Barth feels that natural theology might eventually get preference above Scripture (Brunner & Barth 1946:94) and that *sola scriptura* will be compromised in the process.

Barth roots his perspectives of humankind's total depravity and of *sola scriptura* in the theology of Calvin. The interpretation of Calvin is, however, not very straightforward, for example, Barth differs from Brunner on the interpretation of Calvin (Brunner & Barth 1946:105). Vorster sees here an important opening in the debate and agrees that, on the one hand, Barth is correct with regard to the reformed tradition in his emphasis on *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*, but Barth's interpretation of Calvin, on the other hand, leads to a possible unfair dismissal of natural law. Vorster might interpret this as an unfair dismissal, because it is a 'historic fact that people who were never confronted with the gospel of Christ are still able to develop noble moral principles' (Vorster 2016:4). In contrast to Barth's rejection of natural law, Calvin clearly acknowledged the moral capacity of all people, irrespective of sin, but Calvin also emphasises the importance of *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*. Calvin's interpretation is thus of importance here and, according to Vorster, the *sola gratia* can stay intact in Calvin's theology, because there is a difference between Calvin's anthropology and his soteriology. According to Calvin's anthropology, God's image is not completely destroyed and people can therefore still have a moral inclination (2008:3.7.6). This moral inclinational is a creational gift of God and it is not just natural law that can be equated to natural theology. In Calvin's soteriology, he is clear that one can be saved by Christ alone (and not through one's moral inclination). For Calvin *sola gratia* is therefore not in conflict with the notion of natural law. The relation between natural law and *sola scriptura* is furthermore specified by Calvin as one in which Scripture should always get priority. This priority of Scripture is developed later Vorster's article through reference to the theologies of Bavinck and Berkhof. It is, however, Calvin's theology that helped Vorster to avert Barth's main critique on natural law: its threat to total depravity (*sola gratia*) and *sola scriptura*.

Vorster makes a third significant decision in his argument by questioning the whole notion of the possibility of natural law. He does this through the critique of Michael Welker and thereby taking Barth's critique a step further. Welker argues

in agreement with Barth that all righteousness comes from God and that there can be no other source of the moral good. His further and crucial critique is that nature cannot serve as a source for moral law, because nature itself is flawed (Welker 2014:3). The flaw or problem of nature is that natural life can only exist at the cost of other life and that creatures have to destroy each other in order to exist. In contrast to this flawed law of nature, it is for Welker (2014:8) of key importance that God's law 'establishes a value system that in fact runs counter to the natural tendency of life, namely, counter to the tendency to preserve oneself at the cost of other life'. For Welker natural law can therefore not be the basis for principles of justice and righteousness that is necessary to order human relations and jurisprudence. He rather understands the natural moral inclination of humankind as the work of the divine spirit and not something given by nature. For him natural law is the natural inclination of self-preservation and not an engraved moral inclination towards justice. He stresses that, based on evolution theory, all morals come from God and cannot be ascribed to natural law or reason.

This negative view of Welker on natural law is, however, in conflict with Calvin's view that God's creational gift is a moral sense, an engraved inclination for justice that is given to every person. Calvin stresses this point in different ways and Vorster rightly points out the many terms Calvin uses to describe the moral law that is engraved in the conscience of humankind. The work of Bohatec (1934:3), VanDrunen (2010) and Witte (2007:59) is testimony of this. Welker's position does not account for the fact that 'people who were never confronted with the gospel of Christ are still able to develop noble moral principles' (Vorster 2016:4) in terms of natural law, but only as the inspiration and guidance of God's Spirit. Welker thereby places new emphasis on 'the effect of sin and the guiding work of the Spirit in the moral endeavours of the human spirit' (Vorster 2016:5) in our understanding of natural law as God's creational gift. Vorster (2016:6) acknowledges this as a 'refreshing' view in the 'new debate in Reformed circles about natural law', but he disagrees with Welker in the sense that natural law can be understood as part of God's general revelation in creation (nature and history) – for which he argues in the last part of his article.

With some of the most stringent critique mostly dealt with, Vorster makes two last important decisions in his argument for the credibility of natural law within the reformed tradition. The first is to emphasise the work of two respected reformed theologians, which is in agreement with his position, namely Bavinck (1908) and Berkhof (1958). Bavinck emphasises that the general revelation of God is the revelation in creation (nature and history). Berkhof (1958:36) argues that the Bible testifies about this general revelation 'in nature round about us, in human consciousness, and in the providential government of the world'. God's general revelation and his particular revelation (through Scripture), however, cannot be in conflict with each other and, as Bavinck, Berkhof and Berkhouwer (1951:129) argue, it is always God's written Word that should take priority. Vorster's last point is then to agree with them and to state that 'the natural knowledge based on God's revelation in creation … may not contradict the morality flowing from God's revelation in Scripture' (2016:7). Although natural law is thus acknowledged by Vorster, *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia* is upheld and this makes his argument convincing for the credibility of natural law to be utilised in the reformed tradition as a source of moral decision-making in the field of bioethics. However, to advance Vorster's argument, I will focus on the value of an eschatological view with regard to ethics and its sources, and secondly, on the anthropology of the Protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur.

Natural law and eschatological or teleological ethics

Vorster discusses two issues in the reformed tradition that make it difficult to accept natural law (even when qualified as the general revelation of God and creational gifts): the notion that natural law undermines the doctrine of *total depravity* of humankind (Barth), and that it gives a *too positive assessment of nature* as a source for ethics (Welker). Although the corruptness of both humankind and nature is acknowledged by Vorster, he carefully steers through this challenge by following Calvin and other reformed thinkers and emphasising the existence of an inclination towards justice in humankind, and by focusing on Calvin's discernment between soteriology and anthropology. Vorster argues for the acceptance (albeit qualified) of natural law as a source for bioethics by taking a historical approach: he focuses on God's general revelation and on creational gifts. God's revelation and creation are more concerned (although not exclusively) with the past and, in my view, this approach must be complemented by a more future-orientated approach in order to emphasise and recognise the dynamic nature of natural law. This can help to put the depravity or corruptness of humankind and nature in a more dynamic relation to God's revelation and creational gifts, and to accommodate the dynamic work of God's Spirit as Welker asked for. In this section some pointers in this future-orientated approach (eschatological or teleological) will be discussed, and in the following section the relation between soteriology and anthropology will be returned to by discussing Paul Ricoeur's anthropology.

With an eschatological view on natural law, the focus is not only on the *arche* of ethics (and natural law), but also on its *telos*. This teleological approach should be complementary to the more ontological and creational approach to natural law in the reformed tradition. While reformed theology would speak of creational gifts and Vorster (via Calvin) of an engraved moral law by nature, they are looking backwards, asking the question about the sources for ethics in the being, the ontological or genesis of human beings and not in the purpose, the highest aim, or the teleological or eschatological of human beings. Teleology and eschatology is used interchangeably here in its reference to the future, but these terms are not identical. Teleology concerns the goal or

purpose of one's life in this present world, while eschatology is concerned with the new creation and kingdom of God.

An example of such a teleological ethical approach can be found in the philosophy of Aristotle (7.1097b), who sees *eudaimonia* as the highest aim of people's lives. *Eudaimonia* is often translated as 'happiness', but Aristotle does not understand this 'happiness' in a hedonistic manner. Rather, he understands *happy* as 'equivalent to living well and acting well' (Aristotle 4.1095a). The highest aim of all human beings (*eudaimonia*) is thus for Aristotle to be happy in an ethical sense. In other words, the term *eudaimonia* is concerned with much more than happiness – a concept associated with (and often limited to) selfishness, hedonism, psychological well-being, wealth and health – and Aristotle uses this term with much more sensitivity towards people's need for and understanding of *telos:* purpose, meaning, transcendence, redemption, justice, wholeness, love, fragility, friendship and sacrifice. It is from this highest aim that Aristotle argues for certain virtues to be realised – an ethical life with integrity in terms of individual conduct, but also with the communal good, the political, in mind. The *telos* of humankind is, in Aristotle's view, the moral good and one's life is a striving towards that through different virtues (Hursthouse 2007:47–49). Ethics, here, are not only based on an 'engraved inclination for justice', but on the natural striving towards an ethical life. The emphasis is thus not on some natural knowledge of justice given by nature (or as God's creational gifts), but on developing a virtuous life based on our natural aim towards the moral good (*eudaimonia*). This slight twist by Aristotle in understanding humankind's 'natural morality' (natural law) not only from its past (a given natural striving towards *eudaimonia*), but also in relation to its future (a continuous development of a virtuous life), makes the concept of *natural law* much more dynamic. The assumption is not that humans are born with the full knowledge of justice, but rather with a yearning for it and that they are learning it throughout their lives. Their motivation for this learning is based on their natural striving towards the moral good (*eudaimonia*). Natural law is thus understood as something with an *arche* and a *telos*, in-between which there is a dynamic process.

This more teleological approach to natural law has been explored (and criticised) by various Christian theologians (Hauerwas & Pinches 1997; Hollenbach 2002; Ramsey 1950). While Ramsey (1950:xxxiii) emphasises that 'the basic principles of Christian ethics cannot be understood except from a study of the New Testament', he still values Aristotle's ethical philosophy. A contemporary protestant theologian, Sebastian Rehnman (2012:473), even argues in this regard that 'the notion of virtue is not only central but also consistent with the notion of grace'. There are, for example, many similarities between the Christian theology of love, justice, vocation, the realisation and eschatological hope of God's kingdom (all God's gifts of grace), and Aristotle's emphasis on a virtuous life and the *telos* of *eudaimonia* (as part of a natural inclination of humankind). The Christian-ethical life is in reformational terms not one of endless striving towards righteousness, but a life in answer to God's grace where love and justice should be continually realised. This is a vocational life with the aim and expectation of the moral good and the kingdom of God in mind. In this expectation and hope the Spirit of God guides Christians to live out love and justice in all its concrete forms. The eschatological vision of God's kingdom then becomes an inspiration to Christian-ethical life in a similar way that *eudaimonia* functions as inspiration for Aristotelean ethics. In this ethical process of spiritual growth the Spirit of God plays a crucial role – one for which Welker, for example, pleads in the reassessment of natural law – while *phronesis* [wisdom] has a similar role with regard to virtues. The *telos* of a moral good life (*eudaimonia*) in both cases makes the concept of *natural law* much more dynamic. From a Christian perspective, eschatological hope helps one to understand natural law, not only as a creational gift (a historical static event), but as a possible continuous gift (or process) through which the spirit of God plays a crucial and continuous role. In secular (or Aristotelean) terms, this process (creational gifts) can be described as the need to continuously strive towards *eudaimonia* through a virtuous life. An Aristotelean understanding of natural law can therefore enrich (or at least challenge) the reformed understanding thereof. The challenge is then to see God's general revelation in nature not as a static process and creational gifts not as a once-off given, but as a process in which God's Spirit is playing a continuous role and in which eschatological hope is crucial.

To link this back to Vorster's argument about natural law as God's general revelation and creational gifts, a few comments are necessary:

Firstly, Aristotle is of course not a Christian and not authoritative on sources for Christian ethics, but his teleological perspective of natural law challenges the concept that Christians have about natural law as something static. In other words, the concept of *natural law* itself can be expanded through Aristotle's teleological ethics. The dynamic nature (and content) of an expanded concept of *natural law* does not need to be filled in with Aristotelean terms, but can be filled in with trinitarian terminology and theology. The pneumatological, which Welker is pleading for, can especially be accommodated in this more dynamic understanding of natural law.

Secondly, Aristotle's teleological approach to ethics challenges the Calvinistic concept of *natural law* (as the engraved inclination for justice) in terms of the eschatological. In Christian eschatology, emphasis is placed on the aim of Christians' ethical conduct, the realisation of concrete justice in society, the expectation of the kingdom of God and the role of God's spirit in all of this. The resonance between Christian eschatological ethics and Aristotelean teleological ethics is of such a nature that one can imagine that God's spirit can be involved in the ethical lives of non-Christians on a continuous basis and not only in a past event. In other words, the concept

of *natural law* might be expanded to a *looking forward to when and where justice will be realised* and to the whole process this involves, and not only a *looking backwards to a general moral gift received by everyone*.

Thirdly, in relation to the critique that natural law undermines the doctrine of *total depravity* of humankind (Barth) and that it gives a *too positive assessment of nature* as a source for ethics (Welker), Aristotle's teleological approach to ethics allows for a scheme of natural law where humankind can still be seen as sinful (otherwise Aristotle's arguments for a virtuous life will not be necessary), where redemption is still necessary (even in Aristotle's teleology of ethics, humankind never reaches complete moral goodness or *eudaimonia*; see Verhoef 2014a) and nature is not seen as only a positive source for ethics. Aristotle emphasises the importance to be educated in ethics and to resist some natural inclinations. While reformed theology asserts that after the fall our corrupt nature is completely unable to attain the eschatological goal, Aristotle will posit *eudaimonia* as an ever transcending goal or a 'perfectionist happiness' (Verhoef 2014b:540). The eschatological dimension of natural law adds to a more positive anthropology, but it does not cancel out the need for salvation. This fits in with Calvin's distinction between anthropology and soteriology that will be discussed in the next section.

The value in the teleological ethics of Aristotle for Vorster's question about the credibility of natural law as a source for ethics within the reformed tradition thus lies in its potential to expand the concept of *natural law*. It is a concept that can be understood much more dynamic and much more eschatological. It opens up for a more pneumatological approach to natural law. The next question is how the anthropology of Paul Ricoeur can help one to relate natural law to the total depravity of humankind.

Natural law and the anthropology of Paul Ricoeur

Barth's critique against natural law is that such a notion may undermine the doctrine of total depravity and eventually the doctrine of *sola gratia*. Vorster answers this critique by emphasising the difference between Calvin's anthropology and soteriology. Calvin's anthropology says that God's image is not completely destroyed in humanity and that people can therefore still have a moral inclination (2008:3.7.6). His soteriology says that one can be saved by Christ alone (and not through one's moral inclination). For Calvin *Sola gratia* is therefore not in conflict with the notion of natural law. This anthropology of Calvin can be illustrated by relating it to the Protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology. Ricoeur's anthropology has a unique way of relating the fallibility of humankind with the notion of natural law.

Ricoeur (1978:20) describes the centre of his philosophical anthropology as the 'problem of the intimate disproportion of man with himself or the antinomical structure of man, suspended between a pole of infinitude and a pole of finitude'. This disproportion of humanity is experienced firstly on the level of 'knowing', where one's imagination synthesises one's finite perspectives (perception) of things with one's infinite verbs (speech) in the act of constituting the objectivity of the thing. On a second level ('the practical') the finitude of humanity as experienced in its character (one's feelings, body, habits and finite totality of existence) is in disproportion to its infinite happiness or the totality of meaning that fulfils 'man's existential project considered as an indivisible whole' (Ricoeur 1986:65). The synthesis between happiness (infinite) and character (finite) takes place in the project of 'the person'. Such a project (of being a person) entails 'a presence in which one enters into relations of mutual understanding' (Ricoeur 1986:69), where one's consciousness becomes self-consciousness and the person is practically intended. This project (or synthesis between finite character and infinite happiness) of the person is constituted in the moral feeling of respect. Respect, in other words, is the fragile synthesis in which the form of the person is constituted. On the third level ('the affective') the synthesis between the finite vital passions (to pleasure, having, power, esteem) and infinite spiritual passions (to happiness as completeness and meaning, spiritual desires) in the heart (*thumos*), is distinctively fragile (Garcia 1998:100). The human *thumos* is ever restless, because between the finitude of pleasure and the infinitude of happiness slips a note of indefiniteness.

The fragility of this continuous mediation or synthesis of humanity between the finite and infinite (in this triad of knowing, acting and feeling) becomes for Ricoeur the very locus of our fallibility. The fallible nature of humanity's existence is, for Ricoeur (1986:133), what allows the *possibility* of moral evil: 'the possibility of moral evil is inherent in man's constitution'. Thereby Ricoeur is not claiming that humanity is inherently evil, but rather that evil is a possibility with which humanity is born. Fallibility is 'pure possibility without the fallen condition through which it ordinarily appears' (Ricoeur 1986:145). In other words, although fallibility can be understood as fragility, weakness, without fault (innocence), its historical manifestation is the fallen condition. Ricoeur's emphasis (1986:145) in this distinction is that 'however primordial badness may be, goodness is yet more primordial'. For Ricoeur a myth of fall is therefore only possible in the context of a myth of creation and innocence. This logic is aligned to the Christian myths of the creation of nature and humankind as good, and the fall that follows thereafter. Because goodness is seen as primordial, Ricoeur (1986:145) can say: 'If that had been understood, one would not have wondered whether "the image of God" may be lost, as if man stopped being man by becoming bad'. Humanity's 'image of God' – their primordial goodness – is not destroyed in Ricoeur's view, but humanity is at the same time understood as fallen.

The way in which humanity is not only fallible but fallen, is described by Ricoeur (1967:3) as a phenomenology of confession – an avowal expressed in 'symbols of evil'. In his discussion of such a symbol, the Adamic myth, Ricoeur

(1967:307) emphasised that the Christian believer is not concerned primarily with an interpretation of evil, but confesses: 'I believe in the remission of sins; sin gets if full meaning only retrospectively'. For Ricoeur, the negative symbols of sin include 'the missed target, the tortuous road, the revolt and having gone astray' (Simms 2003:22) that suggest the 'idea of a relation broken off' (Ricoeur 1967:74). These symbols are analogies of the 'movement of existence considered as a whole' (Simms 2003:22) in that the sinner is the one who has gone away from or forgotten God. The counterpart of sin, according to Ricoeur (1967:71), is redemption – the restoration of this broken relation by God. Although Ricoeur (1986:145) describes in his anthropology the good as primordial (with its resonance in the concept of 'image of God'), humankind is still understood as 'fallen' (in the historical manifestation of its fallibility) and in need of redemption (through the interpretation of symbols of evil in his avowed phenomenology). This anthropology has some important implications for understanding natural law in relation to *sola gratia*.

A Ricoeurian description of 'natural law' will firstly emphasise that humanity finds itself suspended in the disproportion of being between the finite and infinite; synthesising different poles on the level of knowledge, action and affection; being fragile in its fallibility; and 'by destination a mediation between the demand for happiness and the contingency of character and death' (Ricoeur 1986:142). Evil is a possibility in this fallibility, but so is the good. The good, however, is primordial, and this is where an agreement can be found with Calvin's anthropology which acknowledges that the 'image of God' is not completely destroyed in humankind and that God gave humanity an inclination for justice engraved in their conscience. This 'natural law' does not cancel out humanity's 'total depravity', because, in the historical manifestation of humanity's fallibility, the condition of fallenness is manifested. Ricoeur describes this through the symbols of sin and thereby acknowledges the need for redemption. Here one finds resonance in Ricoeur's anthropology with the soteriology of Calvin that emphasises redemption by God. Ricoeur's anthropology (primarily phenomenological) is an example of how the theological distinction between anthropology and soteriology of Calvin can be spelled out in more detail. The possibility of maintaining a positive anthropology in the sense of humanity's capability of having an inclination for moral goodness, but at the same time accepting the depravity of humanity and its need for redemption (in the manifestation of fallenness), resonates between Ricoeur and Calvin's anthropologies. This more 'practical' and detailed manner in which Calvin's anthropology (and soteriology) is supported by Ricoeur's anthropology underscores Calvin's ability to retort Barth's critique to natural law (total depravity and *sola gratia*) as Vorster argued for.

Conclusion

The need to provide a Christian-ethical foundation for the development of moral codes for bio- and eco-ethics is of huge importance. Vorster's contribution in this regard – that the concept *natural law* can, with certain conditions, be regarded as a credible and useful tool in the reformed paradigm – should therefore be welcomed. Vorster argues very convincingly for the acceptance (albeit qualified) of natural law as a source for bioethics by giving serious consideration to the most stringent critique to this notion by reformed theologians such as Barth and Welker. With his interpretation of Calvin, Bavinck and Berkhof, Vorster (2016:6–7) manages to set aside the problem of '*lex naturae* vs. *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*'. He clarifies and qualifies his position in his conclusion, especially with the normativity of Scripture. Because Vorster focuses on God's general revelation and on creational gifts (in history), I argued that this approach can be complemented with an eschatological perspective through Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*. The focus is then not only on the *arche* of ethics (and a static natural law), but also on its *telos* (that makes natural law more dynamic). An expanding of the concept of *natural law* to include the eschatological expectations opens up a more pneumatological approach to natural law. I furthermore focused on the important distinction between anthropology and soteriology in Calvin's theology, which is crucial for Vorster's argument, and linked it to the Protestant philosopher Paul Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology. Ricoeur's anthropology illustrates how Calvin's distinction between anthropology and soteriology can be described in phenomenological terms and how the concept of *natural law* can be upheld at the same time as the notion of depravity. The relation between natural law and an eschatological or teleological approach to ethics as well as Ricoeur's anthropology is of such a nature that it advances Vorster's argument about the credibility and utility of natural law within the reformed tradition.

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