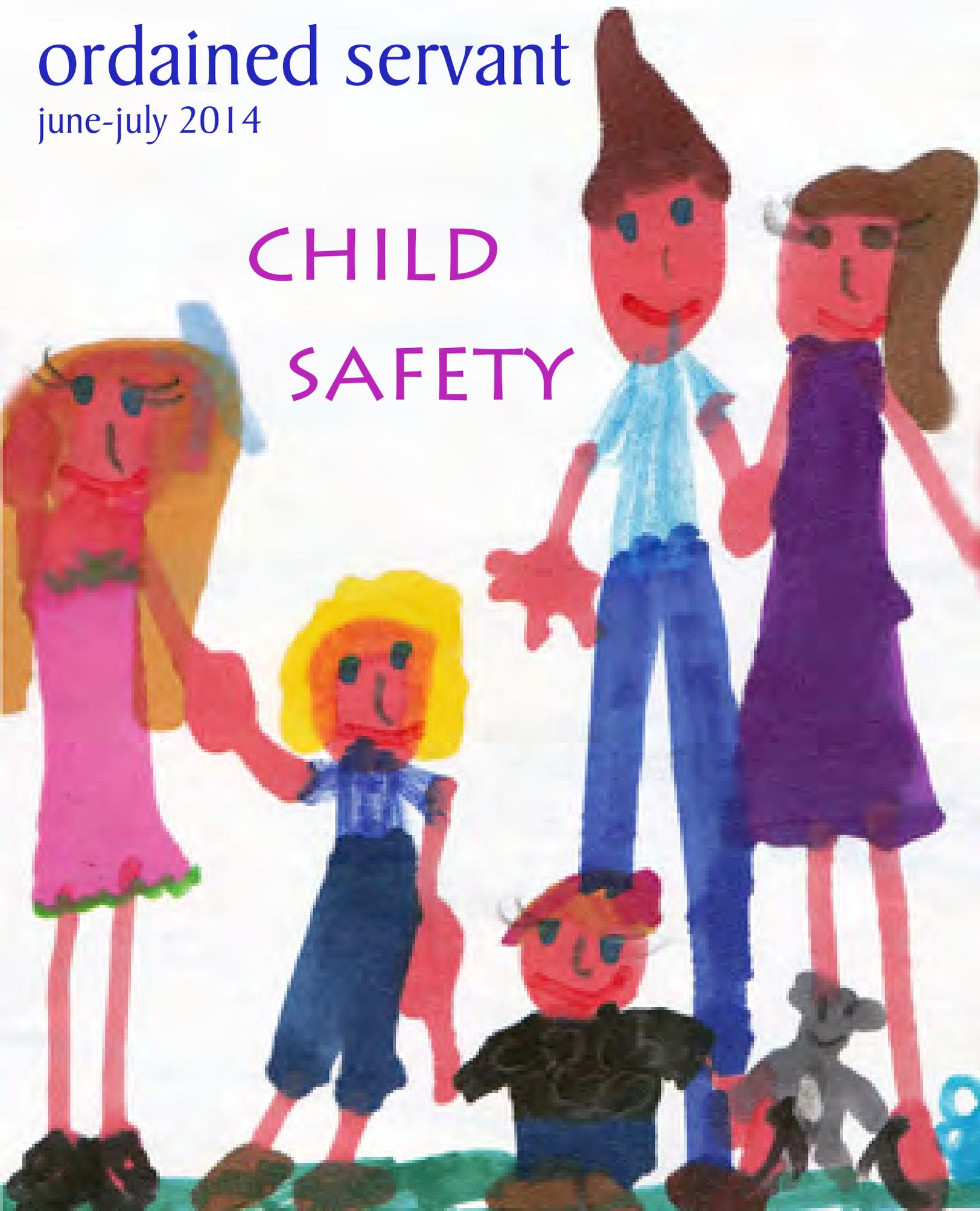


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CHILD SAFETY



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From the Editor

For almost a decade we had a well-crafted child safety policy in place. Recently, however, several members alerted us to our need to upgrade our policy commensurate with current law, which has become much stricter in light of the incidence of child abuse in our culture. The session consulted with several lawyers and members, one lawyer who has done extensive work with the Roman Catholic Church, and came up with an extensively revised policy. We realize that in churches of under 200 people the level of familiarity and trust can lead us to neglect consistent compliance with our stated policy. Presently we have appointed a child safety director who will oversee the consistent implementation of our policy, to protect us from unwarranted lawsuits, but most importantly to protect our children from potential abuse. We have found this to be a costly process. But we believe that the time and money we have invested is well worth it, since the health and welfare of our Lord's church is at stake. We also believe that by passing on the results of our experience, the process of establishing and implementing a sound child safety policy will be less costly for other churches.

One of the unintended consequences of our efforts is that we have a policy that we can share with other churches. I must caution you that this is only an example, not necessarily a template, because the laws of your state, the requirements of your insurance company, and your situation may be different from ours. [APC Policy on Child Safety](#); [APC Volunteer Application](#).

During the process of researching the revision of our policy, I encountered the wisdom of two Shishko brothers, the sons of the longtime pastor of Franklin Square OPC in New York, Bill Shishko. They have each contributed to this topic in ways that I hope will be a great help to all of our congregations, under the guidance of church officers. Christopher brings his legal skills to bear on this topic in "Volunteers and Your Church: Avoiding Legal Pitfalls." Jonathan applies his church planting abilities to the problem of implementing Christopher's advice in a small congregation in "Improving on the Status Quo: Child Safety."

Two pertinent reviews follow. Jen Foley reviews two short but poignant books on child abuse, written by a victim and his parents. On a positive note Cynthia Rowland reviews one in a series of books written for young people about influential Christian leaders in church history.

Diane Olinger reviews an important book on civil law and the Bible. Nine chapters survey this aspect of biblical theology and are a valuable resource for those involved in

civil law, as lawyers or in other capacities, as well as pastors and church officers.

Finally, don't miss two inspired poems by Solomon. They go together, and are excellent for reading in the presence of parents and their newborn children. I have used the King James Version as its poetry, in the literary atmosphere of Shakespeare, is incomparable.

The cover illustration is from a birthday card given to me from my granddaughter Maddie Welch, drawn when she was eight.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

ServantReading

Volunteers and your Church: Avoiding Legal Pitfalls

by Christopher W. Shishko

“Things aren’t what they used to be.” You may have said this or something like it, but probably not before you actually changed the way you have been doing something. Times really do change, and what was common practice years ago may no longer be sufficient to address the realities that face a church today. However, given the right guidance, it may be easier than you think to change the way you have done something in the past.

One topic that you probably will deal with, on a regular basis, is the extent to which your church should look into the backgrounds of its members who volunteer or who work for the church.¹ This is particularly true when church volunteers will be working with children. This article will attempt to provide our readers with some ideas on how to develop a policy for conducting background checks on church volunteers. It is being published in tandem with an article that provides a practical perspective from a pastor who has recently implemented such a policy in his church.

The reality of today is that bad things can happen, and if they do, it is likely someone will be looking to determine whether your church behaved reasonably under the circumstances. It is no longer uncommon for large organizations like some churches to conduct background checks or some form of due diligence regarding people who will be working with children. For a church, there is an obvious tension between protecting the interests of the church from liability and fostering an environment of community within the congregation. However, depending on the state where your church is located, you may be obligated to comply with certain requirements before allowing volunteers to work with children; or your church’s insurance policy may require that you establish certain procedures to be followed by volunteers.

Before you implement a policy regarding background checks, there are two very important questions you should know the answer to: 1. Does my state impose any requirements on my church with regard to employees and volunteers? and 2. Does my insurance policy have any requirements with regard to my employees and volunteers? The answers to these questions will help you in determining whether your church is required to implement certain procedures, or whether you are free to adopt a policy based on what you believe will best protect your church in the event that something does go wrong. However, if there are certain requirements of your insurance policy, you should be careful to comply in order to avoid having your insurance company attempt to disclaim coverage to the church if something goes wrong. If your state imposes certain requirements, you should come into compliance as soon as possible.

¹ Although this article is intended to be informative, it is not a substitute for legal counsel and I strongly recommend you speak to an attorney about your individual church’s situation if you have questions.

Once you have decided to establish a policy with regard to volunteer/employee background checks, and you have determined whether there are any legal requirements or insurance company-imposed requirements, you may also want to consider the following issues:

1. What is your State's current legal standard of care for a church or other organization that supervises children temporarily? It is likely the church would be held to the same standard as any other organization in terms of owing a reasonable duty of care to children when it provides supervision, even with volunteers. If there is case law where an organization has been found negligent because they did not do a background check before allowing someone to care for children, then it is likely your church could be found liable if you do not perform background checks and a volunteer who cares for a child were to do something that harms a child. Basically, in the event of a lawsuit, the question will be whether the church behaved reasonably. Reasonable is not an easily-defined term and is shaped by cases within your jurisdiction, but generally, doing nothing is not reasonable. Therefore, when drafting a policy, it will be helpful to know what courts in your state will consider to be reasonable.

2. Check with your insurance provider to determine what is covered and what is not. They may not be very clear about this, but the last thing you want is to find out that your insurance policy does not cover the actions of volunteers. It would be bad enough if the church got sued for something that a volunteer did, but it would be even worse if there was no insurance to cover the expenses associated with the lawsuit. Work closely with your insurance provider and ask them tough questions. (What if one of our nursery volunteers hurts a child intentionally? What if one of them touches a child inappropriately? Would this be covered? Where does it say that in the insurance contract? What about the same questions for our employees/elders/deacons?) Insurance companies are notorious for selling policies and taking money, but they love to deny coverage when something actually happens. (Who knew that a flood is somehow different than rising water, until Hurricane Sandy?) In short, there is nothing wrong with posing uncomfortable questions to your insurance company because you purchase insurance for the remote possibility that something will go wrong; not because you think something bad will actually happen. Based on input from your insurance company, you may want to ask whether they have any recommendations for what should be included in your policy. They may even have a sample policy for you to adapt for your specific purposes.

3. You may consider having parents sign a waiver for the various services provided by the church. The enforceability of a waiver varies from state to state, so it may not be enforceable but at the very least it could serve as proof that parents knowingly accepted certain risks (i.e., that children who are playing may ultimately be hurt regardless of the level of supervision and that the church cannot/does not guarantee the child's safety). If you are going to use a waiver for certain activities, it is a good idea to develop a model form with blanks which can

be filled in as needed. You may also want to indicate in your policy when a waiver will be required. Just remember, if you say you will do something in your policy, and you do not do it, it may be used as proof that your church behaved negligently by not following its own policies.

4. You may want to establish a policy governing certain church volunteers (such as nursery volunteers or Bible school teachers). As an example, the policy could require that volunteers avoid having only one person alone with children. It is always a good idea to have a second set of eyes in any situation because you may someday need to be able to refute any allegations that something inappropriate took place. It is much harder for someone to claim that something bad happened if there was another person around who can refute the claim. Cameras are also an option. They are not very expensive and some people feel uncomfortable being recorded, but it is definitely one method of protecting a church from false claims, and also may be a deterrent to inappropriate behavior. Again, laws differ from state to state and some states do not allow recording without consent of all parties being video-taped. Most places allow private organizations to video-tape without consent from anyone, but sometimes recording audio is a problem, so you should check with an attorney about what your rights are before you implement any type of security camera system.

5. One specific area of concern involves trips to the bathroom. For obvious reasons, it is likely a volunteer may escort a child to the bathroom and assist the child. There is not a single best method of handling this situation because your options are limited to leaving the child alone in the bathroom, having the child in the bathroom with the volunteer, insisting that two people go to the bathroom with the child (probably impractical), video cameras (almost certainly illegal in a bathroom), but obviously none of the options comes without risk. You may consider having parents inform you whether a child is independently toilet trained and then establish a policy that children should not be accompanied into the bathroom itself if the child is toilet trained. If children are not toilet trained, then the parents could be called to bring their children to the toilet. In some organizations that routinely deal with children, there are aides who assist children in the bathroom, and you can see why in that type of a situation it would be a good idea to be able to show that a background check was done on that person before they were allowed to carry out such duties. Although it may be impractical or too costly to perform background checks on all of the volunteers in the church, you may be able to limit your potential liability by establishing guidelines that reduce the likelihood of something going wrong or limiting the number of volunteers who work with children in such a sensitive setting.

6. Finally, lawsuits are extremely difficult for anyone who has to go through one. They are stressful, expensive, and can destroy relationships. Unfortunately, there is always a trade-off in creating an environment that appears to be overly concerned with protecting the organization versus an overly trusting environment that is ultimately found to be unreasonable and negligent. If you do end up in a

lawsuit, the lawyer representing the church will be looking for documentation to prove whatever it is that you believe to be true. The best case scenario is when an organization can say, “We acted reasonably; see, here are the documents showing that we checked on everyone before we let them work with us; we established policies on what they can and can’t do; we enforced those policies when there were violations; and we did not allow those volunteers to continue working with the church because they failed to follow our policies.” That is, ultimately, you want to be able to demonstrate that, while the church cannot guarantee a child’s safety (nobody can), you took reasonable steps to protect the child from harm.

In closing, Theodore Roosevelt once said, “In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.”² This advice rings true for almost every circumstance. When dealing with a situation in which your church faces potential liability, doing nothing may prove to be the worst decision of all. Instead, being proactive by exploring the issue with an eye towards a reasonable solution, based on accurate information, is the best course of action. This can certainly be difficult, and your church members may be resistant to change. However, if you think that saying “but we have always done it this way” will protect you when something goes wrong, you may want to think again.

The truth is, now, more than ever, courts are looking to see whether your actions were reasonable based on today’s standards, not what was acceptable many years ago. While you may not want to change the way you have done things in the past, and you think that change will upset your congregation, you should consider the alternative of being unprepared when something goes wrong. It is always uncomfortable to prepare for the worst case scenario, but it will certainly be time well spent in the event something does go wrong.

Christopher W. Shishko is an attorney in New York who serves as general counsel to various municipalities, school districts, and organizations and frequently provides assistance with drafting policies for compliance with legal obligations and insurance company requirements.

² <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/theodorero403358.html>.

Servant Work

Improving Upon the Status Quo: Child Safety

by Jonathan W. Shishko

I am convinced that pastors and sessions often resort to saying things like, “we have always done it this way” neither because they think the status quo is sufficient nor because they think they are already doing things in the best way possible. The simple reality is that pastors and sessions are so loaded with pastoral work and church administration that changing the status quo feels like an insurmountable additional work load. Background checks on everybody that works with children? More policies, procedures, and protocols? Asking more of our already strained group of volunteers? Spending more time researching insurance policies, on the phone with insurance agents, and looking into the law of the land? Spending more money on insurance and legal counsel? Oh my. “We have always done things this way,” and “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!”

As a church-planting evangelist in New York City, I certainly understand this way of thinking. However, it was the status quo that led to a recent article in the *New York Times* entitled “Vatican Tells of 848 Priests Ousted in Decade.” In this article, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, a Vatican representative, said that 848 priests were dismissed between 2004 and 2013 and that another 2,572 members of the clergy had been disciplined for sexual abuse. Part of their discipline involved “putting children beyond their reach.”¹

One can only imagine how much work the Roman Catholic Church had to do to accomplish this feat. And yet, the feat itself is far beyond embarrassing. Instead of being proactive, the Catholic Church is now forced to publicize their reactivity. Why? Because, for too long, the Catholic Church went with the status quo, the way they had always done things.

With this horrendous contribution to the ecclesiastical climate, as ordained servants, we must make the protection of Christ’s sheep, and especially the protection of Christ’s children, a top priority. Among all the other things going on, we must be proactive about child safety in the church.

The ethos of Christopher W. Shishko’s article “Volunteers and your Church: Avoiding Legal Pitfalls” is that proactively doing something is far better than doing nothing. Simply continuing with the status quo can be negligence. Assessing the system in place and working to improve upon it is proactive due diligence. I am writing to say that many of the ideas in the aforementioned article are not only easy to investigate, but also easy to implement.

At Reformation Presbyterian Church, where I am an evangelist, our proactive due diligence in regards to child safety began at an overseeing session meeting. As is our

¹ Nick Cummings-Bruce, “Vatican Tells of 848 Priests Ousted in Decade,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/world/europe/vatican-tells-of-848-priests-ousted-in-last-decade.html>.

practice, we discussed the church's financial situation. As one item pertaining to the finances, we discussed the amount we were paying for liability insurance. We collectively decided that, due to the church's current size, we absolutely needed to pay for higher coverage. This led to interaction with our insurance company. This interaction was tremendously informative and helpful on many levels. Our insurance company made one thing very clear: we could continue without running background checks on the volunteers who worked with children, but we would pay a lot more money for a lot less coverage—all while continuing to set ourselves up for the possibility of a terrible lawsuit.

Our course of action became very clear. We decided that no matter how difficult it would be, we would run background checks on everyone at the church who would ever be working with the children. At the time, this was a tremendously daunting task for two reasons. The first reason was the administrative and financial task before us. How could we afford, run, and maintain background checks on the twenty-four nursery workers, Sunday school teachers, and other sitters who regularly contributed at Reformation? The second reason was the public side to all this. Volunteers, by definition, give their time and abilities to a certain task. As a church plant, we are not only grateful for this, but we are absolutely dependent upon it! How would the congregation (one third of which serve as volunteers in working with the children) receive this new requirement?

Thankfully, the angst and anxiety is always greatest in the planning stage. Soon after we committed to making this change, we discovered that there are fantastic services that address this particular issue. We decided to go with protectmyministry.com. The cost is minimal and the service is paperless. All we had to do was make a list of Reformation's active volunteers, and ask those volunteers to fill out a simple consent form. Before distributing the consent forms, we made it the official Reformation policy: before anyone worked with children at Reformation, he or she needed to be a church member who had consented to a background check.

The next step was informing the congregation and distributing the consent forms. As a session, we were a bit nervous about this step. We really didn't know how the congregation would receive the new policy. We held a congregational meeting, and simply summarized our thinking on the subject to the congregation. Fully expecting at least some objection, we were very pleasantly surprised by a congregation that was fully on board with the new procedure! The responses we did get were various comments about how thankful they were to see the church proactively, tangibly, and reasonably addressing the issue of child safety. The congregation appreciated that we were proactively performing due diligence.

Since that meeting, things have been relatively easy. Some people were initially hesitant to give the information necessary to run the background check. That objection is understandable and easily overcome by reminding people that they do not have to volunteer, but that, if they do, we must run a background check for them, in order to provide the safest possible environment for our children. This explanation overcame all objections. Right now, we have a robust and wonderful team of twenty-four active volunteers. Their background checks have all been run and are currently on file.

In order to continue improving upon the status quo, we have not stopped thinking about child safety. To address the issue of volunteers and kids needing to use the bathroom, we are going to work with our volunteers to understand that the nursery is really for kids under the age of two. They are usually not potty-trained, which means that

taking kids to the bathroom is not a very likely event. We will probably work to make a policy that kids who are potty-trained are not permitted in the nursery. Some exceptions to this rule may be made; but when they are, and a child needs to use the bathroom, their parents will be retrieved to take their own children to the bathroom.

We have a robust Kidz Club at Reformation (meetup.com/Kidz-Club). Kidz Club events are held monthly, and are focused on kids ages two to twelve. In order to provide safety at these events, we insist that at least one parent or care-taker attend along with the Kidz Club member. In addition, we host all these events in public places (zoos, bowling alleys, museums, etc., instead of in private residences). No one is allowed to come and simply drop their kids off. The parents or care-takers must stay. While this may sound stern and uninviting, it is easily communicated in a caring and gracious way. Here is the way we put it on the back of every Kidz Club invite card: “In order to build a safe community, Kidz Club events are never ‘drop off your kids and leave.’ They are always ‘come and stay,’ so parents, volunteers, and other guests are serving and fellowshiping with one another while the kids are also there, enjoying the time organized for them.”

In addition to attorneys and insurance agents, there are other great resources to learn from. Looking forward, we intend to glean from other organizations that face some of the same safety concerns that we do. Teachers, day care professionals, other kid-based ministries, and especially, other churches, can all serve as terrific places to learn what does and does not work. Ask around. See what other organizations use. Think outside the box. Ask questions. Are there computer programs we should use to monitor the kids and the supervisors? Is there a place for audio/visual surveillance? What policies could we easily implement that would immediately reduce risk?

If you don’t have time, appoint someone within the congregation to research the issue and counsel the session. Just don’t fall into the trap of setting yourself and the church up for disaster, by, for one reason or another, contenting yourself with the status quo by saying, “We have always done it this way.” “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3). Let’s do what we can to protect that wonderful God-given heritage!

Jonathan W. Shishko *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving as the organizing pastor of Reformation Presbyterian Church in Fresh Meadows, New York.*

ServantReading

Evangelism and the Local Church

by Jennifer Foley

David's Sword, by David, Lee, and Marybeth Elliott. Tate, 2008, 38 pages, \$7.99, paperback.

David's Shield, by Dan, Lee, and Marybeth Elliott. Tate, 2010, 63 pages, \$7.99, paperback.

Child sexual abuse is a profoundly solemn topic. It is not an anomaly either, but, unfortunately, too common of an occurrence in this broken world with broken people. In all likelihood, there are very few of us who remain untouched, in some way, by child sexual abuse—even right now. Maybe you were a victim as a child. Perhaps a colleague at your work place has a son or daughter who was a victim, or a school-friend of your own child has fallen prey. In fact, there may be some one in your life right now who is an ongoing victim of abuse and you are unaware of that tragic part of his or her life. Terrifying to face, yet, there may even be a child in your own church who is being abused—maybe even in your own household. This is the nightmare that suddenly pierced the Christian home of the Elliotts, permanently changing each family member in different ways.

Late one night, Lee and Marybeth Elliott were asleep in their bed when their youngest child, David, knocked on their door. Confused and frightened, David had been trapped in a terrifying secret for several months. And, so, begins the story of the victory of truth over evil, as told so compellingly by the Elliotts in *David's Sword* and *David's Shield*. The first book centers on David's perspective, telling of God's healing for the deep wound that gashed David with the complete exploitation of his innocence. It is the first of its kind written from a child survivor to other children in order to encourage them that it is safe to tell. Indeed, David uses his real name and a photograph of himself in order to demonstrate that it truly is safe to come forward and seek help. This remarkable example has proven to be a highly effective tool such that both children and adult victims have disclosed abuse more readily. The second book centers on Dan's perspective, the older brother and protector of David, and tells of God's healing for the myriad feelings with no emotional outlets that gripped Dan when he learned of David's abuse. It further encompasses the unique challenges of helping a child with special needs, as the story also includes the oldest brother in the family, Mark, who has autism.

In *David's Sword*, David is a trusting boy who enjoys playing with neighborhood children in the backyard and making people happy. A "trusted older brother of a friend" visits the Elliott family often and eventually becomes "like a brother to David." This "Goliath" finds small ways to gain time with David while all of the children are playing outside. Eventually, Goliath introduces David to a "game" to "play" in the woods that makes David uncomfortable and scared. David is confused, and the abuser's threats of

“trouble” silence him. David needs to step out of the darkness and bring the suffocating secret—and Goliath—into the light. The sexual abuse continued for several months, and, then, God mercifully answered David’s prayers. He gave David the courage to tell, which provided a voice to conquer Goliath, with the faithful, patient help of his parents and of many other adults serving at the forefront. *David’s Sword* speaks of the way that God gave words to David and tells of the gentle steps taken by others both to listen to David and to diligently act to protect him. The story is one of hope for other victims, hope that they are not alone and that they may be free of the abuse, free of the shame, free of the fear that keeps them captive. The threats of abusers are very real and powerful, chaining the children to silence. This book changes that power and returns it, as well as extraordinary courage, to the child’s hand.

In *David’s Shield*, Dan struggles and wrestles with feelings of vengeance toward the abuser, and of guilt for having been stripped of an ability to help his younger brother escape the evil imposed on him. Dan now feels forced to idly stand by while the abuser seems to go unpunished and must learn to wait on the justice system. More so, Dan needs to learn how to wait on and trust in God. The tangled, knotted feelings of the sibling of a survivor can stay trapped inside the brother or sister, but *David’s Shield* offers that sibling hope and a better way, God’s way. The story tells of the beginning of Dan’s decision to take the first step—often the hardest step—in the journey of choosing to let go of the multitude of feelings and of learning to seek God for full healing, full trust, and full forgiveness of self and others. Siblings of survivors, too, have hope to find their voice, seek peace, and gain wholeness. This book also is the first of its kind on the market. Siblings deal with a host of deep and scary issues, and the Elliotts have responded to the need for a book that addresses these unique issues with the children. *David’s Shield* also helps parents understand how their other children may be suffering and provides insight and real help for coming alongside the siblings of survivors during the delicate process of coping and healing.

This book series shows the remarkable courage of the Elliott family, especially David, in publicly sharing their most private thoughts, painful experiences, and spiritual struggles. Each book serves as an excellent tool for educating ourselves on the journey of healing, and how we can be alert and ready to help when a need arises. The Elliotts help equip us on how to enter into another’s painful reality and assist with providing healing and wholeness for the abuse victim and family. Each reader will be blessed by the books and ever thankful that God gave grace to the Elliott family to use what Goliath intended for harm as good to accomplish God’s holy will (Gen. 50:20; 2 Cor. 1:3–4). These books would be well placed at church book tables and in pastors’ studies to be readily available as need arises. Please note that many people will not request help openly, and so, offering these books in visible places where they can be purchased outright will enable more families to be helped.

Both *David’s Sword* and *David’s Shield* have been endorsed by people in a variety of disciplines. The first has been approved by the top medical doctor in New Hampshire who is an expert on sexual abuse, a school counselor, a police captain, a guidance counselor, and others. The second has been approved by Don Davis of the New England Patriots, Natalie Grant who is an award-winning singer/songwriter, a school principal, and others. Also, the Elliotts have spoken by invitation at several conferences, churches, and other venues and have been both pleased and honored to do so in order to reach as

many adults and children as possible. They speak as a family in order to bring strength and a comprehensive understanding for the difficult issues that families face.

Both books have been translated into French and German (Spanish will be forthcoming) and may be purchased directly through the Elliotts. David autographs each book so that the children may see, and be encouraged by, his personal message. To order, send an email to Silvertrumpets@comcast.net with “books” in the subject line. If you cannot pay and know of a child who needs help, please contact the Elliotts for assistance.

The Elliotts intend to write two additional books to complete the series. *David’s Sheath* will offer parents insight and concrete help for navigating the entire situation. *David’s Soldiers*, the fourth and final book, will address caregivers and professionals regarding the various services and support that they can seek out when promoting the wellness of the children.¹

Jennifer Foley is member of Amoskeag Presbyterian Church, Manchester, New Hampshire.

¹ On a personal note, this reviewer shared both *David’s Sword* and *David’s Shield* with my youthful sons (middle school and high school age) to help them gain understanding about the terrible evil of child sexual abuse and prepare them to offer help when God calls upon them. We should be mindful that our children likely will be nearer to situations in which abuse is occurring and serve as a more direct avenue for immediate help.

ServantReading

Anselm of Canterbury *by Simonetta Carr*

by Cynthia Rowland

Anselm of Canterbury: Christian Biographies for Young Readers, by Simonetta Carr; with illustrations by Matt Abraxas. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2013, 63 pages, \$18.00.

Anselm of Canterbury is one in a series of books written about distinguished characters from church history. It is a clearly and interestingly written, beautifully illustrated biography of one of the medieval church fathers for younger and older kids alike. It also provides a nice overview for adults. Unlike many of the other church history biographies available, the books in this series contain illustrations, pictures, and drawings on nearly every page. They are chock full of great information and appeal to the eye as well. Adults and kids of all ages will benefit from this book: it is a great read-aloud for young kids and a meaty study book for older kids.

This series of books, subtitled *Christian Biographies for Young Readers*, is written by Simonetta Carr. She is a mother of eight children who has homeschooled them as well. During her homeschooling, she noticed that there weren't many books available about church history for children. Friends and family encouraged her to do something about it, so she tried her hand at filling the void, produced a book, and sent it to several publishing houses. It was eventually published by Reformation Heritage books from Grand Rapids, Michigan. The series now consists of seven books: *Anselm of Canterbury*, *Lady Jane Grey*, *John Calvin*, *Augustine of Hippo*, *John Owen*, *Athanasius*, and the most recent publication *John Knox*. Carr has a contract with her publisher to produce a book every eight months. When asked how she decides on her subjects, she said she tries to choose "men and women who've had a major influence on Christian thought."¹ Her main goal is to teach kids "to know what they believe and why,"² which has become a sort of slogan. Carr makes church heroes come to life.

Carr was born and brought up in Italy. She grew up Catholic, her father a monk. Interestingly, her father met her mother in a confessional booth, and they fell in love. Her mother helped him get out of the church without getting excommunicated. As she grew up, Simonetta started questioning the Bible. She came to the evangelical faith through an American missionary family who was visiting Italy. Eventually she married a Protestant. She describes her spiritual journey this way: "it took a very long time to understand fully."³ Currently she resides in California and attends Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, California, where Michael Horton is pastor.

¹ Carl Trueman's interview with Simonetta Carr, <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/archive/201305>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid

In the book *Anselm of Canterbury*, Carr tells us how Anselm pondered the question, “Why did God become man?” She tells about how God instilled in this man a passion for learning and a love for studying God’s Word. Early in life, he became a monk and eventually a teacher of other monks. He encouraged kindness in teaching as opposed to the harsh correction he had received as a student. He also enjoyed writing, and Carr includes brief summaries of his two books and excerpts from them in the back of her book. Writing in Anselm’s day was expensive and time consuming because they had no paper like we have today, so Anselm had to choose his words very carefully.

Anselm lived during the volatile times of William the Conqueror and was entangled in these political affairs. King William appointed Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury, despite Anselm’s protests. But King William did not prove to be an easy king for Anselm to work with, and the unhealthy intermarriage of church affairs with ungodly statesmen made Anselm’s job difficult. During Anselm’s time, there was also unrest in the papacy. Two men claimed to be pope: Urban, appointed by the church, and Clement, appointed by the emperor. Anselm got involved in the situation and took on the hard task of telling the emperor that it was not his place to appoint church leaders. Thankfully, as a result, the emperor agreed to recognize Urban as pope. In the midst of these issues and other turmoil with which he had to wrestle, Anselm had time for much thinking and contemplation and his few but important writings have had a lasting impact on church doctrine and theology.

Anselm of Canterbury, along with the other books in this series, are hardcover picture books made to look old-fashioned. The pages simulate parchment. On every page of the book, Carr includes illustrations painted by Matt Abraxas; maps; photographs of significant places (e.g., what is believed to be Anselm’s childhood home, still standing in France), statues, and other relevant artifacts (e.g., a Roman wax tablet, a portrait of Anselm). These illustrations and photographs allow Carr to include a host of information that would be tedious to include in the story itself. The main part of the book includes about sixty pages of a summary biography. At the end of the book, Carr includes supplemental information: a one-page timeline, a “Did You Know?” section which includes interesting and relevant facts, and finally a short section of the author’s writings. This format is the same in all the books in this series.

From my own experience as a homeschooling mother, I own few books that have similar content: *Trial and Triumph: Stories from Church History* by Richard M. Hannula, Moscow, ID, Canon Press, 1999, is a 300-page book summarizing the lives of forty-six church mothers and fathers, and *Reformation Heroes*, by Diana Kleyn and Joel R. Beeke, Grand Rapids, MI, Reformation Heritage Books, 2007, is a 240-page book covering the lives of about thirty Reformers. A book more similar to Carr’s is a biography about Martin Luther called *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed the World* by Paul Maier, St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House, 2004. Could this last book have inspired Carr to write others like it?

In these well-researched, clearly-written, attractive books that educate children of all ages on church history from a reformed perspective, Simonetta Carr teaches us what we believe and why. You can find them on Amazon, Westminster Book Store, or other Reformed book stores.

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ServantReading

Law and the Bible

A Review Article

by Diane L. Olinger

Law and the Bible: Justice, Mercy and Legal Institutions, edited by Robert F. Cochran Jr. and David VanDrunen. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013, 269 pages, \$24.00, paper.

Introduction

Law and the Bible is a collection of nine articles, surveying the theme of civil law throughout the Bible. Each article is co-authored by an attorney and a Bible scholar. David VanDrunen, an OPC minister and professor at Westminster Seminary California, is the co-editor of the volume and of its first article. *Law and the Bible* is a valuable resource for those who ask, What light does the Bible shed on contemporary legal systems, and particularly on Christian participation in those systems?

A quick look at the article titles shows the Genesis-to-Revelation scope of *Law and the Bible*, one of its greatest assets along with its interdisciplinary approach.

1. "The Biblical Foundation of Law: Creation, Fall and the Patriarchs," by Randy Beck and David VanDrunen.
2. "Law and Political Order: Israel's Constitutional History," by William S. Brewbaker III and V. Philips Long.
3. "Criminal and Civil Law in the Torah: The Mosaic Law in Christian Perspective," by David Skeel and Tremper Longman III.
4. "The Law of Life: Law in the Wisdom Literature," by Roger P. Alford and Leslie M. Alford.
5. "Crying Out for Justice: Civil Law and the Prophets," by Barbara E. Armacost and Peter Enns.
6. "The Kingdom of God, Law, and the Heart: Jesus and the Civil Law," by Robert F. Cochran Jr. and Dallas Willard.

7. “Civil Law and Civil Disobedience: The Early Church and the Law,” by Joel A. Nichols and James W. McCarty III.
8. “Living as Christians Under Civil Law: The New Testament Letters, Law, and Politics,” by David M. Smolin and Kar Yong Lim.
9. “Expectation and Consummation: Law in Eschatological Perspective,” by John Copeland Nagle and Keith A. Mathison.

Overall Approach—Realistic Expectations

The focus of each of these articles is on civil law, the law that orders human societies and is implemented and enforced through human government. The Bible addresses many areas of civil law, including evidence, civil and criminal procedure, court administration, and welfare regulations. However, the editors and most of the authors of *Law and the Bible* take pains to dampen our expectations of finding immediate applications to our current situation. They remind us, again and again, that not every moral exhortation of Scripture should be codified and that not every piece of civil legislation in Scripture (for example, certain civil laws of the Old Testament theocracy) would be appropriate for the modern nation-state. The authors pay careful attention to context (narrative, historical, cultural, and redemptive-historical) with the hopes that this will help us avoid the temptation of “cherry-picking” verses to justify already-existing political agendas. An example of this type of “cherry picking” is cited in the article on political order and Israel’s constitutional history where the authors, William S. Brewbaker III and V. Philips Long, warn us against the pattern of argument of a royalist bishop who used Jeremiah’s admonition to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:5–6) as authority against resistance to monarchy generally (50n4).

While I generally found this approach instructive, I question the emphasis on historical and cultural differences when exegeting some texts. After all, I am in the same redemptive-historical context as the original audience of the New Testament letters¹; I think, perhaps, I need to be cautious in allowing this to be trumped by cultural or historical differences. The kind of exegesis I’m concerned about occurs in a discussion by David M. Smolin and Kar Yong Lim about the meaning of Paul’s admonition against Christian v. Christian civil litigation. They emphasize the corruption and injustice of the Roman legal system, which strongly favored those of wealth and power, and contrast it to our own. The authors write:

Based on this background, one can see that the application of Paul’s words on civil litigation could vary greatly depending on the circumstances. Thus, where Christians are a vulnerable minority and the courts are often corrupt, the circumstances would parallel those that Paul addressed, and his admonitions against Christians going to court against one another would appear directly applicable . . . On the other hand, trying to apply Paul’s words where Christians have composed the majority for hundreds of years is more difficult . . . The entire concept of Christians bringing their disputes before nonbelievers assumed by Paul would be inapplicable. (233)

¹ See Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 303.

Arguably there are legitimate uses of the legal system by Christians against Christians in our modern society, which don't come within Paul's admonition,² but I think the authors overstate the case.

Most of the article authors in *Law and the Bible* are reticent when it comes to advocating for particular legislation or policies, and limit their role to suggesting the principles that should guide a Christian in making policy decisions. For example, in their article on the Mosaic law, David Skeel and Tremper Longman III conclude that the Mosaic law "recognizes both the importance of lending and the crushing effect that debt can have, and it is unabashedly paternalistic in its concern for the dignity of the poor" (97). However, they stop short of advocating any particular program of international debt relief for developing nations, noting that the further we get from the Old Testament context of individual debt relief the harder it is to apply the Mosaic principles. One exception to this reticence in advocating for particular legislation or policies is in the article on civil law and the prophets by Barbara E. Armacost and Peter Enns. In discussing U.S. immigration law, the authors take a firm stand against "anti-immigrant legislation that is calculated to be oppressive" (143) (examples include laws prohibiting illegal aliens from contracting for utilities, laws which require public schools to determine immigration status of students, and laws which empower local police as deputy immigration enforcers). The Israelites were not to mistreat the foreigners living among them, for they too had been oppressed in Egypt (141–42, citing, *inter alia*, Exod. 22:21 and Jer. 7:6, 22:3). From this imperative, Armacost and Enns conclude that Christians should oppose and seek the repeal of laws like those mentioned above and "should prayerfully consider disobeying them as circumstances require" (143).

Natural Law and Other Themes

Other topics addressed in *Law and the Bible* include civil disobedience (with a case study on apartheid in South Africa), form of government, war, abortion (only *very* briefly, more on this below), catastrophic climate change, and nuclear holocaust (as part of a discussion of end times prophecies in Daniel and Revelation). Natural law is a theme set forth in the book's introduction and first chapter and is revisited by a number of the authors. As Cochran and VanDrunen write in their analysis of law from creation through the patriarchal period:

When the patriarchs have legal disputes with their pagan neighbors, they do not appeal to a parochial moral standard known only through special revelation, but they presume (as their pagan neighbors often do also) a standard that is accessible to all However Christians may develop a theory of natural law, the existence of a universal moral standard has many potential implications for how they approach legal life in a diverse society. (45)

² I am thinking here of instances where bringing a case before a judicatory of believers would be unworkable due to the fact that the Christians involved in the dispute are not joined to a common institutional body, or instances where there is a "distance" between the believers in the case which might keep them from knowing anything about the other's faith or from engaging with one another personally (as might be the case for Christians doing business through corporate entities).

Although VanDrunen does not mention his Two-Kingdoms theology explicitly, Cochran and Dallas Willard, authors of the article on Jesus and the civil law, critique VanDrunen's argument that Jesus's demanding kingdom ethics apply institutionally only to the church, and not the state, which is to enforce *lex talionis*, "an eye for an eye" (173). According to Cochran and Willard, "this too neatly avoids the difficult work of determining the implications for the state of Jesus' teaching on love" (173).

What would VanDrunen's natural law arguments and Two-Kingdoms theology look like in action? In other words, how would his ideal Christian lawmaker or policy advocate operate in the legal system? If I have understood VanDrunen, the task of such a Christian lawmaker or policy advocate would be to go to Scripture to confirm and clarify the natural law (perhaps helped by a guide like *Law and the Bible*) then, so equipped, the lawmaker/advocate would enter the public square to make arguments based on this natural law, arguments which are accessible to all and not just to Christians.³ In other words, the Christian would not make arguments based on special revelation, or, at least, not solely from special revelation. Of course, there is much disagreement about whether this is the proper stance for a Christian lawmaker/advocate, with some believing that it is exactly the Christian's task to bring the wisdom of God's Word, special revelation, into the public square.⁴

There are practical problems as well with natural law and other "accessible" forms of argument by Christians. For instance, the courts are on the lookout for proffered legislative rationales which are really only covers for underlying religious motivations of lawmakers. See *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578 (1987) (striking down a state law that prohibited the teaching of evolution in the public schools unless accompanied by instruction in creation science, which law had a stated secular purpose of protecting academic freedom); *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005) (holding that a school district's Intelligent Design policy violated the Establishment Clause of the constitution because ID is a religious teaching, despite proponents' statements to the contrary). Furthermore, the courts have not been friendly to arguments labeled as moral or natural law arguments, treating them as attempts to insert religion into matters where it does not belong. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) (holding that a state criminal abortion

³ For more information on the use of accessible religious arguments in the public square, see Michael J. Perry, *Love and Power: The Role of Religion and Morality in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). In *Love and Power*, Perry makes the case for the possibility of ecumenical political dialogue using a public accessibility standard. Interestingly, he uses the book's conclusion to confront concerns expressed by Professor Smolin, coauthor of the article in *Law in the Bible* on the New Testament letters. Smolin's concerns then were that Perry's prerequisites of fallibilism and pluralism effectively shut out conservative Christians from the envisioned ecumenical political dialogue. *Love and Power*, 139. Perry's response was that public accessibility is the "essential criterion," more important than an acceptance of fallibilism and pluralism. *Ibid.*, 140. Perhaps Perry's arguments were persuasive, since Smolin's article in *Law and the Bible* includes a defense of natural law as a common platform between Christians and pagans based on his analysis of Romans 2:14–15 (*Law and the Bible*, 225–27).

⁴ See, e.g., John Frame, "Review of David VanDrunen's *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*," <http://www.frame-poythress.org/review-of-david-van-drunen-s-a-biblical-case-for-natural-law/>. While convinced that there is such a thing as natural law, Frame rejects the idea that it, as opposed to Scripture, must be our only basis of argument in the public square. In his "Conclusion" Frame writes: "Scripture is God's word, and God's word is the foundation of morality. When we want to draw people, believers or unbelievers, to that foundation, we should be unashamed to refer to Scripture. I grant that there are many cultural forces telling us not to refer to Scripture in the public square. But we should not listen to them. The attempt of VanDrunen and others to convince us not to apply Scripture to civil matters is a failure."

law violated the constitutional right to privacy); *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003) (striking down a state law criminalizing homosexual sodomy and overturning an earlier case, *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986), in which the Court cited the “ancient roots” of such prohibitions and referred to homosexual sex as an “infamous crime against nature”).

The legal cases I’ve cited in the paragraph above deal with the teaching of evolution in the public schools, abortion, and homosexual conduct, three issues on which many Christians have felt conscience-bound by their interpretation of Scripture to take a stand about matters of civil law. Interestingly, these three issues receive very little attention in *Law and the Bible* (exceptions being a discussion of tactics of abortion protesters in the article on civil disobedience, 206, and discussions touching on gay marriage in several places, including the article on criminal and civil law in the Torah, 98–99).

A Valuable Resource

Regardless of how one frames the task of the Christian lawmaker/advocate or even the concerned Christian citizen, that task will be aided by a thorough knowledge of what the Bible has to say on matters of civil law, making *Law and the Bible* a valuable resource. The style of writing in this volume is described in the forward as “learned but accessible,” and that is a good description. The authors’ approach to their topics is similar to what one might read in a theological or legal journal (serious, orderly, objective), but the authors have left behind the heavy hermeneutical and jurisprudential jargon of their respective disciplines. This makes *Law and the Bible* a viable resource for not only lawyers and law students, pastors and seminarians, but also individual Christians with an interest in the implications of the Christian faith for civil law, and even non-Christians who want to understand how Christians approach these issues. Although this would be heavy fare for a Sunday school class, it might be a profitable tool for a church conference or study group.

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ServantPoetry

King Solomon (1949–2050)

Psalm 127

A Song of degrees for Solomon.

Except the LORD build the house,
they labour in vain that build it:
except the LORD keep the city,
he watchman waketh but in vain.

It is vain for you to rise up early,
to sit up late,
to eat the bread of sorrows:
for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD:
and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man;
so are children of the youth.

Happy is the man
that hath his quiver full of them:
they shall not be ashamed,
but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

A Song of degrees.

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD;
that walketh in his ways.
For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine
by the sides of thine house:
thy children like olive plants
round about thy table.
Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed
that feareth the LORD.

The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion:
and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem
all the days of thy life.
Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children,
and peace upon Israel.