

2016 Annual J. Reuben Clark Law Society Conference

Values of Biblical Laws Today

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I. General Survey of Biblical Laws Dealing with Topics of Pressing Concern Today

Recent publications will be spotlighted that have addressed such topics as belief and the nation, biblical laws and secular laws, principles of government, justice, equality, and public policy issues, both nationally and globally.

Titles to be discussed will include such books as: Harold Netland, *Christianity and Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Globalizing Age* (Baker, 2015); John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 2014); John Scriven, *Belief and Nation* (Wilberforce, 2013); Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice and Society* (Oxford, 2011); Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies* (Oxford, 2009); Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice* (Fortress, 2007).

Topics for specific consideration and application will include biblical law perspectives on: bribery; poverty and social justice; equality; terrorism; refugees and resident aliens; family; community; duties; access to justice; and moral and legal education. Guidelines will be proposed for use in extracting principles from ancient texts relevant to modern legal values.

II. Focused Examination of Leadership Accountability in the Ancient World

In answering public calls for more accountability from political and legal leaders, modern citizens can learn much from ancient experiences and expectations. Various ancient societies developed legal mechanisms for holding its leaders accountable for their actions.

The ancient Athenians employed the procedure of “ostracism,” by which the Athenian citizens often voted to ostracize, or ban, a leader from the city for a period of ten years, if he had acted irresponsibly or when a demagogue appeared to be too disruptive to the peace of the city.

While in office, Roman magistrates could not usually be prosecuted for crimes they committed during their term in office, but they could be tried for those misdeeds once their term had expired. To give teeth to this post-term liability, successive terms in office were not generally allowed. Thus Roman officials served knowing that could, and likely would, be subsequently arraigned for any abuse they committed in office after they left office.

Biblical laws and narratives also contain examples of how ancient Israelites sought to hold their leaders accountable. All these ancient policies and procedures can stimulate current thought concerning policies that would raise the level of accountability of public leaders.