

Each generation is particularly conscious of those scriptural passages that justify their own particular social arrangements. I illustrate this phenomenon with the following chart from Google ngrams (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>). I queried Google ngrams for three Biblical passages that have been used to justify or support specific social practices (using the King James Version for each quote).

1. **Separation of church and state:** “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's” (Luke 20:25).
2. **Maintenance of slavery:** “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Ephesians 6:5).
3. **Discouraging divorce:** “That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

The chart shows the frequency with which the phrases appear in written texts, by year. The pattern reflects the development of secularism, the decline of coercion in labor relations, and the increasing acceptance of divorce.

