The Two Testaments as an Ethical Resource John Goldingay[[1]](#footnote-1)

Near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus notes that people of old were told (for instance) not to murder or commit adultery, and to love their neighbors but hate their enemies; “I tell you,” he says, that we should avoid the inner attitude that finds expression in murder or adultery, and should love our enemies (Matt 5:21-48). Western Christians often take his words as an indication that the New Testament’s ethical ideals are higher than the First Testament’s. If they are, how can the biblical material as a whole be a resource for ethics?

Several considerations suggest that this Western inference from Jesus’s words is mistaken. To begin with, the First Testament already affirms the importance of inner attitude as well as outward act. Job’s account of his life in Job 31 is a systematic exposition of this awareness, not least in connection with sex and with murderous thinking. Joseph embodies it in his forgiveness of his brothers who behave toward him as enemies; turning the other cheek was not a new idea with Jesus.

Second, there is no First Testament exhortation to hate one’s enemies. Indeed, Jesus himself is the only person in Scripture to encourage people to hate anyone (Luke 14:26), in the sense of being committed to one person rather than another. Nor is there is any exhortation to hate one’s enemies in any contemporary Jewish writings that we know.[[2]](#footnote-2) Jesus’s reference to an exhortation to hate one’s enemies is thus a puzzle.

Third, the context in which Leviticus urges people to love their neighbor indicates that the neighbor whom one is to love or be committed to is the neighbor with whom one is an enmity. It is, for instance, the person whom one might rebuke for doing wrong or from whom one might seek redress or against whom one might bear a grudge (Lev 19:17-18). Leviticus’s own point, then, is that loving one’s neighbor implies loving one’s enemy; actually, people hardly need to be exhorted to love the neighbors with whom they get on..

# Fulfillment and Love, Ideal and Condescension

In his exhortation to love one’s enemy Jesus is thus bringing out the Torah’s own implications, not laying out expectations that contrast with the Torah’s. This understanding of his exhortation fits with the context in the rest of what he is saying at this point in Matthew (whereas the common Western interpretation fits ill with that context). In the introduction to the paragraphs in question Jesus declares that he has come to fulfill (*plēroō*)the Torah and the Prophets, not to annul them (Matt 5:17-20). Something similar applies to the Blessings that precede that statement about fulfilling the Torah and the Prophets.[[3]](#footnote-3) The Blessings are a profound, challenging, and encouraging proclamation about spirituality, and in part they are so because of the way they are fulfilling the Torah and the Prophets. While most of their raw materials come from Isaiah and the Psalms, one of the most striking of them echoes the Torah: blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus says. It could seem to contrast with the Torah and the Prophets, but it actually resonates not only with the Joseph story but also with the way Israel does its best to negotiate a friendly passage through Edomite territory on its way to the promised land, and when it receives a militaristic response, withdraws in order to go another way (Num 20:14-21). Being peace-makers rather than war-makers was also not a new idea with Jesus.

While “fulfilling the Torah” might seem to mean simply obeying it (cf. Rom 8:4; 13:8), and obedient submission to God does imply such fulfillment,[[4]](#footnote-4) even contexts that imply this meaning also suggest the further connotation of filling up or filling out. Such an understanding makes sense in Matthew 5. In his teaching Jesus is bringing out the meaning of the Torah and the Prophets. Leviticus 19:18 implies loving one’s enemy; Jesus makes the implication explicit. As Leviticus will immediately have in mind the neighbor who is one’s enemy, the disciples’ immediate enemies will be people within their family (Matt 10:36), while in the Gospel story, the enemies of Jesus and his disciples are chiefly fellow-members of the family in a broader sense, the Jewish people and particularly their leaders.

To anyone who knew the Scriptures, then, there was nothing revolutionary or shocking in Jesus’s expectation that one should love one’s enemy, though some people would no doubt find it offensive, as they do today. In thus “fulfilling” the Torah, Jesus acts as a prophet. He is acting in the same way as Micah when Micah opens up the question about the good behavior that Yahweh looks for, and answers that it involves implementing judgment, giving yourself to commitment, and being diffident in how you walk with your God (Mic 6:8). Insofar as material that will eventually form part of the Torah is in existence in Micah’s day, perhaps still in oral form, and is in people’s awareness, Micah, too, is working out its implications and thus fulfilling the Torah. (We do not know how much of the material in Leviticus or Deuteronomy existed even orally in Micah’s day, and insofar as it did not, maybe he is fulfilling it by anticipation—that is, he is anticipatorily proclaiming the implications of the detailed rules that will eventually appear in the Torah.) Prophets such as Isaiah and Amos likewise condemn Israel’s prayer and worship because they are unaccompanied by faithful relations within the community, and Leviticus carries the same implication, so these prophets, too, are fulfilling the Torah (though again the fact that the book of Leviticus as such was not in existence in their day may mean that they were doing so in that anticipatory way).

Of course the attitude to enemies in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings is more complex than might be suggested by the example of Joseph or the story of Israelites and the Edomites or the exhortation in Leviticus 19. While there is love of enemies, there is also hatred of enemies and killing of enemies. Ironically, the Israelites’ attacks on the Canaanites, which offend modern Westerners but don’t offend the New Testament (see e.g., Heb 11:32-34), are arguably not an example of hatred of enemies. The Canaanites were not Israel’s enemies, and the account of Israel’s attitude to the Canaanites does not refer to Israel’s hating them. Israel was to attack them in an unprovoked way even though they were not their enemies, because God viewed them as his own enemies. Israel was also to hate them in the Psalm 139 sense, of being committed to repudiating their ways. As attitudes to enemies in the First Testament are thus more complex than may be assumed, so are attitudes in the New Testament. There, too, there is hatred of enemies, such as the attitude Paul expresses in 2 Thessalonians 1, which compares with the one that underlies the Prophets and the Psalms: the people of God leave redress to God.

Jesus’s talk of fulfillment and his subsequent examples, then, point to one aspect of the method involved in thinking about the ethical implications of the biblical material. There are imperatives, and there are ways in which their implications need to be spelled out.

Jesus makes a related point in responding to the classic Jewish question about the most important command in the Torah. His answer combines commands about love for God (Deut 6:5) and love for one’s neighbor (Lev 19:18); he adds that the entirety of the Torah and the Prophets hangs on these two imperatives (Matt 22:34-40). He is thus agreeing with the Testament of Issachar (a Jewish writing from a century or two before his time) which urges, “Love the Lord and your neighbor” (5:2).[[5]](#footnote-5) It follows (with regard to the second of these commands) that if you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the Torah (Gal 5:14). Jesus thus offers an alternative to the postmodern instinct to ask whose interest is served by commands in the Torah and elsewhere (for instance, it has been argued that the Ten Commandments are formulated to serve the interests of rather well-to-do middle-aged men who are the heads of households and as such have a wife, servants, a house, oxen, and donkeys).[[6]](#footnote-6) The interpretive question Jesus suggests is rather, how does any given command express love for God or love for one’s neighbor?[[7]](#footnote-7)

A third comment by Jesus on the interpretation of the Torah offers a further related insight that stands closer to that postmodern instinct. Jesus is again responding to a question, concerning divorce. He rules out the idea that a man may initiate a divorce; it does not fit Genesis 1—2. He is asked how then he understands the regulation about giving a woman a divorce certificate (Deut 24:1)? “It was because of your stubbornness that Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not like this” (Matt 19:1-12). As is the case with his spelling out the implications of the Torah in Matthew 5 and Matthew 22, he is not here introducing an idea of his own. Deuteronomy itself is fond of describing Israel as stubborn (e.g., Deut 9:6, 13; 31:27). So Jesus indeed takes a critical stance in relation to the Torah, but his stance involves not introducing a new and higher standard than that of the Torah but analyzing the diversity of levels within the Torah itself. The regulation about divorce certificates stands in tension with Genesis, because it makes allowance for human stubbornness. But in keeping with Jesus’s comment about love, the regulation was also an expression of love, because it gave a woman some means of establishing her status; she cannot simply be thrown out by a husband who is tired of her.

There are further areas where the Torah implies a distinction between how things were from the beginning and how they are when one is being realistic about how things are now. The idea that husbands exercise authority over wives is the most explicit (cf. Gen 3:16). The idea that a man might have more than one wife is a further example: that is, Genesis 1—2 implies the assumption of one man and one woman, while later chapters in Genesis (and the subsequent First Testament story) accept polygamy but are unsparing in describing the troubles that issue from polygamy. One human being becoming the servant or slave of another is a further implicit example. In Genesis 1—2, humanity as a whole is made in God’s image and is commissioned to exercise authority over the earth and it animals; there is no reference to some human beings ruling over others, still less owning others. Books such as Exodus and Deuteronomy then start from the fact that some human beings become the servants of others and lays down rules to limit the deleterious consequences.

There is a tension within the Torah over the killing and eating of animals. Genesis 1 states the ideal; humanity is to be vegetarian. Genesis 9 makes a concession in light of the human waywardness that Genesis has subsequently described. Leviticus 17 tightens the concession in requiring the draining of the blood and the killing of the animal at the sanctuary. It thus takes one step back towards the ideal in its respect for animal life, in its assumption that shedding an animal’s blood is wrong, and in its concern for worship of Yahweh alone (as it does in its Jubilee teaching). On the other hand, Leviticus itself does require much slaughter rather than attempting to implement the vegetarian ideal. Deuteronomy 12 allows for killing animals away from the sanctuary and thus extends the concession. Historically the composition of Deuteronomy may have preceded that of Leviticus 17 but in the compiling of the Torah Deuteronomy was allowed to stand at the end and to have the last word.[[8]](#footnote-8)

So do we aspire to the creation ideal or do we live realistically by the standards that make allowances for our moral weakness? In his comment about fulfilling the Torah, Jesus challenges his disciples to show a righteousness exceeding that of the Pharisees and scholars (Matt 5:20). The discussion of divorce suggests what might be involved, namely, that one does not take advantage of regulations in the Torah that make it possible to evade the Torah’s highest demands. The problem of “whose interest is being served” is not a problem within the text but a problem within interpreters. The text needs to be interpreted not in my own interests but as an expression of love. Augustine’s principle that the test of interpretation is whether it tends to build up the twofold love of God and neighbor[[9]](#footnote-9) is not merely a principle for the application of the text but a principle for its exegesis that corresponds to Jesus’s point about the Torah and the Prophets.

The disciples are subsequently horrified that they should have to forgo the right to divorce; they do not wish to aim at a higher righteousness than other people. Jesus then makes clear that he is not rigorous in the stance he takes; he recognizes that not everyone can accept it. Indeed, in his approach to the broader question of the respective position of women and men among his disciples, he himself does not seek to implement a standard that matches how things were at the beginning. While he treats women as equals rather than as subordinate to men, he includes no women among the twelve disciples. It is twelve men who represent the twelve Israelite clans. He calls no women to follow him. He thus does not take the egalitarian approach that is implicit in Genesis 1—2.

Jesus’s attitude to the material in the Torah concerning divorce and his broader approach to the position of women suggests a way of handling some other troubling data within the New Testament. The “household codes” point to areas of life where the New Testament has lower standards than the Old. There is no expectation in the First Testament that wives should be silent when people gather for worship (1 Cor 14:34). Only in the New Testament is there an exhortation to wives to obey their husbands (1 Peter 3:1). No doubt Israelite men expected their wives to do so, but the First Testament does not explicitly underwrite this expectation, and enthuses over stories about uppity women such as Sarah and Vashti. A traditional way to give an account of the different levels of insight within the Scriptures involves using the model of progressive revelation. In the First Testament, the people of God make war; in the New Testament, they don’t. The trouble is that even if we allow for the validity of this example, there are not many others, and there are as many counter-examples. In regard to relations between the sexes, the New Testament represents what Margaret Davies calls “an impoverishment of traditions.”[[10]](#footnote-10) This is not to say that it is not authoritative Scripture; there was apparently reason for allowing such exhortations to have a place in the New Testament. They illustrate the way the New Testament, like the Old, makes allowance for what theologians often call humanity’s fallenness or brokenness, for which a more explicitly scriptural expression is humanity’s stubbornness or hardness of heart or closed-minded-ness.

I raised the question how the First Testament could be a resource for ethics if the New Testament’s ethical ideals are higher than those of the First Testament. If one granted the premise, one might find part of the answer to that question by noting the way it works with the tension between what is ideal and what is practical. But actually, the premise is mistaken. The New Testament does not suggest that it offers a more advanced understanding of ethics than the one in the First Testament Scriptures and there is thus no “problem” about the relationship of the two Testaments in connection with the level of their ethics. The teaching of the First Testament is not outdated by that of the New. Both Testaments are resources for the community’s understanding of God’s expectations.

We have noted that Jesus does suggest three hermeneutical clues for our interpretation of injunctions in the First Testament. One is that it may involve bringing out the inherent implications of some injunction. Another is that it may involve asking how an injunction may be an expression of love for God or for one’s neighbor. A third is that it may involve asking where it stands on the axis that runs between God’s creation will and God’s making allowance for human stubbornness.

# The Other Question about Method

In reality, the tricky question regarding method in connection with biblical ethics lies elsewhere than in the relationship between the Testaments. My inclination as a white Englishman is to come to the Bible with liberal Western values. These include beliefs such as the following: that individuals should be able to make their own decisions about what they do, rather than being forced to do what someone else says; that people should be able to appoint their own governments; that nations should not be subject to rule by other nations; that individuals should have the freedom to decide whom to marry and should have the same opportunity for education and work no matter what their sex or race; that we should abjure violence; that we should look after the world rather than despoil it; that individuals should have autonomy over their bodies, rather than being liable to torture, assault, or abuse; that they should be free to worship as they wish, act as they wish, and speak as they wish, as long as they don’t harm other people in doing so. We could argue about some elements in that list or about their formulation or about whether other items should be added, but the general picture will do.

David Clines has similarly observed that when interpreting the Pentateuch he himself evaluates it in light of “the ethical standards… of a liberal Western conscience, affirming of personal dignity, individual and collective freedom and self-determination, and opposed to violence and discrimination, and so on.”[[11]](#footnote-11) He thus articulates a truth that is common though not commonly recognized. Clines is well aware that these are the values of our particular culture. We are inclined to think they are universal norms; as the American Declaration of Independence puts it, “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” Yet the very formulation of that declaration shows it to be affected by the culture in which it was formulated, and a consideration of values from other contexts confirms the point. The core African principles of Kwanzaa, for instance, are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Asian values include a belief in consensus rather than confrontation, respect for authority, and commitment to the well-being of the community over against that of individuals.

Readers of the Bible who are committed to accepting its authority are inclined simply to assume that their values and the Bible’s values must be the same and thus to look for ways of conforming the two. Attitudes to violence are an example. A paper on “The Lamb of God and the Forgiveness of Sin(s) in the Forth Gospel” comments near its beginning,

No documentation is really necessary to prove that violence is a societal scourge of monumental proportions and that it is escalating at a terrifying pace domestically, locally, nationally, and globally. And no one seems to have any idea how to stem the increase except to mobilize more and more “good” violence by arming more people, building more prisons, and declaring more wars, to combat the “bad” violence.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Western readers expect to find their abjuring of violence in the Bible, and they do so by means of a selective reading of aspects of Jesus’s teaching and of the significance of his life, and by means of an evaluative reading of other parts of the Bible on its basis. Readers who are more comfortable with a suspicious reading operate in a different way. Feminist interpretation, post-colonial interpretation, ecological interpretation, and disability interpretation have a common approach. Their starting point enables them to see ways in which the Bible has been misinterpreted and ways in which its implications have been missed; it can thus be harnessed to resource their perspective. It also provides them with a basis for critiquing the Bible. But it systematically rules out the possibility of self-critique. Their own perspective is the absolute. Allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures makes it possible to rework the text’s meaning so as to make it say something that fits with the interpreter’s understanding of what counts as Christian and biblical, and also to prevent it from saying something that conflicts with that understanding. The irony is that critical interpretation has the same problem.

The issue these considerations raise for interpretation is as follows. The diversity within the Scriptures means one can find material to support almost any position one wishes to maintain. And the fact that both Testaments combine God’s ideal vision with allowance for human stubbornness provides us with a golden key to using the Bible to support what we approve of (that’s God’s ideal) and undermine what we do not approve of (that’s material making allowance for human stubbornness). Yet whatever set of values we presuppose, we would surely be wise to assume that it should not be treated as final; we are likely to be wrong at some points. An awareness of another culture’s values gives us something to think against in this connection, and at the very least, the Scriptures have the capacity to fulfill that function.

I suspect that people reading the Scriptures are inclined to one of two opposite premises. They may start from the assumption that there are likely to be differences between our values and the Bible’s and that ours are likely to be right. Or they may start from the assumption that there are unlikely to be differences between our values and the Bible’s, and if there seem to be differences, the challenge is to see how this appearance is mistaken. But if we are to profit more from studying the Bible, we will do better to assume that there are differences and that these differences may provide us with some critique. At the very least we need to seek to stay in ongoing dialogue with the parts of the Bible that we don’t like. And if reading the Bible issues only in providing us with material that reinforces what we already think, our reading is very likely ideological.

# Scripture, Sex, and Culture

In light of these considerations and in connection with an area that matters much to Western people, one could consider the application of the Scriptures to the rights and wrongs of sexual practice.

As broad generalizations, one could say that in the mid-twentieth century, conservative Christians in the West

1. Assumed that pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex were wrong and did not engage in them
2. Did not talk much about contraception but practiced it
3. Assumed that divorce was wrong and rarely undertook it
4. Assumed that a second marriage after divorce was wrong and rarely undertook it
5. Assumed that polygamy was wrong and did not practice it
6. Assumed that same-sex relationships were wrong and rarely engaged in them.

In the twenty-first century, many conservative Christians in the West

1. Engage in pre-marital and extra-marital sex and think it is acceptable
2. Assume that whether and when they want children is purely a matter of choice
3. Recognize that many people get divorced and view it as sad but ethically acceptable
4. View a second marriage after divorce as ethically acceptable
5. Assume that polygamy is wrong and do not practice it
6. Suspect that same-sex relationships are acceptable, within a covenantal context.[[13]](#footnote-13)

What role did the Scriptures play in the mid-twentieth century and what role do they play now? In both contexts there has been interplay between the Scriptures and the culture in which people live. The change in attitudes that I have described has come about for cultural reasons not scriptural reasons. Yet I am not here concerned simply to suggest that mid-twentieth-century attitudes were more scripturally-based, but to note that both sets of attitudes have a cultural as well as a scriptural background.

This double background influences the questions people ask and the areas their questions cover as well as the answers they give. I suspect that this point could be made by asking in a modern non-Western context what would be the questions about sex and marriage that people ask and what are the areas that their questions cover, but I am a Westerner, so it’s hard for me to look at the matter that way. On the other hand, I do live much of my life in First Testament Israel, and maybe I can identify its questions and the areas it thinks about.

A panel during a student orientation session in the seminary where I teach was asked among other things what areas of life students needed to be circumspect about. I said “sex.” The student who asked the question thought I was referring to same-sex relationships, whereas actually I was referring to the fact that we live in a context in which sex between people of the opposite sex is okay as along as both agree and no one gets hurt. The questions about same-sex relationships are likewise deemed solved in regular society in the West, but within much of the church the question remains fraught and makes for instructive discussion.

“You will not sleep with a male as one sleeps with a woman; it’s an offensive act,” the Torah declares (Lev 18:22). But Isaiah 56 affirms that eunuchs who keep Yahweh’s Sabbaths and thus commit themselves to the covenant relationship will receive a memorial and a name better than sons or daughters in Yahweh’s house. Might the way God makes these promises to eunuchs in the context behind Isaiah 56 point to the way God may relate to someone who is attracted to a person of the same sex in our context?[[14]](#footnote-14) In Isaiah 56 “eunuchs” likely denotes Judahites who were genitally deformed or emasculated, perhaps with their cooperation or perhaps not, and probably in order that they could safely supervise (e.g.) the king’s harem in Babylon. God promises them an honored place in the community of Israel, even though they cannot contribute to its future by begetting children.[[15]](#footnote-15)

How might one decide whether God’s acceptance of eunuchs would mean that God might similarly accept homosexuals marrying someone of the same sex? Might such an inference fit with the principles of love of God and love of neighbor? Might it be the fulfillment or filling out of a scriptural insight? How might it relate to distinguishing between creation vision and allowance for human stubbornness?

In order to think about the issue, it helps to set it in the context of an understanding of sex and marriage developed from the Scriptures as a whole. The process whereby we form our attitude to this subject as to others is inclined to involve our using the Scriptures to support a view that we formulate on some other grounds—commonly, one that emerges from our culture. That process is not wholly wrong. It coheres with the idea of general revelation, and it matches aspects of the way the Scriptures themselves go about formulating theology and ethics. But the risk is that the influence of our culture is the determinative factor in our formulating our views. So to seek possible escape from circular reasoning, I have sought to think through what the various Scriptures have to say about marriage in order to formulate an understanding that reflects the Scriptures as a whole, paying particular attention to insights that do not correspond to ours. One might see marriage as (among other things)

1. Service-focused (the first man and woman were to serve God and serve the world together)
2. Independent (having reached some maturity, people leave their parents)
3. Heterosexual
4. Procreational (the first human beings were to be fruitful)
5. Monogamous
6. Egalitarian
7. Covenantal and thus lifelong
8. Sacrificial toward each other, especially on the man’s part
9. Sacrificial toward God
10. Sexually expressed
11. Amorous
12. Arranged in a way that involves the couple’s wider family
13. Willingly entered-into
14. Publicly recognized by the community

I see the first seven of these points as emerging from Genesis 1—2, the next two as emerging from Hosea and Paul, the next two as emerging from the Song of Songs, and the last three as suggested by accounts of actual marriages.

The implication is that a marriage falls short of this vision if it involves

1. Two people who live largely separate work lives
2. Two people who fail to separate from their parents
3. Two people of the same sex
4. Two people who avoid having children
5. Polygamy
6. Husband or wife having authority over the other
7. Husband or wife having a still-living former spouse
8. One person being self-withholding or overbearing
9. Two people concerned primarily with our own fulfillment
10. Two people who live celibately
11. Two people in a platonic relationship
12. An arrangement made independently of the couple’s families
13. An arrangement imposed by the couple’s families
14. Two people in a clandestine relationship

While a same-sex marriage falls short of this scriptural vision, so do many other forms of marriage. In Western culture we disapprove of polygamy but not of some of the other shortfalls. Some traditional societies accept polygamy but not same-sex marriage. What tips me over the edge in still wanting not simply to agree with secular Western culture and accept same-sex-marriage as having the same status as heterosexual marriage is that it implies a mistaken vision of marriage on a broader front. In a Western context, it implies that two people’s love for each other and their willingness to commit themselves to each other is the key factor in connection with undertaking a marriage or justifying an understanding of marriage, with the implication the marriage’s involvement of people of the opposite sex is incidental to the idea of marriage. This seems some way from the scriptural vision of marriage. But the more traditional Western Christian understanding of marriage is also some away from the vision that emerges from the Scriptures.

Our acceptance of divorce and second marriage is a realistic and loving stance towards people whose experience of marriage reflects their living in a world that cannot live up to God’s vision—their living in the context of Genesis 3:16. We all pay the price of humanity’s having long ago abandoned God’s way, but people whose marriages fail pay a particularly costly version of that price in this area of life, and in this sense they are no more at fault than people who manage to keep their marriages intact. Romans 1:24-27 makes more explicit that people who are drawn to same-sex relationships also thereby pay the price of humanity’s having long ago abandoned God’s way. They are the victims of God’s wrath—not a wrath directed against them in particular but the wrath directed towards humanity as a whole.[[16]](#footnote-16)

# Slavery

I assume that the principle of ideal and condescension underlies the New Testament’s acceptance of slavery. People who supported slavery in the United States were easily able to quote the New Testament to substantiate their case. Jesus and the New Testament writers refer many times to slaves and slave-owners and never raise any questions about slavery. Indeed, the New Testament urges slaves to obey their masters (1 Tim 6:1-2; Tit 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:18-25). Paul does note that slaves and free are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28), but the same is true of male and female, so the statement carries no implications regarding the abolition of the difference in society or in the congregation. In keeping with his comment about all being one in Christ Jesus, Paul urges Philemon to accept back his runaway slave Onesimus “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother” (Philemon 16). The exhortation has been used to support their case both by abolitionists and by defenders of slavery.[[17]](#footnote-17) Perhaps Paul’s ambiguity tests Philemon and indicates the same combination of attitudes as Jesus when he is speaking to his disciples about lifelong marriage and divorce: releasing Onesimus would be great, but Paul is not insisting on it. Ephesians 6:9 does exhort slave-owners not to ill-treat their slaves. But neither letter urges masters to free slaves after seven years of service in keeping with the Torah’s expectations (e.g., Deut 15:12-18).

The argument in Philemon does introduce a new factor into the New Testament’s exhortations concerning slavery, as does Ephesians 5—6 concerning marriage.[[18]](#footnote-18) There, the expectation concerning a wife’s submission to her husband is transformed as a result of the redefining of the husband’s obligation. His job is to let himself be crucified on her behalf; her job is to submit to his doing so. Yet such reinterpretation of the expectations in the household codes is not a consistent feature of the way the New Testament reworks the household codes, and one can see that simply making Jesus’s acceptance of ill-treatment a model for slaves (1 Peter 2:18-25) is potentially an oppressive move.

The place of slavery in the Roman Empire and its role in the way households work make it difficult to imagine what the abolition of slavery would look like or how it might be achieved. Yet the difference over against the situation in Israel is more one of degree than of kind, and even when one makes allowance for the reinterpretation that appears in Ephesians and Philemon and the way relationships between slaves and masters within congregations might be transformed, it remains troublesome that the New Testament raises no questions about the institution.

It is in this connection that Margaret Davies thus comments on a difference between the Testaments. The First Testament has two approaches to social ethics. On one hand, it lays down rules for the social order, attempting to place limits on the oppression of the weak by the powerful. On the other, it lays moral obligations before people, attempting to get them to be generous and considerate to the needy. In contrast, the New Testament writings “provide nothing like the breadth of vision in social affairs to be found in the Jewish scriptures.” Further, “there is nothing in the New Testament to compare with Philo’s description of Essene belief and practice: ‘They denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for outraging the law of equality, but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of nature, who like a mother has borne and reared all alike as genuine brothers.’” Thus “a comparison with Deuteronomy and Leviticus shows that the New Testament represents an impoverishment of traditions, an impoverishment which allowed gross injustice to flourish in Christian countries through the centuries.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Further, the slavery of New Testament times is a much more oppressive institution than the short-term indentured labor caused by debt that is accepted by the Torah. The First Testament is mostly talking about something more like being a servant than being a slave (the word *’ebed* was translated by words such as “servant” or “bondservant” until the RSV introduced the word “slave”).[[20]](#footnote-20) New Testament slavery more commonly involves people becoming the property of other people and being subject to their absolute power. It is New Testament-like slavery that Britain eventually encouraged and America accepted. It is thus not surprising that Anglican missionaries in Jamaica in the early nineteenth century (I have heard it said) opposed the abolition of slavery on the basis of texts from Paul, while Wesleyan and Baptists who supported abolition did so on the basis of First Testament texts; certainly it was from Leviticus 25 that Henry Bleby took the text for his Emancipation Day sermon there in 1834,[[21]](#footnote-21) while Onesimus (after he had been converted was set before slaves as an example.[[22]](#footnote-22) In the United States, too, the defenders of slavery found the sanctions in connection with slavery stronger in the New Testament than in the Torah.[[23]](#footnote-23) The example of servitude/slavery implies regressive revelation rather than progressive revelation between the Testaments.

As is the case with divorce/second marriage and same-sex relationships, regarding both First Testament servitude and new Testament slavery, “from the beginning it was not like this” (Matt 19:8). Thus Augustine saw sin as the prime cause of slavery, noting that the word “slave” does not occur until Noah uses it. “It is a name, therefore, introduced by sin and not by nature.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Augustine’s stance contrasts with that of Aristotle, who justified slavery on the basis of the conviction that there were natural differences between people who were born to be free and to rule, and people who did not have the gifts necessary to running their own lives and needed to be subject to someone else.[[25]](#footnote-25) While Thomas Aquinas’s view was somewhere in between Aristotle and Augustine, he does note that Genesis 1 gives human beings dominion over the animate world but not over one another.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The implication of my argument is not that the New Testament was wrong to accept slavery in the way that it does. I assume that the Holy Spirit led people such as Paul to take the position that they took. My point is rather that in other contexts (specifically, in Deuteronomy) the Holy Spirit was able to inspire Scriptures that in some ways come closer to the way things were from the beginning. If Christian interpretation assumes that the New Testament characteristically or consistently expresses a higher standard than the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, it cuts itself off from important insight.

# Violence, War, and Nationhood

John H. Yoder has noted that the sixteenth-century form of establishment that depended on a relationship to political structures has not been replaced by independence but by a new kind of establishment, conformity to school, job market, and media—or as one might put it in light of Clines’s comment, to liberal Western values. “Christians in the first century were a minority in a hostile world. Their ethical views were attuned to that context. In the twentieth century Christians… are also in a minority in a world committed to other loyalties, yet we do not reason as the early Christians did.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

Yoder sees the church’s abandonment of pacifism as an instance of that process, but the opposite is nearer the truth. As Clines again implies, a preoccupation with the wrongness of violence is a feature of modern liberal Western thinking. Its background in liberal thinking does not make it wrong; it may be a piece of wisdom in our context. But we need to be wary of making it an absolute that provides a clue to our interpretation of Scripture. It could be tempting to make the principle of hardness of heart our key to understanding violence and war in the First Testament and the New, but I don’t think it works very well. Rather one needs to take account of the fact that the Bible as a whole is not very preoccupied with violence; it thus confronts our preoccupation. Violence was built into God’s creation purpose. God’s reason for creating humanity included the aim that humanity should exercise rule by force (*rādâ*) over the world’s creatures(Gen 1:26). If we were in any doubt about the verb’s connotations, then God’s commission to humanity removes such doubts, when God declares that human beings are to subdue the earth (*kābaš*; Gen 1:28); the word denotes forced subjection. This talk of force is not all that Genesis says about the way humanity serves him in the world. God commissions humanity to serve the ground and care for it (‘*ābad,* *šāmar*; Gen 2:15)—though of course serving the ground (e.g., digging it) is a violent operation. Yet there is evidently a difference between such use of force and the violence that Genesis goes on to describe in the stories of Cain and Lamech (Gen 4; cf. the use of the word *hāmās* in Gen 6:11-13, though there it may denote violation in a broader sense). God’s violence is then a response to human violence; “if there were no human violence, there would be no divine violence.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Such comments make clear that the notion of violence needs nuancing. There is good and bad violence in Scripture. While the First Testament often explicitly or implicitly rules out violent action, the basis on which it does so is that Israel in its feebleness needs to trust in God rather than take responsibility for its destiny.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Whereas the New Testament has much to say about slavery and marriage, and what it says can seem embarrassing, it has little to say about being a nation or about being an imperial power,[[30]](#footnote-30) which can also seem embarrassing, though one might guess at possible reasons. Jesus is aware that he doesn’t know when the last day will come, and he doesn’t focus much on what may happen in the time that will elapse in between; it’s simply a time of waiting (the comment in 2 Peter 3:8-10 and its broader context fill out the point). Related to this fact is the way Jesus doesn’t see the life of nations as very significant. It’s just a tale of wars and rumors of wars. This stance could also mean he wouldn’t need to focus on what it means to be a nation or an imperial power. It wasn’t ultimately important. Another reason is that in his day the people of God, the Jewish people, is neither an independent nation nor an imperial power, and the group he mostly teaches, his disciples, are not people who would be exercising power if it were. Meir Pa’il, an Israeli brigade commander and politician, has noted that Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces rejects the notion of “an eye for an eye” in the sense of “murder and crude retribution.”[[31]](#footnote-31) In a response, Milton Himmelfarb noted “the difference between the moral problems that Pa’il was considering and those which concern Jews in the Diaspora. Jews who are living only as individuals within a larger society have, at most, the moral problems of individuals.” The problems of Jews in Israel are of quite a different scope.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The bumper sticker says, “When Jesus said, ‘Love your enemies,’ I think he probably meant don’t kill them.” It might seem surprising that Jesus did not make the comment “It was said of old, ‘You shall only make war when God tells you to do so,’ but I say to you, ‘You shall not make war at all.’” But the question of disciples making war did not arise.

What is true about Jesus’s teaching is also true elsewhere in the New Testament. It doesn’t focus much on the way history and politics may unfold before Jesus’s final appearing. There is thus no raw material from the New Testament for approving or disapproving the state’s involvement in violence, except perhaps in Romans 13 (and the similar 1 Peter 2:13-14). Yoder argues that in this chapter, the state’s bearing the sword connotes a judicial and police function, not executing the death penalty or making war.[[33]](#footnote-33) This distinction seems alien and anachronistic.[[34]](#footnote-34) Yoder is right that later Christian thinkers took from secular sources the way of thinking that led to the just war tradition, which doesn’t follow what Jesus said about loving enemies or “the norm of the cross and the life of Jesus Christ as the way of dealing with conflict.”[[35]](#footnote-35) The problem is that the New Testament did not provide raw material for an understanding of the state, which was one reason why Christians turned to the secular just war tradition when they found themselves in a position where they were involved in governing nations and empires. Yoder goes on, “The new stance… assigns to civil government… a role in carrying out God’s will that is quite incompatible with the fruit of the progressive relativization of kingship from Samuel to Jeremiah to Jesus and Jochanan ben Zakkai” (who sought to make peace with the Roman forces during the siege of Jerusalem).[[36]](#footnote-36) “The two ancient turning points represented by Jeremiah and Constantine have become… the two most important landmarks outside the New Testament itself for clarifying what is at stake in the Christian faith.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Jeremiah (on this view) does not see the coming downfall of Judah as marking a scattering that constitutes a hiatus after which normalcy will return. In his letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer 29),

God instructed the people in Babylon to stay there, to renounce notions of an early return to Judaea, to settle in… and (especially) to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile….” The move to Babylon was not a two-generation parenthesis, after which the Davidic or Solomonic project was supposed to take up again where it had left off. It was rather the beginning… of a new phase of the Mosaic project.[[38]](#footnote-38)

The Jeremianic model, Yoder said, turns Jews into a people who do not seek to take control of history. Christian pacifism followed that stance.[[39]](#footnote-39)

This reading of the First Testament in general and of Jeremiah in particular is open to a series of objections. The clearest is that Jeremiah makes clear that the move to Babylon was indeed a two-generation parenthesis. He is explicit that the exiles are to settle down for seventy years, after which Yahweh will bring them back to their land (Jer 29:10-14), and elsewhere Jeremiah is explicit that Yahweh will “raise up for David a faithful branch, and he will reign as king, act wisely, and implement faithful government in the land” (Jer 23:5-6). Kingship is already relativized by Samuel, yet allowed; it is hard to see any difference in Jeremiah.

While Jeremiah indeed had no time for the idea that the Judahites would take control of history, this stance was not a novel one. None of the Prophets have an expectation along those lines. It is harder to say whether Jeremiah would regard Ezra and Nehemiah as inappropriate “deviations from the Jeremiah line,” as people “politicking for imperial authorization.”[[40]](#footnote-40) What is clear is that their stories are part of the Scriptures and that the Scriptures are not uneasy with their stance. Their needing to deal with the question of relations with the secular powers thus makes them a significant resource for the people of God when they need to do so. One might also see it as significant that the stance of the Maccabees, who engaged in violent resistance, is not represented within the Scriptures.

# On Waiting and Working for the Kingdom

Between David’s day and Jesus’s day a thousand years passed. Since Jesus’s day, twice as much time has passed. During these two millennia, millions of believers in Jesus have lived as members of independent nations and of imperial powers, often ruling them and thus controlling their national and imperial policies, or at least taking part in democratic processes whereby they chose people to determine these policies, and thus sharing in responsibility for them. For the first two or three centuries after Jesus, at least in the part of the world that we know best, the Roman Empire, the question of being a Christian politician or ruler could hardly arise. The turning point was the reign of Constantine, who mercifully turned the empire from one that persecuted and martyred believers into one that recognized Christian faith and even made it the empire’s official though not exclusive religion.[[41]](#footnote-41) There thus comes about an alliance between empire and church, an alliance with potential and danger. Both the potential and the danger are realized over subsequent centuries. If Constantine was concerned to control the church, it was at least in part with a question such as “how can I get two North African Churches that hate each other enough to kill to recognize each other as brothers?”[[42]](#footnote-42)

While the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament has some significance for both empire and church in this situation, the more obvious and immediate scriptural material for the instruction of empire and church comes in the First Testament, and it thus regrettable that the church has paid little attention to it. The material comes in the First Testament’s reporting of Yahweh’s attitude to Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece, and in the broader way it speaks of Yahweh’s attitude to Israel, which for much of the time is both a political entity and the people of God. One key facet of this dynamic is the relationship of kings, priests, and prophets. It is possible for the emperor to want to control the church and for Henry VIII to declare himself head of the church, but it is also possible for Athanasius to resist Constantine (even if Athanasius did pay for his resistance) and for Ambrose to rebuke Theodosius.

If Constantinianism means the claim that the Christian empire can be identified with the kingdom of God and can be the fulfillment of First Testament prophecies of the messianic age, then it is a heresy. But just as questionable is the argument that “The alternative to resigning ourselves to exile without end… is the narrative of history, and of our lives in history, moving toward the Kingdom of God…. This is, to be sure, the Christian narrative.”[[43]](#footnote-43) How do we look at things when the end did not come? Are we simply left to our own devices? Or is the transition to Christendom the way God chose to work? Or do we deny history? “The common Christian calling is a project: i.e., a goal-oriented movement through time,” Yoder argues.[[44]](#footnote-44) Jesus is a charter to which further development must be faithful and by which it will be evaluated, as history moves on from the New Testament; “renewed recourse to the New Testament… enables authentic progress.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

There is no basis in Scripture for the conviction that the narrative of history is moving towards the kingdom of God. Nor does a consideration of the narrative of history over the past two thousand years offer any pointers in that direction. Jesus does rather speak of wars and rumors of wars and the New Testament envisages that later times will see apostasy and heresy (1 Tim 4:1-2). Bringing in the kingdom of God is fortunately God’s business.

My step-daughter and her husband are spending their lives working for an anti-genocide movement. I once plucked up the courage to ask her whether she thought the movement would ever succeed, implicitly raising the question whether they were wasting their lives. She had thought about the question and she knew that they were unlikely to achieve that aim, but she drew an analogy with the anti-slavery movement. It had not eliminated slavery; there is still slavery in the world. But it had made slavery an unacceptable notion. Their aim in the anti-genocide movement was to make genocide an unacceptable notion.

Perhaps it is a possibility; certainly it’s worth aiming to get governments that want to be part of the “world community” to foreswear and oppose genocide as they foreswear and oppose slavery. The aim is in keeping with other aspects of our seeking to restrain the outworking of sinfulness in the world. But it is not the bringing in of the reign of justice and righteousness. And I am even more proud and enthusiastic in connection with the energy these members of my family put into seeking to bring healing and love and a sense of recognition to the refugees themselves and their children who have known nothing but life in a camp. That work does look like the bringing in of a reign of justice and righteousness in these people’s lives.

# Conclusion

My understanding of the way in which we may use the two Testaments as an ethical resource thus takes up three principles that Jesus suggests. First, as a prophet he brings out the implications of the teaching in the Torah and the Prophets in way that has the potential to enable us to be challenged by them rather than dismissing them or ignoring them. Second, as a teacher he articulates the distinction within the Torah and the Prophets between the way things were at the beginning and the way allowance has to be made for human stubbornness, a distinction that can also enable us to learn from the New Testament. And third, as a pastor he invites us to look for the way the Torah and the Prophets work out the implications of love for God and love for neighbor, a tactic that can open up the significance of the New Testament, too. These three approaches to interpretation may contribute to the safeguarding of interpreters from simply using the Scriptures to support ethical convictions that they bring to the text out of their own context, and to interpreters being able to profit from material in the First Testament upon which the New Testament has little to say, such as violence, war, and nationhood, which is all the more significant because two thousand years have passed since Jesus.

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# Abstract

Jesus suggests three principles for interpreting material about behavior in the First Testament. (1) His own teaching fills it out, brings out its implications. (2) Ask how any text is an expression of love for God or love for neighbor. (3) Material in the First Testament is sometimes stating God’s creation ideals; sometimes it’s making allowance for human stubbornness. This last principle also facilitates reflection on the New Testament. The challenge of the two Testaments as an ethical resource is allowing them to critique us rather than using our convictions to critique them. That process requires us to gain an understanding of our own cultural assumptions and context; attitudes to and understandings of sex, slavery, and violence are examples. Consideration of the last question (and of the significance of the First Testament) is controversial in a distinctive way because the New Testament has little to say about violence, war, and nationhood and because two thousand years have passed since Jesus.

# Keywords

Slavery, War, Violence, Nationhood, Constantine, Empire, Jeremiah, Yoder, Sex, Fulfillment

# Bio

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1. An expanded version of a chapter called “Moses (and Jesus and Paul) for Your Hardness of Hearts” in Goldingay, *Do We Need the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The “Manual of Discipline,” the Qumran Community Rule, does commend hating the sons of darkness (see e.g., 1QS 1:3-4, 9-10), but these people are not personal enemies but people the community sees as God’s enemies. Hating them does not imply taking hostile action against them or even necessarily having feelings of hostility toward them; it rather implies a resolve to have nothing to do with them and their ways, in keeping with the attitude expressed in passages such as Pss 26:5; 31:6 [7]; 101:3; 119:113; 139:21-22. The Manual of Discipline commits people to leaving to God the judgment of anyone who wrongs us (1QS 10:17-18), again in keeping with the attitude of the Psalms. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See further Goldingay, *Reading Jesus’s Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. David J. A. Clines, “Methods in Old Testament Study,” in Clines, *On the Way to the Postmodern* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 1:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Philip Jenson posits a suggestive background to this understanding within Deuteronomy itself, whose rules represent three levels: (1) “The command,” as 6:1 puts it, the Shema; (2) “The ten words” (4:13); and (3) “The laws and decisions” (4:14) (see Jenson, “Snakes and Ladders,” in Katharine Dell [ed.], *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament* [London: T. and T. Clark, 2010], 187-207, following Eugene H. Merrill, e.g., *Everlasting Dominion* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2006), 164: “The Shema is to the Decalogue what the Decalogue is to the whole covenant text, especially in its Deuteronomic rendition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. So Joachim Schaper in a paper on “Ritual, Monotheism and the Place of Leviticus in the Pentateuch” given at the Society for Old Testament Study at Bangor, Wales, in July 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Christian Doctrine* 1.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See “Work and Slavery in the New Testament,” in John W. Rogerson and others (eds.), *The Bible in Ethics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 315-47 (347). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “Does the Pentateuch Exist?” www.academia.edu/3859631, accessed February 4, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Lamb of God and the Forgiveness of Sin(s) in the Fourth Gospel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73 (2011): 1-29 (2). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Over the period during which this paper has been germinating, transgender questions have come to the fore in Western culture, and in principle it would be possible to set them in the context of the analysis in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Frederick J. Gaiser, “A New Word on Homosexuality?” *Word and World* 14 (1994): 280-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. On the interpretation of the passage, see further Goldingay, *Isaiah 56—66* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Cf. R. B. Hays, “Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies,” in J. S. Siker (ed.), *Homosexuality and the Church* (Louisville: WJK, 1994), 3-17 (7-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On the interpretation of Philemon in this connection see e.g., J. M. G. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership,” *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 161-86; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Lloyd A. Lewis, “An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle,” in Cain Hope Felder (ed.), *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 232-46; Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983); D. Francois Tolmie (ed.), *Philemon in Perspective* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See e.g., Oliver O’Donovan, *The Desire of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 183-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “Work and Slavery in the New Testament,” 321, 342, 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. I have discussed the nature of First Testament servitude/slavery further in my *Old Testament Theology Volume 3: Israel’s Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 458-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Speech… on the Results of Emancipation* (Boston: Wallcut, 1858), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See e.g., M. Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries* (reprinted Kingston, Jamaica: The Press University of the West Indies, 1982), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See e.g., L. R. Morrison, “The Religious Defense of American Slavery Before 1830,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 37/2 (1980-81): 16-29 (23). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *City of God* 19.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See *Politics* 1.3-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Summa theologica* Supplement*,* Question 52, Article 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. John H. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 22-28, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Terence E. Fretheim, “God and Violence in the Old Testament,” *Word and World* 24 (2004): 18-28 (21). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. John H. Yoder’s own study in *The Politics of Jesus* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 76-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. O’Donovan’s comments, *The Desire of Nations*, 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. “The Dynamics of Power,” in Marvin Fox (ed.), *Modern Jewish Ethics* ([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 191-220 (193). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. As related in an editorial (?) “Response to Meir Pa’il,” *Modern Jewish Ethics*, 221-27 (221). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *The Politics of Jesus*, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Cf. O’Donovan, *The Desire of Nations*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. John H. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *For the Nations* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Yoder, *For the Nations,* 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Yoder, *For the Nations*, 66-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Yoder, *For the Nations*, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Our main source for a knowledge of Constantine is the glowing account of *The Life of Constantine* by Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, who was born slightly before him but outlived him by two or three years, though his account (like any other ancient source) is subject to critique. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Richard John Neuhaus, *American Babylon* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. John H. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *For the Nations*, 139, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)