

did not intend His word to be proclaimed by dictating machines: the Holy Spirit inspired those who put Scripture into writing, but the words and matter would be that which would be meaningful to the intended audience. I would guess that in Hebrew, like contemporary Arabic, imagery was an important component of the message. Moreover, in the warlike world of the ancient Middle East, a God who did not smite your enemy was not really a God worth worshipping. And can one claim any peace loving message from the Greek, Roman, Norse or Teutonic pantheon?

All the above neglects the fundamental message of the Old Testament: that God has chosen his people Israel, the children of Abraham, to be a light unto the world, that he is a forgiving and loving God, who over and over again has forgiven them for straying from him. We see the messages of love: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Lev 19:18); "for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16); Hosea 11. Moreover, if we believe that our life on earth is only an interlude in an eternity--heaven, hell, purgatory--and that even for those who did not or have not yet heard the message of Christ there may be salvation, then these bloody deaths are secondary in achieving what God wills, that He be known, first to His Chosen People, and then through Christ and the Apostles to the world. Thus, the Old Testament commandment to love your neighbor (and the alien in your midst) becomes the New Testament commandment to love your enemy. Benedict XVI's comment sums this up:

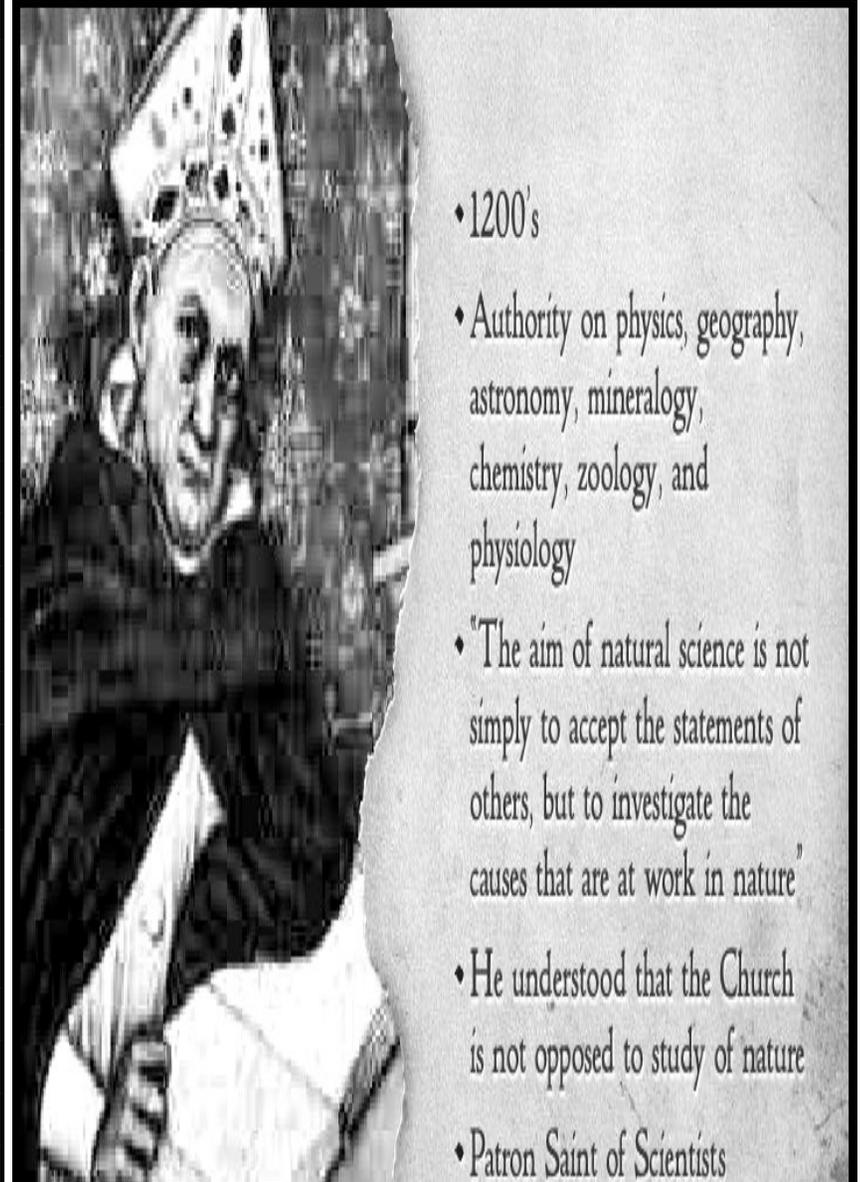
"The great difficulty with the Old Testament, because of its lack of rhetorical beauty and of lofty philosophy, was resolved in Saint Ambrose's preaching through his typological interpretation of the Old Testament: Augustine realized that the whole of the Old Testament was a journey toward Jesus Christ. Thus, he found the key to understanding the beauty and even the philosophical depth of the Old Testament and grasped the whole unity of the mystery of Christ in history as well as the synthesis between philosophy, rationality, and faith in the Logos, in Christ, the Eternal Word who was made flesh." Church Fathers: from Clement of Rome to Augustine.

I urge those more knowledgeable than I in Scripture (and there are many) to flesh out these arguments.

From a series of articles written by: Bob Kurland - a Catholic Scientist

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Catholic Physics - Reflections of a Catholic Scientist - Part 16 Should we shun the God of the Old Testament?



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Should we shun the God of the Old Testament?



The Lord answering Job out of the Whirlwind
William Blake

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

"... the dangers of believing in a God whom we cannot but regard as evil, and then, in mere terrified flattery calling Him 'good' and worshiping Him, is still greater danger. The ultimate question is whether the doctrine of the goodness of God or that of the inerrancy of Scriptures is to prevail when they conflict. I think the doctrine of the goodness of God is the more certain of the two. Indeed, only that doctrine renders this worship of Him obligatory or even permissible." C.S. Lewis, *Letter to John Beversluis, God in the Dock*

"...As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New." Catechism of the Catholic Church #129 (reference is to St. Augustine of Hippo).

While reading a very fine post by Matt Briggs, You can't get something from nothing, a commentary on Hart's *The Experience of God*, I came across the following comments to his post:

"The Abrahamic tradition – all its branches – conflates the infinite entity which has a huge number of names given to it – God, Brahma, the Tao (I think), the Source and probably numbers of others, which is by definition unknowable and beyond space and time and may or may not have a personality – with Yahweh, the vicious, bloodthirsty, jealous and utterly unreasonable god of a desert people in 3000 BCE. Some time around then, some priest came up with the idea that THEIR god was chief among them all, and made it stick."

"However, why must everyone confuse this putative Being with that rank imposter – the vicious, jealous, bloodthirsty deity of an ancient nomadic desert tribe?"

I'll disregard the nascent anti-semitism (anti-judaism?) of these comments and put them down as due to naive, untutored knowledge of Holy Scripture, that cherry-pick the bad amongst all that the Old Testament offers. They bring to mind the 2nd century heretic Marcion, a Gnostic who proclaimed that the god of the Old Testament was a demiurge, an evil and lesser counterpart of God, the Father of Jesus, and that the Old Testament was not to be regarded as Holy Scripture. Tertullian and Augustine both disproved his arguments.

Now I'll admit that I am bothered during my daily readings in the Liturgy of the Hours when I come across "that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes, while the tongues of your dogs have their share." (Psalm 68:23) and particularly Psalm 149, which occurs frequently for the Morning Prayer:

"May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron,"

There are other parts of the Old Testament that disturb contemporary sensibilities: Abram offering his wife Sarai to the Pharaoh, as his sister (Gen 12:10-20); Joshua slaughtering all the inhabitants of Jericho down to children and animals, except for the prostitute Rahab (Joshua 6:1-27); Judah, Er, Onan and Tamar in a story straight out of the raunchiest TV soap opera (Gen 28). What can we say to all this blood, guts and sex? That God