

God the Most Unpleasant Character in all Fiction

Here are my favorite and most useful quotes from Dan Barker's God the Most Unpleasant Character in all Fiction. For Mr Barker, the Bible is not inspired by a loving God but inspired by fear and evil.

He surveys the ten commandments. The first forbids having any God but the true God. The second says not to make images of God. The third says not to take God's name in vain - ie use it in disrespect. The fourth says to honour the Sabbath day. He says:

The first four commandments have nothing to do with how we treat other people. They are a loyalty pact demanded by a controlling commander. God's cringing grandstanding on Sinai seems nervous. When reading the Old Testament, I often feel like yelling: "If you are afraid of not being loved, then stop frightening your lover." True respect is earned, not demanded. A confident lover would never be jealous. Jealousy is insecurity. It is the fear that someone you love will not love you back, a dread that they will choose someone else. It is possessive and controlling, based on an assumed right of ownership.

True. The commandments imply that God comes first and he must be loved above all. A God is that which is to be worshipped with love and images are banned in case they get in the way of that love. They are essentially a paraphrase of the big command to love God with all your heart and soul and mind. The commands that come after are summarised by love your neighbour as yourself. The ten commandments are an elaboration on the command to love God alone with all your heart and to love your neighbour.

Barker shows how God will not forgive people. To me the Bible seems to refuse forgiveness to those who will not ask for it from God. Real forgiveness means you struggle to fix the relationship. Here the struggle is mentioned. If you don't try God hold's a grudge.

Joshua 24:19 "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." KJV

But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy, and to carry in no burden through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates; it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 17:27)

The expression that God is not willing to forgive may mean he is not as forgiving as we are led to believe.

2 Kings 24:3-4 "Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive." NIV.

Alarmingly a sexually abused animal is to be slain! It is a safe bet that the same things were done to toddlers who were raped. The text implies the animal is in fact responsible and a sinner!

Leviticus 20:15-16 "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." KJV (Bestiality is immoral, but why the death penalty? And why for the animal?)

Barker points out how ink and paper and time is wasted by God on pedantic rubbish.

God the interior decorator. Thirteen whole verses about fancy draperies Exodus 26:1-13.

God endorses forced marriage here:

Deuteronomy 21:10-14 "When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her." KJV (Used sex slaves are

worthless.)

Respect is something that must be earned, and since the God of the Old Testament asserts his authority with powerful threats and actual acts of violence, “fear God” boils down to “be frightened of his cruelty,” no matter how you look at it. The love of God and the fear of God are inseparably linked here.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. . . . When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The Lord your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, because the Lord your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the Lord your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 6:4–15).

Notice how we are asked to love a God who will reward us with material things and yet we are told to fear him with all our heart and soul and mind as well as love him. The love is given under a fear of suffering loss and facing destruction. This is not love but slavery. Some say that love is not about affection but about obedience and that is the key. They could be right as love of neighbour is not about how you feel at all but about doing God's will for that person so it is really about God not the person. Refusing to directly love the person is a sign of hate and passive aggression. Direct love of others is banned - you "love" that is serve them because God commands it.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate, says the Lord of hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land, says the Lord, two-thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one-third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, “They are my people”; and they will say, “The Lord is our God.” (Zechariah 13:7–9).

This sanctions wars that attack even children and God is vowing forced conversion.

And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. (Mark 9:42–48).

There is no case for regarding this as anything other than a law. Moses allowed dismembering too under Jewish law. For all we know in those turbulent days when violence was normalised people could have obeyed Jesus. It is said to be a metaphor for if you want to sin and you cut your eye out it does not affect what is in your heart. You may still be willing to sin if you have the eye. But Jesus didn't say it was a metaphor. He did speak about the heart elsewhere but that does not mean he was being consistent. He could still have meant what he said. Also, if what you are seeing is putting bad things in your heart then getting rid of your sight will help. Realistically if you want an eye out you need somebody else to do it. Jesus was not saying you must do it yourself as on your own - you do it by getting somebody to do it.

If any of Barker's interpretations are wrong does that matter? What matters is that the reasonable interpreter can and does agree with him. That is why Christianity is still responsible if some nut reads its Bible or listens to Jesus wrecking the Temple at Mass and goes out and attacks somebody in the name of the faith.