

Handout for Homily: "The Violence of God in the Old Testament"

Completely optional to use! But there are some blanks to full in, so grab a pencil or pen.

OPTION A: _____ Out of the Bible

- Marcionism¹

Problem: This option is debunked by.... Jesus himself...

- John 5:39 *"(Jesus said,) 'You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.'"*
- & Luke 24:27 *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, (Jesus) explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."*

What it looks like today

- Ignore difficult Old Testament passages
- Penal Substitutionary Atonement²

OPTION B: God is _____ and we are _____.

- God does what God does
- Weaker Version: God was good in it, but it is a mystery how.

Scriptural Support

- Isaiah 55:8-9 *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*
- God is the potter, we are the clay (Romans 9:19-24)

Problems/Weaknesses

- Refuse to face the facts / grapple with scripture.
- Fails to address how God is good and not evil.
- Pastorally, in traumatic situations: very unhelpful.

OPTION C: God revealed himself _____ in the Bible

- Jesus is the fullness of God's self-revelation
- The Old Testament is God showing *some* of Himself
- God works with people where they are by letting them think what they do at that time and then teaching them to think better.

Scriptural Support

- John 14:8-10 *"(Jesus said,) 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.'"*
- Galatians 3:23-24 *"Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith."*

¹ Marcionism is the theological name for this option

² To read or watch two sermon on the problems of the penal substitutionary theory of atonement, which has become dominant in Western Protestantism, visit <https://www.saintmatthiasoakdale.com/penalsub>

What it looks like today

- “God may have said something in an Old Testament passage, but it wasn’t heard totally correctly.”

Problems/Weaknesses

- Every time you read an Old Testament text, you have to figure out what God is really saying
- Less useful for passages where God Himself acts violently

OPTION D: More than _____

- The historicity or depiction of God in troubling Old Testament stories is not as important about what God is doing now, spiritually, in our relationship with Christ.
- These Old Testament stories are meant to test our hearts.

Scriptural Support

- God often tested the Israelites in the Old Testament (e.g. in the wilderness)
- Jesus often used story this way in parables (e.g. the Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son)

What it looks like today

- Example: Contrasting Genesis 18:16ff with Jonah 4:1ff with Luke 19:41ff

Problems/Weaknesses

- This can lead to a loss of the Old Testament’s plain sense.
- Unclear when difficult Old Testament passages should only be understood as a story and historical or fully historical

OPTION E: The Best Approach, according to Green:

Leave behind the _____ and
_____ the _____,
with the weight on how it relates to _____.³

- John 5:39 & Luke 24:27



Discussion Questions (with 2 or 3 or 4 people around you) OR go up to chancel to ask Fr John a question or listen to what questions others have.

1. Which of the four approaches do you think most closely represents how you have approached or thought about passages of a violent God in the Old Testament?
2. Does Green’s Proposal (E above) resonate as the best or a sound approach? Why or why not? Or what questions does it raise?

³ To explore this further, visit <https://cewgreen.substack.com/p/reading-the-scriptures-in-the-school>

KEY for Handout for Homily: “The Violence of God in the Old Testament”

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