

Summum bonum (Atheist & Bishop podcast)

Post by “Joshua” of June 24, 2023 at 11:34 PM

That's one of the more frustrating aspects of the response to Greenblatt's book. They downplay self-flagellation, which admittedly probably was restricted to the real hardliners, but take no account of the persecution of Heretical sects, the torture and murder of apostates, the relish of punishment of the damned in hell, the culture of fear and inquisition, the conversion of "heathens" at the point of a sword, the anti-Jewish pogroms, the hunting and burning of accused witches, and the infamous *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

One reviewer actually wrote *this* with a straight face;

Quote

Indeed the Middle Ages are considered Europe's most bookish era, a time when books — Christian, Greek and Roman alike — were accorded near totemic authority. Medieval readers and writers (not just clergy — lay culture was widely influenced by texts and documents, especially following the 10th century) *were apt to believe anything they read in an old book* just because it was old and from a book.

As if to say that *that* were a sign of literacy. Well I'm sorry, but a literate and literary society does *not* believe something just because they read it in a book. A literate society knows enough about books *not* to take them blindly or at face value. It is only credulity and ignorance and illiteracy that views books as 'totemic'.

But imagine someone saying or writing that in the middle ages--and about one book in particular--and then try pretending that we don't all know what would be done to them.

Well wide of the mark, Bishop.

Quote

His aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up factitious excellencies - belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human kind - and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtue: but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful.

-John Stuart Mill, on his father