

“Let me say it as kindly as I can: if justification by faith alone in the finished work of Christ is the heart of the Gospel message, then C.S. Lewis said nothing about the gospel in all of his writings. In spite of this astounding fact, millions of self-professed ‘evangelicals’ think his writings are wonderful examples of Christian truth. And apparently, evangelical professors cannot get enough of his Anglo-Catholic writings....” -Ronald Cooke[i]

Dr. Jerry Bergman, whose bio at CMI is quite impressive, has contributed hundreds of articles for scientific journals and authored or coauthored an extensive body of literature to the benefit of biblical creationists. He is also the author of the recently published, *C. S. Lewis: Anti-Darwinist: A Careful Examination of the Development of His Views on Darwinism*. Featured in the latest issue of the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* are two positive book reviews of Bergman’s latest work.[ii]

Like Bergman’s other publications, this work on C.S. Lewis is sure to be informative, extensively documented, and useful to anyone interested in researching Lewis for himself. Lewis’ distaste for Darwinism, however, should not necessarily make him an ally to those who actually believe in biblical inerrancy and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many creationists have pointed out the insufficiencies of the Intelligent Design Movement (ID), for example, noting the movement’s refusal to interact with the biblical record of history and only punching holes in the general theory of evolution. What’s different about Lewis that he should receive such attention from creationists? One reviewer even admits that, “[Lewis] would probably be classified today more as a member of the intelligent design movement”.[iii]

C.S. Lewis’ anti-Darwinian sentiments aside, his views on the Bible—both its history and theology—and the gospel, are not ones to be admired.

It is particularly surprising that biblical creationists, who are devoted to upholding the Bible’s record of history (particularly the Creation and Flood accounts as recorded in Genesis chapters 1-11), would be willing to overlook C.S. Lewis’ rejection of inerrancy and historicity. For instance, Lewis wrote that:

“The Old Testament contains fabulous statements. As to the fabulous elements in

the Old Testament, I very much doubt if you would be wise to chuck it out. Jonah and the Whale [sic], Noah and his Ark, are fabulous; but the court history of King David is probably as reliable as the court history of Louis XIV.”[iv]

One of Lewis’ official biographers noted the “great apologist’s” denial of inerrancy:

“Although Lewis never doubted the historicity of an account because the account was miraculous, he believed that Jonah’s whale [sic], Noah’s ark, and Job’s boils were probably inspired stories rather than factual history.”[v]

Why is Lewis’ denial of inerrancy and historicity suddenly irrelevant? These are the doctrines that we are ultimately defending when we uphold the Genesis record. But apparently for some creationists, his anti-Darwinism is sufficient to place him in our corner.

But perhaps I am being too hard on Dr. Bergman and his reviewers. The purpose of the book is obviously to show that Lewis was not a theistic evolutionist, and I wouldn’t contest Bergman’s research on that point. However, Lewis’ denial of the historicity of the biblical record coupled with his abysmal theology are serious cause for concern in light of his enduring popularity.

In the preface to one of his most well-known books, Lewis makes the following admission:

“The reader should be warned that I offer no help to anyone who is hesitating between two Christian ‘denominations’. You will not learn from me whether you ought to become an Anglican, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or a Roman Catholic. The omission is intentional (even in the list I have just given the order is alphabetical).

...The danger clearly was that I should put forward as common Christianity anything that was peculiar to the Church of England or (worse still) to myself. I tried to guard against this by sending the original script of what is now Book II to four clergymen (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic) and asking for their criticism. The Methodist thought I had not said enough about Faith, and the Roman Catholic thought I had gone rather too far about the comparative unimportance of theories in

explanation of the Atonement. Otherwise all five of us were agreed” [emphasis added].[vi]

Obviously, then, doctrinal distinctives even between a Presbyterian and Roman Catholic are utterly irrelevant. Both are equally valid Christian “denominations”, according to Lewis, even though Rome’s gospel is the gospel of antichrist. I have little good to say about Anglicanism or Methodism in our present day, but we have to take into consideration the degeneration of those denominations in the time since Lewis wrote. The main point is that Romanism, however, has for centuries promoted “another gospel”.

According to Dr. Ron Cooke,

“Lewis said that when he was younger he thought that the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ was silly, but as he grew older, he confessed that it was not as silly as he once thought it was. Hardly a ringing endorsement for one of the most important doctrines connected to personal salvation. Yet at the same time, Lewis speaks out [in his affirmation of] purgatory.

...If someone is going to purgatory when he dies, as Lewis stated firmly that he was going to such a place, then obviously he did not understand the great biblical truths that make up the Gospel.”[vii]

Lewis’ belief in purgatory is really no secret, but the following reference provided by Jill Saunders should suffice as evidence:

“Our souls demand Purgatory, don’t they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, ‘It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy?’ Should we not reply, ‘With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I’d rather be cleaned first.’ ‘It may hurt, you know’—‘Even so, sir.’”[viii]

Obviously, for one to hope to be cleansed of his vileness in the mythical land of purgatory

means that the blood of Christ was not sufficient in what it was intended to accomplish. The doctrine of purgatory is not only absent from the pages of Scripture, it is a practical denial of the finished work of Christ.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God [not purgatory], being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

In the same book, Lewis writes:

“Of course I pray for the dead.... And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden.... To pray for them presupposes that progress and difficulty are still possible.... I believe in Purgatory.”[ix]

At the end of *Mere Christianity*—a book which I picked up years ago because it seemed to be required reading for those interested in apologetics—we find even more such theological drivel. Just like his embrace of purgatory, much of the following reminds me of Jerry Walls’ nonsensical ramblings and pluralistic pandering. My comments are interspersed in brackets:

“There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen.

[Yeah, those are called apostates, and they were never actually born-again, since God brings to completion all whom He has justified (Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 1:6).]

“There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.

[Regeneration is an instantaneous act of God. No one slowly becomes a Christian, though from our perception the actual point of conversion is not necessarily discernible.]

“There are people who do not accept the full Christian doctrine about Christ but who are so strongly attracted by Him that they are His in a much deeper sense than they themselves understand.

[This sounds like Kierkegaardian existentialism. They believe false doctrine but they are more “strongly attracted” and are “His in a much deeper sense” than the one who actually believes the Word of God. According to Scripture, if you do not believe the gospel you are lost, regardless of how sincere or religiously devoted you are.]

“There are people in other religions who are being led by God’s secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it.

[The gospel is propositional; Truth which must be believed; statements which must be intellectually assented to. Thus there is no one “in other religions...who thus belong to Christ without knowing it”. That is a nonsensical statement.]

“For example, a Buddhist of good will may be led to concentrate more and more on the Buddhist teaching about mercy and to leave in the background (though he might still say he believed) the Buddhist teaching on certain other points. Many of the good Pagans long before Christ’s birth may have been in this position. And always, of course, there are a great many people who are just confused in mind and have a lot of inconsistent beliefs all jumbled up together. Consequently, it is not much use trying to make judgments about Christians and non-Christians in the mass.”[x]

“Good pagans.” Right.

Contrarily, Jesus said

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14-16).

Lacking the biblical gospel and any clear doctrinal parameters, such writing is more than palatable to heretics of all varieties, as the following excerpt from a *Christianity Today* article proves:

"[Lewis] is widely quoted from tried-and-true defenders of Mormon orthodoxy. It just shows the extraordinary acceptability and the usefulness of C.S. Lewis because, of course, most of what he says is perfectly acceptable to Mormons."[xi]

It should go without saying that if your belief system is perfectly compatible with Mormonism, you have a problem.

Whatever "mere Christianity" Lewis may have held to, when it comes to his overall theology, the bad far outweighs the good. This simple fact is either conveniently overlooked or conspicuously denied by those who continue to promote his works as masterpieces of Christian literature. The argument seems to be that we can capitalize on the good stuff Lewis had to say while overlooking his disastrous doctrine. But that is like quoting the papal antichrist on those rare occasions he actually says something that may be true. What's the point of digging through the dunghill for a speck of truth when there are vast storehouses of knowledge deduced from Scripture from which to strengthen our apologetic acumen? Why not draw instead from theologians who aptly understood that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10), men equipped to defend *the faith* (Jude 3), not Lewis' compromised minimalist pseudo-Romanism?

If I had found anything I had written being praised by Jesuits, monks and nuns I would be shocked and appalled. In fact, I would regard it as a high insult that my articles would be acceptable to heretics such as Mormons and papists. I would be forced to conclude that I had not been so clear in articulating the gospel of grace. Lewis had no problem accepting the support of heretics, however.

"...Letters of agreement reach me from what are ordinarily regarded as the most different kinds of Christians; for instance, I get letters from Jesuits, monks, nuns, also from Quakers and Welsh Dissenters, and so on."[xii]

I have tried to make it as clear as possible at No Peace with Rome that Romanism's gospel is

a false one and the religion of antichrist. In saying that I am not asserting anything beyond what historic Protestantism has long held. Let us not forget that Rome has had more than a few choice words for Protestants as well. In fact, the older Reformed writers were much more direct and penetrating in their assaults on Romanism than what you find herein. To have peace with Rome is to have peace with antichrist. Yet Lewis found his writings welcome even among Jesuits, an undeniably subversive order worthy of the name given them by *Roman Catholic* historian Malachi Martin, “the Stormtroopers of the papacy”.

Once again, it seems, Lewis gets a pass from the “non-Catholic” evangelically community, this time because he is “anti-Darwinian”. I must ask, would the same pass be given to an anti-Darwinian Muslim academic? Surely, the devout Muslim believes that Allah created the universe without the aid of theistic evolution.[xiii] If anti-Darwinism is the criteria, certainly far more Muslims would be of use to us than the compromising evolutionary creationists of the day. Should we be willing to capitalize on the works of Muslim scholars in bolstering our apologetic arsenal since many of them are also anti-Darwinian? If not, why not? Romanism is not Christianity. It is a counterfeit religion which denies that God saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Anglo-Catholics like Lewis are not in any better position in eternity than the “good pagans” who deny the gospel despite their denunciation of evolutionary fairytales.

[i] Cooke, R., *C.S. Lewis: A Modern Tractarian*, MethodEvangel Press, Rector, AR, 2017, p. 17.

[ii] *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 53(4):327–28, 2017.

[iii] Oard, M., *CRSQ* book review, ref. 2, p. 328.

[iv] Lewis, C.S., *The Grand Miracle*, Random House, New York, 1970, p. 32, as cited in Saunders, J., *C.S. Lewis, A Bridge to Rome*, Canadian Protestant League, Toronto, CA, 2010, p. 6.

[v] Lindskoog, K., *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian*, 4th ed., Cornerstone Press, Chicago, 1997, p. 199, as cited in Saunders, ref. 4, p. 5.

[vi] Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*, viii & xi

[vii] Cooke, ref. 1, p. 19.

[viii] Lewis, C.S., *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, Harcourt, New York, 1963, pp. 108—09, as cited in Saunders, ref. 4, p. 4.

[ix] Lewis, C.S., *Letter to Malcolm*, p. 111, as cited in Cooke, ref. 1, p. 23.

[x] Lewis, ref. 6, pp. 208—09.

[xi] LeBlanc, D., 'Mere Mormonism', *Christianity Today*, Feb. 7, 2000, as cited in, Saunders, ref. 4 p. 2.

[xii] Lewis, C.S., *The Grand Miracle, and Other Selected Essays on Theology and Ethics*, from *God in the Dock*, Random House, 1970, p. 35, as cited in Saunders, ref. 4, p. 3.

[xiii] Or, "evolutionary creation", as is currently the preferred term.

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