

STEPHEN SHERIDAN TESTIMONY: SOME OTHER READING AND LISTENING

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Christian Writers

CS Lewis

- The Great Divorce (*The best explanation of Hell I have seen, with some surprising humour in it.*)
- The Abolition of Man (*An alert on how materialism can destroy our humanity.*)
- That Hideous Strength (*The last of his Planetary Trilogy, in which an evil atheist government body attempts to seize power – the end is never in doubt, but it has a good analysis of the evils of materialism, inhuman bureaucracy and pomposity. You don't have to have read the rest of the Trilogy and it has an amusing appearance by Merlin.*)
- Mere Christianity and many other works

The Phenomenon of Man – Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

My Father's favourite book. The author was made famous again by the US preacher at Harry and Meghan's wedding. De Chardin was a Catholic palaeontologist, who attempted to combine evolution with his faith. Evolution is perfectly compatible with our Faith simply as the mechanism by which God delivers his creation, but de Chardin takes this much further. While a bit of an intellectual stretch, as an experiment in mysticism it is fascinating.

The Atheistic Perspective

The End of Faith – Sam Harris

God is Not Great – Christopher Hitchens

The God Delusion – Richard Dawkins

And to counter:

The Dawkins Delusion - Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath

On the Problem of Anti-Semitism

Why the Jews? The Reason for Anti-Semitism - Prager, Dennis, Telushkin, Joseph

I found this book gave credible reasoning why this scourge has never left us. I have been horrified by the recent rise in anti-semitism in the UK, particularly among the university educated young. I am not Jewish, but my Polish grandfather died after being sent to a Concentration Camp for the crime of being a school teacher (my father fought with the Polish Air Force and later the RAF in World War 2 – he changed his name when he married my Mum). This means I feel this danger very intensely. I was very proud to attend the rally the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism in Parliament Square just before the December 2019 Election. The gratitude of the Jewish community I met was heart-warming, but heart-breaking. In addition I had the strange incident just of “the miracle of the car battery” (ask me or Father Paul 😊).

Interesting YouTube stuff

Prager University on the Ten Commandments

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK57RiMqTdk&list=PLIBtb_NuIJ1y0fPzddUfOqYMav-gp1JNM

Please note that Prager is very conservative political individual and some of the arguments he uses against Atheism and Humanism are often “straw man” or mis-characterise some of those beliefs. However, I found his work on the Ten Commandments is interesting and a good starting point for debate on their meaning and application.

In Conversation with David Berlinski (2019) — Materialism, Darwinism, Artificial Intelligence & More

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlGhsm3Faio>

David Berlinski—Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyxUwaq00Rc>

Berlinski is a fascinating agnostic but theist-inclined Jewish mathematician/quasi-philosopher who produces strong arguments against the arrogant certainty of some atheists.

Continued Overleaf

If you like Fantasy Novels

I have always been a big fan of the great friends CS Lewis and Tolkien on the fantasy front. Lewis is more obvious in his tales of Christian morality in his Narnia books, while Tolkien is a bit more subtle in the Lord of the Rings. Tolkien was of course a Catholic, while Lewis was CofE. Lewis also wrote Science Fiction.

CS Lewis the Planetary or Cosmic Trilogy:

Out of the Silent Planet

Perelandra (or Voyage to Venus)

That Hideous Strength

Lewis wrote these books from the Late Thirties to the Forties, like Narnia they have strong Christian themes, but are written for an adult audience.

The universe that Lewis builds around our own is that each planet in our Solar System has an angel-like ruler appointed by God called an Oyarsa. Earth is known as Thulcandra, which translates as "The Silent Planet", because its Oyarsa rebelled against God and corrupted the world he was meant to nurture. In doing so he cut the planet off from the other worlds, hence "Silent".

In the first book the hero, a linguistics professor is drugged and kidnapped by two ruthless adventurers to be taken as a sacrifice to the ruler of Mars (Malacandra), because they misunderstand the nature of Martian society (three sentient races who all link directly with their Oyarsa). In the second book Ransom goes to Venus (Perelandra) to try and stop a corruption akin to the temptation in the Garden of Eden, driven by one of the corrupt adventurers from the first book. I have referenced the last book overleaf.

There is a lot of moral debate in these books, perhaps the best being in the first book one where Weston (one of the ruthless adventurers), who is motivated by the supremacy of Man, tries to explain his viewpoint to the Oyarsa of Mars and Ransom tries to translate it into the Oyarsa's language which he has learned, but finds it hard. The full speech comparing the English to the translation is repeated in the Wikipedia entry for the book, but I have put a key extract below:

Weston: Life is greater than any system of morality; her claims are absolute. It is not by tribal taboos and copy-book maxims that she has pursued her relentless march from the amoeba to man and from man to civilization.

Ransom (trying to translate): He says that living creatures are stronger than the question whether an act is bent or good – no, that cannot be right – he says it is better to be alive and bent than to be dead – no – he says, he says – I cannot say what he says, Oyarsa, in your language. But he goes on to say that the only good thing is that there should be very many creatures alive. He says there were many other animals before the first men and the later ones were better than the earlier ones; but he says the animals were not born because of what is said to the young about bent and good action by their elders. And he says these animals did not feel any pity.

Penelope Wallace – The Ragaris Books

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?i=digital->

[text&rh=p_27%3APenelope+Wallace&s=relevancerank&text=Penelope+Wallace&ref=dp_byline_sr_ebook_s_1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/s?i=digital-text&rh=p_27%3APenelope+Wallace&s=relevancerank&text=Penelope+Wallace&ref=dp_byline_sr_ebook_s_1)

-We Do Not Kill Children

-The 10th Province of Jaryar

-The Servant's Voice

Blog: <https://www.penelopewallace.com>

I discovered Penelope Wallace by an accidental Amazon reference (Amazon is not all bad!). She is a Christian and fantasy/science fiction fan. She also writes a blog. I disagree with her politically, but her religious thoughts are very interesting. She has created in Ragaris something unique: a quasi-medieval fantasy setting in which the full gender equality combined with Christian faith, but of course it is still a harsh world of extreme wealth and poverty with selfish corrupt and manipulative people in it. Each book has a detective story with political intrigue attached to it. Characters have depth and the plots have involved and credible as is the universe she has created.

You can see reviews on Amazon and I have a full set of all 3 books to give away, freshly printed by Amazon, just send me an email to the address on the front of this sheet. ☺