

The Problem of Pain

C.S. Lewis

Week Four

Chapter Five – The Fall of Man

- According to the doctrine of the Fall, people are now a horror to God and to themselves and are ill-adapted to the universe because of the abuse of their free will. (p. 63)
- The doctrine guards against Monism (which says that God generates both good and evil) and Dualism (which says that God produces good and some equal, independent power produces evil). (p. 63)
- Christianity asserts that God is good and made all things good; that one of the good things he made – free will – included the possibility of evil; and that we creatures availed ourselves of the possibility and became evil. (p. 63)
- The doctrine doesn't answer the question, 'Was it better for God to create than not to create?' (Yes, but probably a meaningless question.) (p. 64)
- It also can't be used to show that it is just to punish individuals for the sins of their remote ancestors. We sinned 'in Adam' ... God couldn't keep on undoing sin and also respecting our human choice ... so we can trace our sinfulness back to the original sin. (pp. 64-65)
- The developed doctrine says that man was created completely good and happy but disobeyed God and became what we now see. Some say that this is disproved by modern science, that men have slowly risen out of brutality and savagery. (p. 66)
- No objection to the idea that people physically descended from animals, but it doesn't follow that the further back you go, the more wicked and wretched you will find man to be. (p. 67)
- Not all animals treat others of their species as badly as men treat men. Not all are as gluttonous or lecherous as we are, and none are ambitious! (p. 67)
- Our prehistoric ancestors weren't as unsophisticated as we make them out to be. They made all the useful discoveries, except that of chloroform, which have ever been made – language, the family, clothing, fire, domestication of animals, the wheel, the ship, poetry and agriculture. (p. 68)
- Science has nothing to say for or against the doctrine of the Fall. (p. 68)
- The idea of sin supposes a law to sin against, and if sin were a social sin, then the first man couldn't have committed it. (Laws wouldn't have been developed yet.) The doctrine doesn't name a sin against someone else, however; it names a sin against God, disobedience. (p. 69)
- St. Augustine calls the first sin the result of pride, of a creature's trying to set up on its own and existing for itself. From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and itself as self, it has the terrible alternative of choosing itself over God. We all make the wrong choice every day! (pp. 69-70)
- Lewis's attempt at recounting the story
 - Over centuries, God perfected the animal form that was to be human. (p. 72)
 - In the fullness of time, God gave it consciousness of itself and of God and of truth, beauty and goodness. (p. 72)
 - He wholly commanded himself and the lower lives with which he came in contact. God came first in his love and thought (pp. 73-74)
 - Sooner or later these creatures fell. Something whispered to them that they could be as gods and call their souls their own. (p. 75)
 - This act of self-will is the only sin that can be conceived of as the Fall. (p. 76)

- Since I am I, I must make an act of self-surrender, however small or easy, in living to God rather than myself. This is the weak spot, the risk that God apparently thinks worth taking. (p. 76)
- Having cut itself off from the source of its being, it had cut itself off from the source of its power. Then God began to rule the creature not by the laws of spirit but by those of nature. The organs, no longer governed by man's will, fell under the control of ordinary biochemical law and suffered whatever the inter-workings of those laws might bring about in the way of pain, senility and death. (p. 77)
- The will, caught in the tidal wave of mere nature, had no resource but to force back some of the new thoughts and desires, and these became the subconscious as we now know it. (p. 78)
- We lost our original specific nature, falling from spiritual to merely natural. Human spirit became a mere lodger or even prisoner in its own house. (p. 78)
- God saw the crucifixion in the act of creating the first nebula. (p. 80)
- If there are other rational species than man, existing in some other part of the universe, then it is not necessary to suppose that they also have fallen. We are members of a fallen species. (p. 81)
- Man, as a species, spoiled himself, and good must mean remedial or corrective good. (p. 85)

Chapter 6 – Human Pain

- The possibility of pain is inherent in a world where souls can meet. (See Chapter Two) (p. 86)
- Men, not God, produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets and bombs; it is by human avarice and stupidity that we have poverty and overwork. But there is much suffering that cannot be traced to ourselves. (p. 86)
- The word "pain" has two senses – the faint ache in my limbs after a brisk workout, and any experience, physical or mental, which a patient dislikes. (p. 87) Pain in the second sense – suffering, anguish, tribulation, adversity, trouble – raises the question of the problem of pain. (p. 88)
- When we surrender ourselves to our Creator, we are good and happy. Our problem is how to recover this self-surrender, which we have lost. (p. 88)
- To render back our will is a grievous pain. It is inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation. That this process cannot be without pain is witnessed by the history of the word 'mortification.' (p. 89)
- The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it. Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil, and every man knows something is wrong when he is being hurt. (p. 90)
- God shouts in our pain; it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. (p. 91)
- There is a universal human feeling that bad men ought to suffer. Some would like to banish all conception of retribution from their theory of punishment and see its value wholly in deterrence or reform, but that makes all punishment unjust. (Avoids the matter that it is deserved.) (pp. 91-92)
- Revenge is evil and forbidden to Christians. It loses sight of the end in the means, but it does want the evil of the bad man to be to him what it is to everyone else. (p. 92)
- Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he either rebels or makes an attempt at adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion. (p. 93)
- Pain plants the flag of truth with the fortress of a rebel soul. (p. 94)
- Pain also shatters the illusion that what we have is our own and is enough for us. (p. 94)

- God may really be right when he thinks that ‘deserving’ people’s modest prosperity and the happiness of their children are not enough to make them blessed, that all of this must fall away from them, and if they have not learned to know him they will be wretched. And therefore he troubles them. (p. 95)
- The life to themselves and their families stands between them and the recognition of their need; He makes that life less sweet to them. (p. 95)
- It is hardly complimentary to God that we should choose him as an alternative to hell; yet even this he accepts. (p. 96)
- The creature’s illusion of self-sufficiency must, for the creature’s sake, be shattered. (p. 96)
- If God would not have us until we came to him from the purest and best motives, who could be saved? (p. 96)
- The illusion of self-sufficiency may be at its strongest in some very honest, kindly and temperate people, and on such people, therefore, misfortune must fall. (p. 96)
- The dangers of apparent self-sufficiency explain why Our Lord regards the vices of the feckless and dissipated so much more leniently than the vices that lead to worldly success. Prostitutes are in no danger of finding their present life so satisfactory that they cannot turn to God: the proud, the avaricious, the self-righteous, are in that danger. (p. 96)
- If the thing we like doing is, in fact, the thing God wants us to do, yet that is not our reason for doing it, it remains a mere happy coincidence ... The full acting out of the self’s surrender to God therefore demands pain. The action, to be perfect, must be done from the pure will to obey, in the absence, or in the teeth, of inclination. (pp. 97-98)
- Lewis believes that God commands certain things because they are right, not that they are right because God commands them. (p. 99)
- He agrees with Aristotle that the better a man is the more he will like what is right; he agrees with Kant in one regard, that there is one right act, that of self-surrender, that can’t be done fully without being unpleasant. (p. 100)
- Such an act may be described as a test of the creature’s return to God; in this sense, our troubles are sent to try us. (p. 100)
- Human will becomes truly creative and truly our own when it is wholly God’s; this is one of the many senses in which he that loses his soul shall find it. (p. 101)
- Suicide is the typical expression of the stoic spirit, and battle of the warrior spirit; martyrdom is the supreme enacting and perfection of Christianity. This great action has been done on our behalf by Christ on Calvary. (p. 102)
- Lewis is not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. He is only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made perfect through suffering is not incredible. He can’t prove it palatable. (p. 105)
- Even if pain itself has no spiritual value, if fear and pity do, then pain would have to exist in order to have things to fear and pity. And that fear and pity help us in our return to obedience and charity is not to be doubted. (p. 106)
- Let God sheathe the sword of pain for a moment, and I behave like a puppy when the hated bath is over – I shake myself as dry as I can and race off to reacquire my comfortable dirtiness. (p. 107)
- If the world is a vale of soul-making, it seems on the whole to be doing its work. (p. 109)
- Christians and Marxists agree – poverty is blessed and yet ought to be removed. (p. 109)