

Dear fellow pilgrims,

Last week we finished up Book I of *Mere Christianity*, "Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe." This opening section derived directly from Lewis's first broadcast talks for the BBC in the darkest days of World War II, and Lewis does a remarkable job in looking at some of the big questions of life, including how did life originate and where did the universe come from and what can we know about reality. We also looked at some of the implications of Book I for us today, especially the need for Christians to model Gospel humility rather than pride as we seek to serve as translators of Gospel Truth to a culture that no longer speaks our language. Having set the stage, we will then move on in Book II to talk about the Christian faith and how it answers many of our most profound questions.

Here is a summary of what we discussed last week in Chapter 5:

Ch. 5: We Have Cause to Be Uneasy

Progress: If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man.

The Evidence: the Universe and the Moral Law (Law of Human Nature)

Our Predicament: If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day, and are not in the least likely to do any better tomorrow, and so our case is hopeless again.

The Key Realisation: It is after you have realised that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk.

In religion, as in war and everything else, comfort is the one thing you cannot get by looking for it. If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth—only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with and, in the end, despair.

IMPLICATIONS

"In a time of uncertainty and questioning it is the responsibility of the Church – and of religious broadcasting as one of its most powerful voices – to declare the truth about God and His relation to men. It has to expound the Christian faith in terms that can be easily understood by ordinary men and women, and to examine the ways in which that faith can be applied to present-day society during these difficult times." –J. Welch to Lewis, early 1941

Definition of Pride (Hubris):

dangerously corrupt selfishness, the putting of one's own desires, urges, wants, and whims before the welfare of other people; irrationally believing that one is essentially and necessarily better, superior, or more important than others, failing to acknowledge the accomplishments of others. Dante's definition of pride was "love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one's neighbour."

Keller, The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: "Up until the twentieth century, traditional cultures (and it is still true of most cultures in the world) always believed that too high a view of yourself was the root cause of evil in the world." However, "our belief today – and it is deeply rooted in everything – is that people misbehave for lack of self-esteem and because they have too low a view of themselves."

The answer according to the Bible is gospel-humility.

Our world is often inoculated against the claims of the Gospel and at a more basic level against logical argument, even from a skilled logician with brilliant analogies like Lewis. However, the power of STORY (metanarrative) can open the most closed heart and mind. The power of BEAUTY and TRANSCENDENCE can also be a means of opening the door. Christians must learn to become TRANSLATORS of spiritual truth, the truth of the Gospel, for a culture that no longer speaks our language.

Here is the link for class on Wednesday, January 20, at 7:15 p.m. ET-please feel free to share the link with any friends who may be interested:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

I look forward to "seeing" you tomorrow in class on Zoom!

Further up and further in,

Brian+

Music link from last week:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCx-Meklym0>

(Lyrics attached below)

Video link to last week's class:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqAVZeADC0M>

Audio link to last week's class:

<https://www.stphilipchurchsc.org/mere-christianity/episode/2021-01-13/episode-9-chapter-5-we-have-cause-to-be-uneasy>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-9-chapter-5-we-have-cause-to-be-uneasy/id1537579476?i=1000505302107>

Adam's Lament

St. Silouan of Athos

Adam, father of all mankind, in paradise knew the sweetness of the love of God; and so when for his sin he was driven forth from the garden of Eden, and was widowed of the love of God, he suffered grievously and lamented with a mighty moan. And the whole desert rang with his lamentations.

His soul was racked as he thought: "I have grieved my beloved Lord." He sorrowed less after paradise and the beauty thereof – he sorrowed that he was bereft of the love of God, which insatiably, at every instant, draws the soul to Him. In the same way the soul which has known God through the Holy Spirit but has afterwards lost grace experiences the torment that Adam suffered. There is an aching and a deep regret in

the soul that has grieved the beloved Lord. Adam pined on earth, and wept bitterly, and the earth was not pleasing to him. He was heartsick for God, and this was his cry:

“My soul wearies for the Lord, and I seek Him in tears. How should I not seek Him? When I was with him my soul was glad and at rest, and the enemy could not come nigh me. But now the spirit of evil has gained power over me, harassing and oppressing my soul, so that I weary for the Lord even unto death, and my spirit strains to God, and there is nought on earth can make me glad. Nor can my soul take comfort in any thing, but longs once more to see the Lord, that her hunger may be appeased. I cannot forget Him for a single moment, and my soul languishes after Him, and from the multitude of my afflictions I lift up my voice and cry: “Have mercy upon me, O God. Have mercy on Thy fallen creature.””

Thus did Adam lament, and tears streamed down his face on to his beard, on to the ground beneath his feet, and the whole desert heard the sound of his moaning. The beasts and the birds were hushed in grief; while Adam wept because peace and love were lost to all men on account of his sin.

Adam knew great grief when he was banished from paradise, but when he saw his son Abel slain by Cain his brother, Adam’s grief was even heavier. His soul was heavy, and he lamented and thought: “Peoples and nations will descend from me, and multiply, and suffering will be their lot, and they will live in enmity and seek to slay one another.”

And his sorrow stretched wide as the sea, and only the soul that has come to know the Lord and the magnitude of His love for us can understand. I, too, have lost grace and call with Adam: “Be merciful unto me, O Lord! Bestow on me the spirit of humility and love.”