

Brandon Redding

Dr. Darci Hill

ENGL 17th Century British Literature

The topic of sin is one that is spread throughout much of literature, but nowhere is it more prevalent than in the works of Seventeenth-Century British authors, particularly Milton, Donne and Bunyan, as well as in the Christian apologetics composed by C.S. Lewis, and especially in the bible itself.

Lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride are the seven touchstones of sin cast upon the world due to the first original sin by Adam in eating of the fruit from the forbidden tree. Many of the aforementioned authors such as Milton and Bunyan interpret the sins in diverse ways, presenting tales that when read on a simply superficial level can be compared to the great Greek adventures and tragedies of heroes such as Odysseus who proceeded them in Homer's *The Odyssey*. When looked at under a theological lens however, characters such as Christian in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Death in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are seen with brand new eyes, and an interpretation that illustrates how sin is the very foundation on which these stories are written.

In writing of sin and its place in the world, these authors take note to include mankind's own role in the destruction which they reap upon themselves, while also highlighting the path toward forgiveness and ultimate redemption as offered by God. While Cain, the firstborn child of Adam and Eve is indeed punished for his act of murder against his brother, he is originally offered salvation by God, but given the choice to lead a worthy life in God's eyes, but he instead chooses to fall prey to sins pitfalls. These tales which utilize sin as both a theme and oftentimes

an actual character do not seek to convince their readers that one path is either right or wrong, but leave the interpretations open to the beholder.

In delving into the topic of sin, it seems obligatory that many literary scholars and critics over the years would delve into these seventeenth century works as a means of justifying arguments in which they agree with the original author, and in some cases, completely deconstructing the ideas placed forth by Milton, Bunyan and Donne. The articles selected for consumption provide thought provoking analysis of many of these authors works, providing commentary on sin's presence throughout these works. While many of the articles allow for the reader to come to many of their own conclusions which match the writer's opinions, some of the other articles will find the reader headed in a completely different direction thought wise than the author. The fact that they force the conversation to be had however is testament to their selection.

White, Jr., Robert B. "Milton's Allegory of Sin and Death: A Comment on Backgrounds" *Modern Philology*, Vol. 70, no. 4, 1973, pp. 337-341, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/436353

Considered the most significant of John Milton's works, the first words of '*Paradise Lost*' state that the main theme of the work will be "man's first disobedience", highlighting the act of Adam and Eve's disobedience towards God in eating from the forbidden tree and Satan's role in the creation of sin.

Presenting two moral paths that can be taken after disobedience, '*Paradise Lost*' details the downward spiral that sin creates, embodied by Satan, and the road to redemption set upon Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are the first humans to disobey God. While Satan's act of defiance can be seen as being out of a hate for God, Adam and Eve's betrayal is seen more tragically, as they doom themselves to be removed from paradise and being subject to the outside

world because of their sin. As such, the root and origination of sin can be traced to Satan. In preying upon Eve's vanity, Satan tempts Eve to eat from the forbidden tree. Because of their eating of the fruit, Adam and Eve are now aware of shame and guilt, and have become more akin to Satan than they are to God.

Because of this first sin, all sin is born and thrust out unto the world, including envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth and wrath. Milton's work, divided originally into ten books, is seen as a way to "justify the ways of God to men," and can be seen as a cautionary tale of the pitfalls that await those who question and choose to defy God, the creator.

Of great debate within Milton's work is the role and intent behind the characters of Satan, Death and Sin within Book 2 of *'Paradise Lost'*. In this book, Milton delves into the origination of Satan and Sin, as viewed by the unholy trinity of Satan, his daughter, Sin, and their offspring, Death. With these characterizations, Milton creates a plethora of scholarly debate as to the origination of the idea that Satan, Sin and Death are personified inversions of God himself.

Robert B. White spends the majority of the introduction to his article, "Milton's Allegory of Sin and Death", trying to disprove theories as to the source of Milton's work on book 2 of *Paradise Lost*. In his words, the author hopes to "show how the search for sources of ever-increasing obscurity has led critics away from what seems to be the most obvious and most readily available model for the episodes involving Satan, Sin and Death, and has in fact prevented a proper understanding of some portions of the poem."

Placing forth as evidence an example of a work frequently cited as the potential source for much of Milton's *'Paradise Lost'*, particularly in regard to the Satan, Sin and Death episode, is the *'Adamo Caduto'* of poet Serafino della Salandra. In Salandra's play, Sin, Guilt and Death

enter at the precise moment that Adam eats of the fruit from the forbidden tree. When Adam inquires about the Sins origin, Sin replies that he is the son of Adam and Eve. Death is the incestuous offspring of himself, Sin and Eve. The author feels this to not be an adequate source for Milton however, as the work is not close to the parallels within *Paradise Lost*, and “neither scene nor characters corresponding to Milton’s allegory of Satan, Sin and Death exist.”

Additionally, the author presents Gower’s *‘Mirour de l’omme’*, a work in which the Devil conceived the maiden Sin, and then, enamored with his own creation, begat Death. While similar in the creation of Death as an unholy union between Sin and Satan, this work too is struck down by the author as a credible source for Milton, as the work itself was not published until 1899, thus making it near impossible that Milton would have ever heard of the work at all.

White does firmly believe that Milton’s work in *‘Paradise Lost’* does correspond between the events and characters in heaven and hell, and that Satan, Sin and Death constitute a parody of sorts of the Holy Trinity, with hell reflecting as an inversion of the Divine Trinity in heaven, as evidenced by the doctrine of the Trinity that was accepted by the Protestant church in England during Milton’s time. This doctrine, which describes the relationships among the three Persons of the Trinity in simple terms, states that The Father-Son relationship is equated to self-knowledge, while the Holy Spirit is generated from those two as an expression of divine self-love. Therefore, White’s belief is that the account in *Paradise Lost* of Satan, Sin and Death can be examined through the eyes of this Holy Trinity view.

The article suggests that there is a general agreement to this belief, using as evidence the phrasing of Sin’s first words as she interposes herself between her father and her son, “O father, what intends thy hand,’ she cried/’ Against thy only son?”, to suggest the Divine Trinity. Satan, corresponds to the First Person, or Father, while Sin, beautiful woman to the waist only, with a

serpent-like lower body corresponds to the son. Sin's child, Death, is to The Holy Spirit, personifying the sin of lust rather than love.

Since Satan was created by God, Milton's belief that Sin is the personification of Satan's pride and disobedience, which was within Satan from his creation, thus led to the first sin, that of Satan thinking himself impaired when created by God. It is through that original sin, that of pride, that Milton believes Satan produced his daughter, Sin, as the personification not of self-knowledge, as the Holy Trinity teaches, but of self-ignorance and the inability to acknowledge and accept the conditions and limitations that were set upon him. Satan's pride leads a creature of God to esteem itself above its creator.

The author makes a valid argument for Milton's beliefs in his article, illustrating continued methods in which the inversion of the Holy Trinity and themes of sin play a primary role within his tale. Satan's incestuous lust for his daughter led to the creation of death. This image of a sexual union between father and daughter further serves as an inversion of the love between Father and Son as portrayed by the Holy Spirit.

The article overall does make a valid argument for the manner in which Milton deduced the unholy trinity that is comprised by his characters. While the evidence placed forth by White is substantial in disproving the belief that Milton was heavily influenced by similar thematic works, it also offers what can be conceived as one of the most valid and thought-provoking assessments of Milton's choice in the characterizing of his characters, and of sin's role within the story as a whole. The article's straightforward interpretation of the Divine Trinity and its inversion within Milton's tale should be of particular interest to anyone looking to seize upon the work as a reflection of sin and its creation and continued influence throughout literary works spanning centuries.

Sproxtton, Judith. “D’Aubigné and Bunyan: The Experience of Sin” *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 3, 1988, pp. 155-165, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004724418801800301>

Judith Sproxtton’s article “*D’Aubigné and Bunyan: The Experience of Sin*” illustrates the ways in which the subject of sin played integral roles in both author’s works. The piece begins with an examination of the differences between the two authors, as Sproxtton seems bewildered by the fact that there exist similarities between D’Aubigné and Bunyan at all based on their cultural differences. D’Aubigné, the child of a wealthy aristocratic family, was subject to a privileged education where by the age of four he was translating Greek, Latin and Hebrew. Bunyan on the other hand was the child of humble roots, who was once quoted as saying “when he married he had neither a dish nor a spoon.” That Bunyan would go on to become one of the most prolific English writers of his time is a testament to the strength of Bunyan’s works.

Though D’Aubigné is viewed as a “bellicose partisan who wrote self-indulgently of blood and carnage”, Bunyan is seen as “a sober non-conformist who wrote Sunday school stories.” Sproxtton believes however that a great deal of comparison between the two authors works can be made, including the prioritizing of Protestant religion within their works and a purposeful dissection of the relationship between man and God, though even their methods in this were quite different. D’Aubigné held a disdain for comparing his works to any other thinkers of the time and declared that “by spiritual criteria alone that the worth of his work will be established.” Bunyan however sought with the purpose of his works to “seek the advance of truth.” Both authors sought to place at personal relationship with God at the heart of their work. As such, an awareness of one’s own sin was seen as the most critical element in establishing such a relationship. Accordingly, only through being conscious of his own sin could man be open to receiving grace.

Juxtaposed to D'Aubigné, Bunyan's recognition of his own sin was a distressing experience, as he felt his sense of sin made him horrified by his own existence. Within Bunyan's works, the author deems it necessary for characters to experience a moment of wretchedness and envelopment of sin before they are deemed capable of beginning the spiritual journey toward a relationship with God. Bunyan relied on images of fear and a desolate atmosphere and pain in order to convey the experience of pain, as the author illustrates that he uses in '*The Pilgrim's Progress*' to describe the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Sproxton goes on to express that neither author chooses to portray sin in a way that is expressive of the desolation of humanity, instead describing their portrayals as "the beginning of a more positive awareness which acknowledged the supremacy of God's will." In *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, a spiritual autobiography published in 1666 while the author was imprisoned for preaching without a license, Bunyan expresses it is only through the words of the scriptures that he is capable of learning how his own sin could be reconciled with God's love. Both authors, according to Sproxton, utilize their dependence on the bible to compensate for the horror of sin. Sproxton utilizes the words of C.S. Lewis to further delve into the method of Bunyan's works regarding sin, with Lewis expressing "(Bunyan) is establishing a spiritual territory in which the forces of right and wrong conflict, focusing, in fact, on the essential features of the inner lives of all men." Bunyan showed how the human condition itself "contains within it the most overwhelming danger and that our lives comprise a fearful struggle against it," namely sin. The theme of Bunyan's works concerned the peril of the individual soul and the sinful world in which we find ourselves in.

Holding the similar view of the overwhelming nature of sin, both authors according to Sproxton, held similar views that only by grace could man be released from the thralls of sin.

However, it was important for man to realize their own sinfulness, and subsequent need for repentance. Though taught through theology to the sinfulness and worthlessness of man, Bunyan takes value in aspects of humanity.

This article completes a satisfactory illustration in of the role that sin plays in the works of John Bunyan and makes the extra effort of detailing the authors juxtaposition in works with similar in tone author D'Aubigné. That each author viewed sin as such an integral aspect towards achieving a meaningful relationship between man and God is significant, as they seem willing to acknowledge that without one, the other seemingly would not exist. Though sin is the very thing that creates a definitive separation between man and God, it is sin that allows man to in fact be human and allow the grace of God's mercy.

Weatherby, Harold L. "Two Images of Mortalitie: Spenser and Original Sin" *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 85, no. 3, 1988, pp. 321-352, JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4174309

Harold Weatherby in his article, '*Two Images of Mortalitie: Spenser and Original Sin*' illustrates how famed English poet, Edmund Spenser, best known for his work entitled *The Faerie Queene*, utilizes a different take when it comes to the articulation of sin's presence amongst mortal men as illustrated by the titular character of Titaness Mutabilitie, who hopes to extend her reign to the heavens themselves. Written by Spenser as man's and Nature's principal adversary, a rebel aspiring to "rule and dominion to herselfe to gaine", she is responsible for social, moral and physical disorder, and is even the cause of death itself.

Weatherby explores the notion that Spenser chooses to defy our expectations, as Mutabilitie is without a doubt a personification of human sin. This is exemplified throughout time as the curse of Adam eating from the forbidden fruit and the devil's own machinations in leading us toward temptation. Spenser however, in all of his stubborn might, goes out of his way

to prevent the mentioning of Sin throughout his work, a notion that Weatherby is keen to delve into. Though some would argue that the mention of “bad” and “wrong” are synonymous with it, and that rebellion is the bare definition of sin, Weatherby elaborates on his belief that we tend to view sin as a condition more so than an actual act, as rebellion would be viewed. The author goes on to elaborate the belief that sin in fact would be seen as the cause of “bad” and “wrong” instead of its equivalent.

Previous authors such as Milton view sin as something in which we are all culpable of due to Adam’s initial sin, and as such, we are punishable by death for the inherited crime. According to the Catholic church, “we are bound to hold to that the first sin of the first man is transmitted to his descendants, by way of origin.” The author believes that Spenser is rejecting a fundamental part of the tradition set forth in the doctrine established.

According to Weatherby, Spenser “violates... our expectations by revising the relationship between sin and death.” Mutabilitie is not an isolated instance of Spenser’s work failing to phrase the word sin, or “original sin” though it blatantly tells tales of such, which is noted as a “remarkable absence in theological poetry written in a milieu in which man’s inherited depravity was a central concern.” Noting one of Spenser’s most central works, *The Faerie Queen*, which the author states possesses little reference to sin and guilt, despite its theological subject matter, the author instead focuses in on one of Spenser’s lesser known works, “Hymne of Heavenly Love”, marking it as one of Spenser’s only unequivocal statements of inherited guilt. Quoting that Christ’s blood flows to “cleans the guilt of that infected cryme,/ Which was enrooted in all fleshly slyme” (HHL, 167-68), the author believes that the lines could not signify anything else other than the traditional conception of inherited sin and guilt.

Weatherby states that contrary to church teaching that Adam's progeny are responsible only for their own sins, and that death, not guilt, is Adam's legacy, Spenser seems of the mindset that inherited death rather than being the wages, is the actual cause of sin. While Weatherby makes many valid arguments towards his beliefs on Spenser and the notion, or notable absence of explicit sin within his works, he takes a very roundabout manner in establishing his belief. Spenser, one of the most acclaimed poets of the time, whose work on '*The Faerie Queen*' is seen as one of the most prominent works delving into the subject of sin and its position within the human experience, Spenser's work has held throughout time a place within the theological examination of the deadly sins and their influence throughout.

Weatherby does an excellent job in detailing the manner in which Spenser goes about introducing the topic of sin throughout his works, allowing the reader to interpret for themselves the true nature of it's depiction. Weatherby seems knowledgeable about his subject matter and the period in which Spenser wrote, making a valid argument for Spenser's choice to present the notion of sin in a different archetype than has previously been portrayed. In doing so, Weatherby opens new readers to the possibility of entering into Spenser's works with a newfound appreciation for the manner in which it is told.

Scott, Alison V. "Toward a Reevaluation of the Bower of Bliss: The Taxonomy of Luxury in Faerie Queene, Book Two" *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, Vol 33 No 2, 2007, pp. 220-251., <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:708577>

Alison V. Scott, author of this piece in her introduction to her subject states candidly that "this article does not speak conclusively about the meaning/s of luxury in Spenser's allegory," instead suggesting that it "suggests the need for '*The Faerie Queene*' - - to be reassessed in relation to the taxonomy and iconography of luxury."

According to the author, the concept of luxury has been defined as lavish, super-abundance and indulgence of that which is costly, and something that adds comfort or pleasure exceeding what is considered necessary in life. Though self-aware of its being suggestive of excess and distinction, Scott sees modern day interpretations of luxury to be devoid of the fear of luxury as sinful and subversive, which was more prevalent in classical culture than in modern day. Spenser brings forth the idea of “wasteful luxury” through the concept of the Bower of Bliss. The bower is a culmination of the delights and temptations that Guyon, the protagonist of Book Two, is forced to conquer in order to complete his mission. Having already survived temptation from Mammon, who tempts him with wealth in the underworld, Guyon is consistently met with temptations of lust and greed.

Scott believes though that in recognizing the expansiveness of the language of luxury and the range of associations of the concept of luxury that were available to Spenser, that the representation of the bower as a dangerously pleasurable place, and not simply as a place that incites lust or idleness. Early Christian writers utilized the notion of luxury as a generalized vice in a series of opposing vices and virtues, carrying the notion of luxury as a social and political vice into the theological discourse of the seven deadly sins, which Scott notes was a movement which mirrored the medieval church’s incorporation of pagan gods within didactic warnings about the consequences of sin. She is not fully convinced however that this is the way in which (sin) is invoked throughout ‘*The Faerie Queene*’.

Throughout the second book of ‘*The Faerie Queen*’, Scott notes, the significance of connections among consumption, luxurious pleasure, and entrapment are pivotal to the instruction to virtue. The author sees luxury in ‘*The Faerie Queene*’ as both a category of things consumed and a process of errant consumption, viewing luxury as a descriptor for sinful

consumption as exhibited in book one's pageant of the deadly sins. Luxury embodies man's fall into sin, as exhibited by gluttony, hoarding and greed, exhibited by Spenser's characters. Scott states that "luxury draws man into the abyss of insatiable and boundless desire that originated with concupiscent desire and therefore with original sin. Gluttony is viewed as an outward example of the body being given over to sin. Because of Adam's original sin, man is vulnerable to all other examples of sin. Such temptation is continuously thrown in Guyon's path, as it is echoed that sin crosses into man's path, threatening to draw him off course. Spenser's previous personification of gluttony in the pageant of deadly sins is tied to the allusion to luxury as well, given that the temptation of taste is associated with consumption and gluttony.

Scott's article, while not adding anything revolutionary to the conversation regarding sin within '*The Faerie Queene*', does do a good job in opening the world of the poem up to those who have not experienced it. Scott seems knowledgeable enough on Spenser and his work to craft an article that is as engaging as it is informative. The notion of luxury and its similarities when compared to greed and sloth is present within works of many authors of this time, and Scott does well within the article in taking a stance on the Christian church of the time.

Glancy, J. Edward. "An Encouragement to Read (Or Reread) John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*" *Knowing and Doing*, Vol 18, no 1, 2018

J. Edward Glancy's article on '*The Pilgrim's Progress*' is a virtual how-to guide as to how best digest the work by John Bunyan which holds a pivotal spot in today's literary world, and deigned a work that leading evangelicals find shaped them and their beliefs, with some such as Leland Ryken, a professor of English at Wheaton College calling it "a Christian classic whose importance is impossible to overstate."

Written by John Bunyan in 1678, *'The Pilgrim's Progress From This World, To What Which Is To Come'* is a Christian allegory that is regarded as one of the most significant works of religious English literature. The work is seen as the first novel written in English and is presented as a dream sequence that is narrated by an omniscient narrator. Glancy describes the work as telling the story of Christian, who journeys from his hometown, The City of Destruction, to the Celestial City, which is also seen as Mount Zion, or heaven. Christian throughout the tale is weighed down by a great burden, the knowledge of sin, which he believes came from reading of a book (the bible). Christian seeks deliverance in order to prevent descending into hell. Glancy is quick to highlight however that the tale is more than just a simple travel story, citing theologian and Pastor, Derek Thomas, who states that *'The Pilgrim's Progress'* is an allegory, the illustrative representation of one thing by another; and in Bunyan's case, he will employ parables and metaphors, and fancies (fantasies), and similitudes in *'The Pilgrim's Progress'* of every sort, and he does this by seeing the Christian life as a journey, a road trip, to the Celestial City, to heaven." Along the journey to heaven, the road is "strewn with all kinds of dangers and temptations and pitfalls," namely sin.

Glancy fancies *'The Pilgrim's Progress'* as a work that can be read and reread time and time again, but acknowledges how it's decline remains in effect due to its difficult nature to read, highlighting both the archaic language, which closely resembles that of the King James Bible, as well as the fact that the taste for allegory is today somewhat out of style. Glancy highlights that there is indeed a right and wrong way to read and interpret the work, citing author Leland Ryken, who wrote a forward to an edition of *'The Pilgrim's Progress'*. Ryken states that "the wrong way (to read and interpret the work) is to slight the literal, physical level of action on the premise that the religious meaning is what really matters. The right way is to abandon ourselves to the

story of qualities of the work and let the second level of understanding grow out of that narrative experience.”

Both authors feel that Bunyan’s work is meant to be read as a travel and adventure story first, and then allow the theological and moral aspects of it emerge as an extra source of enjoyment and enrichment. The chief allegory found in Bunyan’s tale is that of Christian carrying around a great weight which acts as a burden on his way to completing his journey. That great weight, which is clearly seen as being sin, is one of the most critical aspects of the story, one that Glancy seems poised to gloss over to one who would be new to Bunyan’s work. This seems to be the exact opposite of what Glancy states is his purpose in his article.

While Glancy seems intent to introduce a new generation to ‘*The Pilgrim’s Progress*’, in skipping over the fundamentals on which the story was written by Bunyan, he does a disservice both to himself as well as to the audience he seeks to introduce. He does well in introducing the concepts of the work and in explaining the possible reasons one might have in *not* reading it, but does not truly give a satisfactory argument as to why one *should* read the work. As such, Glancy’s article falls short of it’s intended purpose.

Petrik, James M. “In Defense of C.S. Lewis's Analysis of God's Goodness”, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 1994, pp.45-56, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40021238>

C.S. Lewis, one of the most acclaimed novelist, poets, academic and literary critics of his time, spent much of his illustrious career examining theological principles such as the notion of sin, writing what can be seen as Christian apologetics, a brand of Christian theology that aims to present historical, reasoned and evidential bases for Christianity, defending it against objections.

Author James M. Petrik in his article '*In Defense of C.S. Lewis's Analysis of God's Goodness*', articulates the fact that much of C. S. Lewis's work "falls within the philosophy of religion", but that the philosophical community had produces little in the way of philosophically grounded analysis of that work. A noteworthy exception to this that the author brings forth is John Beversluis's '*C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*', a book which Petrik notes "pays Lewis the compliment of taking his work to be serious enough to warrant an extended critique." A touchstone of Beversluis's piece on Lewis was his critique of Lewis's solution to the problem of evil, of which Petrik seeks to offer a reply, specifically to the objections to the analysis of goodness that Lewis undertook in his work, *The Problem of Pain*.

Petrik argues that Lewis is operating within the platonic tradition of believing that the same moral code that is binding upon human beings also is binding to God. While Lewis does maintain that the moral standards for human beings may very well differ from the standards upheld by God, Petrik feels that there could actually be a different set of standards of morality in play all together.

Additionally, a key component in Lewis's attempt to reconcile God's goodness with the existence of suffering is found in his contention that an individual's love for another is consistent with allowing the other to endure suffering that one has the ability to alleviate. The argument that all human beings are fallen and this in need of spiritual and moral healing plays into the reasoning behind why this notion is so carefully illustrated. Lewis in his work sees suffering as a contribution to the redemption of human beings, as well as reminds them of the fact that mankind has at some point turned their backs on God, the ultimate source of their true happiness, through original sin. Suffering is then utilized by God as a reminder that man is not morally or spiritually well. Lewis states "we can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities; and

anyone who has watched gluttons shoveling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains.”

Viewed as Lewis’s ‘shattering thesis’ it is this which the author states Beversluis sought to base his main attack against Lewis’s ideology, by first arguing that “true love does not impose the inordinately severe demands on the beloved that are implied by the intolerable compliment”, and maintaining that Lewis’s shattering thesis “crumbles when one considers the way that suffering is meted out in the world, for there is no clear correlation between the degree to which an individual suffers and his/her level of spiritual development.”

Lewis’s assertion that true love will trade the beloved’s suffering for his/her moral and spiritual well-being leads Petrik to introduce his own belief that Lewis need not subject God to a different moral code in order to argue that the redemptive use of suffering that is permissible for God is not permissible for human beings. The reason that it is viewed as permissible for God to allow suffering is due to the fact that the spiritual and moral development of human beings is a complex thing.

While neither Lewis or Beversluis ever come out and directly state what the main separation between the standards of morality between God and man are, it is clearly asserted to by both authors that this separation is sin, a matter that Petrik does a respectable job in tying together. Petrik details that the main reason that humans have an imperfect grasp of the moral values that are binding upon themselves and God, is because mankind is faced by the temptation of sin, often devolving down it’s destructive path, while God is completely above and unprovoked by such notions. Petrik, along with the two authors seem to share the notion that

this fundamental difference between God and mankind acts as separation between the two and the notion that evil plays a fundamental part in it. Knowing that Lewis himself has stated the belief that pride is the anti-God state, the position in which ego and the self are directly opposed to God, and that pride is considered the father of all sins, it is easy to see how Petrik has come to the conclusions that he has regarding mankind's reaction to sin.

Perry, T. A. "Cain's Sin in Gen. 4:1-7: Oracular Ambiguity and How to Avoid It", *Prooftexts*, Vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 258-275, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/pft.2005.25.3.258>

As the article states, with the unfolding of the Genesis narrative, the Creation story quickly introduces conflicts that human beings must resolve: between husband and wife, humans and God, and humans and nature as they deal with the repercussions of living in a newfound world of sin. At the root of all of these conflicts is sin, namely the original sin of Adam eating from the forbidden fruit. Born into sin, Cain, the first born of Adam and Eve, is believed to be the originator of evil, violence and greed. Author T.A. Perry in their article "*Oracular Ambiguity and How to Avoid It*" articulates the family conflict between brothers, as exemplified by the story of Cain and his brother, Abel.

Perry argues that Cain's jealousy, one of the most fundamental of the seven sins, and which resulted in the murder of his brother, arose from Cain's fear of an upset of fraternal roles and loss of birthright to his brother, Abel, both from their physical father, Adam, as well as their spiritual father. Genesis 4:3-4 states: "Now Cain brought, from the fruits of the ground, an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought from the firstlings of his flock and the fat portions thereof."

Perry states that it is inferred from this text that while each brother wishes to please God with their offering, it is Abel who makes a special effort to do so. The verse continues, “Now the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.” (Gen.4:5) This leads Perry to make the argument that many have, that perhaps God did not care for Cain’s offering, consequently proving in Cain’s mind that the father did not care for the first born this. This presumption is the very thing that leads toward the very temptation that in the end defeats Cain.

The author cites interpreters who point out the distinction between the brothers and their sacrifices, reinforcing the view that God looks to the heart, the person and not the sacrifice, leading to the possible notion that Cain’s offering is indicative of his essential unworthiness. Perry argues that ambiguity intentionally set forth within the bible and placed upon God allows the wicked to “fall into a pit that they themselves have dug.”

Perry’s article starts off strong, articulating the presence of sin and it’s influence of Cain in the murder of his brother, but quickly devolves into a piece that jumps all over the map, and subsequently asks the question if God is simply playing games with mankind and toying with them for his own amusement, even going so far as to suggest that God could be provoking man to sin. While Perry does not outright assume, the notion that God’s complicity is indeed in question.

While a drastic leap to make, as it is certain that the authors intention is not to ask such a question, the fact that it arises amounts to the positions that Perry takes throughout the article. Comparing God to the character of Edmund in King Lear, Perry suggests that God’s rejection of Cain as a person, as well as his gifts, casts a pall of tragedy over the story. God’s assertion that if you act correctly, you will benefit from the preeminence of birth, as abbreviated by Perry, leads

Cain toward the ultimate misinterpretation of what he wishes to hear. Perry asks the question, who killed Abel—Cain or God? The answer is resoundingly Cain, yet Perry makes note of God's testing Cain, thus possibly leaving open to the interpretation of the reader what the true belief of the author is.

Strier, Richard. "Sanctifying the Aristocracy: Devout Humanism in François de Sales, John Donne, and George Herbert", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 69, no. 1, 1989, pp. 36-58, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1204687>

One of the great problems of late medieval and early modern spirituality in Western Europe, as detailed in Richard Strier's article '*Sanctifying the Aristocracy: Devout Humanism in François de Sales, John Donne, and George Herbert*' was that "the religious status of ordinary Christians, of persons living in the world outside of monastic or religious orders." Strier details that many of these problems were created by the increase in wealth, among other things, thus detailing how sin played a role in both the church and mankind's role within it.

Strier's article details how works by renowned seventeenth century writers such as François de Sales, John Donne, and George Herbert focused on these troubles faced by the church. With the introduction of baptism, seen as the essential Christian vow, an attempt was made to break down the barrier between the regular man and those within the church. An argument was also made for there being a religious value in what were considered "worldly" activities. While devout humanism might have been a movement that was determined to show Christianity to be fully possible with the bounds of ordinary life, it too led to a certain elitism that capitalized on the very nature of human nature and the role of sin within it.

While Donne and de Sales had their perceived notions of what a "devout life" would be, Strier turns his attentions to Herbert and his work, '*The Church Porch*' as an example of why such a life may not be possible, as the poem does not offer any notion of a devout life. Instead,

'The Church Porch' is not focused on the love or service of God, but instead is concerned with Christian behavior, namely tithing, church attendance and proper behavior in church. The author's iteration that there is no equivalent in *'The Church Porch'* to earlier ideas presented by Donne of a "divine splendor" or de Sales attempts at transforming sociability into a version of charity. *'The Church Porch'* presents a purely theological interpretation of what Christianity should be, placing no distinction between a wealthy man and a man of lesser means. It is noted however that *The Church Porch* is not meant to be read as a moral counsel, but is simply moral. Strier utilizes the descriptions of Louis Martz when describing the breakdown of *The Church Porch*, categorizing the initial stanzas as regarding "sins related to individual conduct", the middle stanzas as regarding "sins related to social behavior" and later stanzas as related to sins "related to specifically religious duties."

Critics of the poem have made arguments to the placement and perceived importance of each sin within the poem, with lust seen as the least important, and inching closer to those of high importance, including anger, envy and pride. Strier argues that Herbert himself has given no indication to the importance of the placement of the sins, insisting that the "attack on these sins is abrupt and passionate." The author sees the world within *'The Church Porch'* as one in which civil conversation is capable amongst men.

Strier does a quite capable job of opening *'The Church Porch'* specifically to unfamiliar readers who may have previously seen the poem as something unapproachable to them. In opening this window into the world of *'The Church Porch'*, Strier suggests that the reader accepts a world in which persons do not take to heart the sickness or poverty of others. He does a remarkable job in breaking down the poem in laymen's terms, especially in regard to its depiction of sin and the moral complexity of Christianity. The perception of Herbert is one in

which he “transcended the disingenuousness with regard to wealth and worldly position”, to which his works attest to, and provide a great source for those looking to delve further into the use and critique of sin within works of seventeenth century writers.