The Bent Will: A Distorted Good

In his book, Perelandra, C.S. Lewis illuminates what it means to be good and what it means to be evil. He associates good with humanity, obedience, and faith and associates evil with the un-human, disobedience and uncertainty. Lewis uses these dichotomies to demonstrate that good and evil are not opposites, but rather alternates.

What does it mean to be "bent?"

Since Ransom initially cannot communicate the word “bad” in the Old Solar tongue, he uses what he can--“bent” to signify evil. This implies that evil isn’t the opposite of good, but rather, a damaged or “bent” version. Only once is the word “bent” used in this manner in the KJV Bible, which is most likely what Lewis would have referenced in his theological studies. In the book of Hosea, it describes the way the people of Israel have abandoned or grown further from God. “[a]nd my people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him” (King James Bible, Hosea 11.7).

Before the Chronicles, there was a trilogy.

Many readers of C.S. Lewis are unaware that he wrote a science fiction trilogy before he penned the beloved Chronicles of Narnia.

Starting with Out of the Silent Planet and concluding with That Hideous Strength, Lewis’ space trilogy tells of the adventures of Dr. Elwin Ransom, a philologist (likely inspired by friend and colleague Tolkien) as he travels to other worlds.

The series explores the consequences of interplanetary colonization and applies the Christian worldview to the genre of science fiction.

Ransom

His mission is one that is Christ-like, however he is no symbolic representation, like Narnia’s Aslan. Instead, Dr. Ransom is an everyday Christian with an extraterrestrial calling: sacrificing himself for Perelandra by doing battle with the Un-man.

The Un-Man

The Un-Man believes committing crimes and immoral decisions, or disobedience, is what enables progress, and that human progress is the ultimate goal. He wants to save humanity, but in a distorted way. His evil is not presenting the opposite of the truth; it is presenting a dirtied version of it.