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HONS 361 Final Reflection

This semester has certainly given me plenty to reflect on. These are just a few of many take aways that I enjoyed from our exploration and discussion on the Problem of Evil.

The novel that made me think the most and has affected my views the most is Lewis' *The Great Divorce*. Specifically, the exploration of heaven and hell has made me completely rethink the after life. Raised mainly in the Southern Baptist Church, I had previously believed everyone went straight to heaven unless they were diabolical; if they were diabolical then they would go straight to hell, damned for eternity. In reading *The Great Divorce*, I found that the after life is more of a spectrum and the in between area is considered purgatory. That is another thing I had not believed in as a Baptist. I had been told a lot of misconceptions about purgatory with very negative connotations. Yet, in reading more about it and talking with others about their conception of purgatory, it seems like a middle ground that allows us to sort through and recognize our sins to repent and grow closer to God. This idea makes a lot of sense to me, especially considering free will and how God always gives us a choice. With this in mind, and as the novel explores, the ultimate form of hell is annihilation and the ultimate form of heaven is complete unity with God. In short, I had previously known I did not align with the Baptist Church's ideologies, but in reading so much C.S. Lewis this semester I know I cannot continue to subscribe to the Baptist Church's ideologies.

My favorite book we read this semester, but one that did not necessarily affect my spiritual views, is Lewis' *A Grief Observed*. As you likely also experienced, I found it extremely cathartic to read C.S. Lewis' experience in grief. Having experienced various forms of grief in the past, losing my partner has to be my biggest fear in life. So, reading someone like Lewis' inner thoughts and anger with God was comforting as I have also felt that way and know that

feeling will be back again. I especially liked how he let himself be angry with God for awhile until he was able to step back and examine why God might be putting him through this test. In looking at his suffering from the angle of learning from it, Lewis demonstrated how we may not be able to choose what we go through, but we are able to choose how we react and grow from our pain. I will more than likely read it again to help me through whenever I grieve again. I have also already recommended it to a few of my friends that are also in serious relationships because I think they will get a lot out of it. The small size of the book as well as going through Lewis' grief with him as he writes in his stream of consciousness style makes the book extremely easy to read and I think everybody can get something out of it.

To be honest, I learned more from this course than in any other class in a long time. It was extremely refreshing to read and talk about things that I had only really had a platform to speak on with my closest friends. As you half-jokingly mentioned, these were the topics that were keeping me up at night. Overall, I learned a lot and I am eager to read more. With what I did learn, I feel better prepared to defend my beliefs and I hold a lot more complex views on my faith which has strengthened my relationship with God. Thank you so much for that.