

## **Questioning Together: Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral**

Notes & Quotes on Theodicy: Sunday, February 26, 2023

Created and facilitated by the 20's and 30's Group.

Rev. Linzi Stahlecker and Fraser Reach will facilitate the discussion.

*Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.*

To get started: Welcome! Included below are notes and quotes on theodicy, from a variety of faith traditions (including the Episcopal Church). It is meant to be a 'buffet' of resources on the topic- please sample what you are curious about and explore more thoroughly what calls to you.

“A God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved. Suffering and injustice do not affect him.... But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either. So he is also a loveless being.” Source: *Christian Understandings of the Trinity: the Historical Trajectory*, Author: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Quote: Jürgen Moltmann, pp. 200-201.

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Source: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ Edited by John de Gruchy*, p.262. [See link for online text.](#)

“Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget those things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.” Elie Wiesel, Source: *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman, pp. 137-138.

“A great Tibetan teacher of mind training once remarked that one of the mind's most marvelous qualities is that it can be transformed. I have no doubt that those who attempt to transform their minds, overcome their disturbing emotions and achieve a sense of inner peace, will, over a period of time, notice a change in their mental attitudes and responses to people and events.” The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalia Lama of Tibet, Source: <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/compassion-and-human-values/countering-stress-and-depression>

“Some things strike the wise person, such as bodily pain and weakness, the loss of friends and children, and the ruin of his country in war-time, but they will not shake his principles. I do not say that the wise person does not feel these strikes, for we do not ascribe to him the hardness of stone or iron; There is no virtue if one is not conscious of what was endured. What then does he? He receives some blows, but when he has received them he rises above them, heals them, and brings them to an end; The more trivial things he does not even feel, nor does he make use of his accustomed fortitude in the endurance of evil against them, but either takes no notice of them or considers them to deserve to be laughed at.” Seneca, Source: *On the Firmness of the Wise Man, Cited from: The Beginner's Guide to Stoicism, Matthew J. Van Natta*, p. 108.

“I wanted to feel safe in the world. I wanted to feel powerful. And so I focused on what was working in my life, in the ways I was taking power in real-life situations.” Trauma and Abuse Survivor, Source: *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman, p. 288.

“There are such helpers in the world, who rush to save anyone who cries out. Like Mercy itself, they run toward the screaming. And they can’t be bought off. If you were to ask one of those, ‘Why did you come so quickly?’ he or she would say, ‘Because I heard your helplessness.’” Rumi, Source: *the Essential Rumi, translations by Coleman Barks, p. 156.*

“To counter the compelling fantasy of a fast, cathartic cure, the therapist may compare the recovery process to running a marathon. Survivors immediately grasp the complexities of this image. They recognize that recovery, like a marathon, is a test of endurance, requiring long preparation and repetitive practice.” Judith Herman, Source: *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman, p. 252.

### *The Light is Coming*

“Now the light is coming, running like liquid beneath the heavy shadows of night, slipping in from the cracks and crevices of life, restoring the dry and empty places, bringing new life to the barren hope of years long past. Soon the brightness cannot be contained, but spills out, pours out, to surround your heart with love, to bring you alive once more in an old promise fulfilled. Open your eyes and do not be afraid any longer, for now the light is coming- coming quickly, coming to you- and nothing, not even death, will be able to stop it.”

Source: *Ladder to the Light: An Indigenous Elder’s Meditations on Hope and Courage*, Steven Charleston, p.147.

“Divine goodness is not unchanging bliss untouched by pain. It is a completed process of abandonment and rediscovery, estrangement and union, a journey undertaken in love, continued in anguish and completed in exultation.

Human existence is seen, in this context, as part of the divine process of self-realization, which is also a process of reconciliation and estrangement. The process is one wherein all things can be taken up into a final good which can only be precisely what it is because of the whole process that preceded it, and of which we are therefore essential parts.”

From Keith Ward, “God: A Guide For the Perplexed” (One World: London, 2002)

### *Theodicy Definition:*

“A defense of the existence of God despite the presence of evil and suffering in the world. The term was coined by Gottfried W. Leibniz (1646-1716). It is drawn from Greek words meaning God and justice, and it justifies God's omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence in the face of evil. Theodicies often emphasize the importance of human free will and moral responsibility, which allow the possibility of evil through destructive choices. Human virtue can also be understood to have meaning in terms of a choice for virtue despite possible failure and painful consequences-i.e., in the face of and in opposition to real evil. Human moral and spiritual development would be deprived of meaning if moral choices or favorable outcomes were somehow predetermined by God. The reality of free will allows us to choose to accept the offer of God's saving love. This response to the invitation of God's love would be meaningless if it were forced or unfree. Thomas Aquinas has been associated with the free will defense to the

problem of evil. Leibniz believed this world to be the best of all possible worlds and held that evil provides a necessary contrast to disclose beauty and harmony. The term has also been applied to natural theology, which is the knowledge of God that can be attained by human reason.” Source: *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/theodicy/>

Thank you!