

Catholic Worker movement progressed, it was forced to make adjustments from being a grandiose social movement aimed at transforming capitalistic and totalitarian societies to being involved in the ordinary, day-to-day work of attending to the specific needs of the most destitute and abandoned. In response to accusations that tending the dregs of society was mere tokenism, Day spoke of the socially redeeming effect of such efforts. She saw them as responses to the "sacrament of the present moment" and was motivated to continue them through her faith in the little way of St. Thérèse. Thus a sheltered, bourgeois young woman of the nineteenth century became for Day a stalwart model for the radical, socially active Catholic Worker movement of the twentieth century.

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THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- Topic: Incarnation and Human Embodiment
as Ground for Theological Anthropology
Convener: Susan Windley, The University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
Moderator: Ted Ulrich, The Catholic University of America
Presenters: Diane Schneider, St. Mary's University, Winona, Minnesota
Michael Stoeber, The Catholic University of America

Both presentations dealt with the difficult test case of suffering as a problem to human embodiment and spiritual growth. In her paper, "The God of Illness and Wholeness," Schneider argued that a process interpretation of the relationship between God and human being is more adequate to understanding suffering than classical Christian theology. The aim of a process understanding of this relationship is that God is the real source of "becoming possibilities." Through process ontology, she explained that God has a vested interest in the becoming of each human being, and lures humanity to fullness of life and relationship. Evil, on the other hand, is chaos, what happens when actions taken from our free will are not in harmony with God's will. Tragically, this results in suffering and a kind of illness. She closed the paper asking, "how does the process God deal with the suffering of human beings?" In the language of process theology, God works in our "mind-body," feeling and identifying with human suffering. Physical suffering should not be defined as purely evil; human beings should try to take the opportunity to learn from the suffering. Is the suffering rooted in our past? The negativities of our pasts must be challenged; otherwise they continue to drive themselves and are manifest in disharmony and suffering. In these challenges, God lures the suffering mind-body toward transformation. This

transformation is a very different metaphor than the "surrender of the will" to God, and more appropriate to those in physical suffering.

Stoeber's paper, "An Apology for Theodicy: Suffering and Spiritual Transformation," picked up the theme of embodiment and suffering in a more classical manner. His paper defended the practice of theodicy against certain critics (Kenneth Surin, Terrence Tilley, and Grace Jantzen) who advocate its abandonment. He argued it is not the case, as those critics assert, that all themes in theodicy efface the genuineness of the human experience of evil, inhibit imperatives to overcome suffering, and involve assertive declarations which are themselves evil. Stoeber's paper outlined a theodicy of transformative suffering. Suffering might be understood to play a positive role in the redemptive process of spiritual transformation, and thereby begins to reconcile the experience of suffering with a God of infinite power and love. But he also suggested that some suffering is utterly destructive. He argued that an effective theodicy requires speculation upon the possibilities of afterlife healing from destructive suffering, and further opportunities for spiritual transformation. Such speculation neither transforms such suffering into good, nor does it inhibit the Christian imperative to respond compassionately to the suffering of others. This struggle and hope for an effective theodicy is the only fully compassionate stance for a Christian theist to take in response to the suffering of others.

The discussion following the papers was broad and diverse. Observers brought up whether issues of natural and institutional evil worked differently in discussing human nature and theodicy, whether the exact nature of the afterlife was important to the dignity of the suffering, and whether suffering was primarily caused by personal sin in classical and process models. The most extended discussion came when Schneider was asked about her opening comment, a "hanging around the laser printer" experience of being blamed as a theologian for not handling radical suffering. How did she respond? She said that conversation had continued, and that she was adopting a "being-with" stance, choosing her moments to challenge. This began an open discussion on whether we need more than the "God as our empathetic friend" model: does not Jesus' death and perceived "abandonment" or "surrender" on the cross mean something ontologically? God can overcome, not take away, the sting. We finished with a discussion on this tension between human *kenosis* and fulfillment.

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