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Theodicy, Disability, and Fragility: An Attempt to Find Meaning in the Aftermath of Quadriplegia

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Abstract

This article, weighing the implications of theodicy for the experience of disability, first delineates the problem of most theodicies, namely, their focus on primary causation and their failure to attend to secondary causes; the laws of nature inherent to the evolution of life. It then explores various ways Christology and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love can imbue suffering with meaning, and so help people flourish in the context of disability and loss.

Keywords

causation, disability, suffering, theodicy, theological virtues

In the five years since the accident that left me a (C5 incomplete) quadriplegic, I have struggled with the problem of pain; how could a good, loving, and sovereign God have caused or allowed me to have broken my neck?[1] In this article I seek to

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[1] I owe an incalculable debt to the wisdom and counsel of Neil Ormerod. During my seven-month stay in hospital, he visited most weeks, and high on our agenda was the problem of pain. Those hospital-bed conversations provided the stimulus for this article.

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bring my experience of severe injury and disability into dialogue with the insights of philosophical theodicy and theology so as to explore the activity of God at those times when God seems to be either malicious or absent. Given the breadth of material, I cannot presume to do justice to the range of issues and potential solutions that have framed centuries of academic thought on the topic. Instead, I consider the insights of a sample of 21st-century theodicies, weighing their potential contribution to the challenge of suffering and acquired disability. I then outline the importance of the distinction between primary and secondary causation, and highlight the need to face up to the contingency and fragility of human life. Finally, I explore the potential of the cross to create meaning out of the incomprehensibility and horror of suffering and describe ways in which the virtues of faith, hope, and love can translate this meaning into the present-day hardships of life. I do not mount a comprehensive defense of theism but, rather, respond to my struggle to believe in the existence and love of God. I thus follow the modern impulse to set aside abstractions and reflect on particular experiences of suffering in the world, and only thereafter suggest generalizable conclusions.[2]

Pain, Suffering, and Disability

The problem of pain is not about pain per se. Pain is a survival mechanism that functions to show us our limits; this is nowhere more obvious than with a spinal-cord injury, where the absence of the capacity to feel certain pains is itself a danger. The issue, then, is not pain but suffering, which is prolonged hardship (physical, psychological, and social) that serves no meaningful purpose.[3] Eleonore Stump clarifies the purposelessness of suffering by noting its effect on a person's flourishing, which can be understood objectively and subjectively. Objectively, "the good" refers to the flourishing of the physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and relational capacities central to our nature as human beings; suffering is what keeps a person from the "well-being that, without the evil, he could and should have had."[4] Subjectively, a person can also suffer the loss of desires of the heart that are particular to the individual,[5] such as the loss of a love, personal goals, and identity.

Disability is a broad and variable category, thus the nature and extent of suffering it involves is diverse. In this article, I focus primarily on my own experience of acquired disability, although I draw on the broader discipline of disability studies and reference other examples of disability and loss, hoping that the logic of the argument will be relevant to the experience of people with disabilities very different from my own.

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[2] See Mark Stephen Murray Scott, "Theodicy at the Margins: New Trajectories for the Problem of Evil," *Theology Today* 68 (2011) 149–52, at 150.

[3] Cynthia S. W Crysdale and Neil Ormerod, *Creator God, Evolving World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013) 92.

[4] Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012) 8.

[5] Ibid. 11.

Spinal-cord injury is generally presumed to entail the loss of sensation and movement, but it is also the distortion of neurological function. Normal sensation is replaced by permanent neuropathic pain (that feels like burning skin) and arthritic-type aches, and the ability to decide what and when to move is traded for spasm and uncontrolled bladder and bowel activity. It is a catastrophic injury that impacts every aspect of life; the initial terror of finding oneself trapped in bed in ICU is followed by months of hospitalization and years of rehabilitation, which eventually gives way to a stable disability that requires ongoing medical intervention and care; this understandably creates difficulties for family relationships (and sexuality), vocation, and recreation. This process inevitably involves a loss of independence, and so impacts one's sense of self.[6] Thus spinal-cord injury undermines the various capacities that enable a person to flourish, and it inevitably makes impossible the fulfilment of at least some of the heart's desires. The point is not to elicit sympathy or to suggest that life with the injury is meaningless. Indeed, the experience of disability can be simultaneously more difficult and yet better than is generally imagined. Many people, looking from the outside, assume that the paralyzed person would be "better off dead" (attitudes formed by fear and prejudice, "masked by an avowed compassion, contempt cloaking itself in paternalism").[7] But most people with the injury want to live and flourish—even those with high-level quadriplegia.[8] It is also the case that every human life entails the experience of suffering, which is inevitably incomparable, so that one person's burden cannot and should not be weighed against another.

The brute fact is that life begins and ends in dependency—both youth and old age are a form of disability—and at every point in time we are vulnerable to affliction and death.[9] Our vulnerability has two fundamental aspects: first, our fragile bodies (including our brain), and second, our social embeddedness. Like any disability, spinal-cord injury is a medical and social problem. Disability literature often focuses on either one or the other, but both are significant.[10] We suffer our bodies, and we suffer our fitting into society with these bodies; and in the context of suffering the inevitable question arises, Why, God?

In more recent explorations of theodicy, there has been a tendency to reject supposedly intractable, abstract, and theoretical analysis of the problem of pain, and redirect attention to consolation and resistance,[11] highlighting, for example, Jesus' partaking in our experience of "godforsakenness," and the cross as a symbol of resistance to evil.[12] John Swinton, writing from the perspective of disability, argues that the problem with philosophical theodicy is that it asks questions about the character of God that are "simply inappropriate and perhaps even idolatrous"; in relying on human reason rather than on the evidence of the love and power of God revealed in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, theodicy is a mark of faithlessness.[13] Instead, Swinton offers a pastoral theodicy of action and resistance. But while practical responses to suffering are essential, so too is the logical coherence of faith. In my own experience of crisis and ongoing disability, the consolations of faith have been intimately connected to my struggles to make sense of the power, character, and existence of God. Hans Reinders helpfully distinguishes between the practical lament, Why, Lord?, which seeks a pastoral response and the abstract and intellectual treatises of theodicy;[14] but the logic of my article is that the former is supported by the latter, and, conversely, that the best theodicies are compassionate and consoling responses to the hardships of life.

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[6] For an insight into the challenge of adjusting to spinal-cord injury, see Shane Clifton, "Grieving My Broken Body: An Autoethnographic Account of Spinal Cord Injury as an Experience of Grief," *Disability and Rehabilitation* 36 (2014) 1823–29.

[7] Paul K. Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2003) 150.

[8] Katayun Hassanpour et al., "Low Depressive Symptoms in Acute Spinal Cord Injury Compared to Other Neurological Disorders," *Journal of Neurology* 259 (2012) 1142–50.

[9] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001).

[10] Tom Shakespeare, "Nasty, Brutish, and Short? On the Predicament of Disability and Embodiment," in *Disability and the Good Human Life*, ed. Jerome Bickenbach, Franziska Felder, and Barbara Schmitz, Cambridge Disability Law and Policy Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013) 93–112.

Suffering and Sin

Central to the problem of suffering are conceptions of the nature of divine causation. Christian theology has traditionally distinguished between primary and secondary causation; as creator, God is the source, ground, and primary cause of all that exists, including all secondary causes. God imbues creation with its own power; secondary causes are real causes and can be understood in and of themselves (hence, scientific study is self-contained). This autonomous agency (not independence) does not detract from the divine power but, rather, reveals it, since the "perfection of the creature"[15] (its creative causal power) reflects the divine power. The logic of natural theology and the various proofs of the existence of God flow out of this conception of creation, but so does the problem of suffering.[16]

One of the responses to this problem is to distinguish between the will of God in creation and the rejection of that will in the human decision to sin. Augustine in his *Confessions* observed that evil is not caused by the divine will but, on the contrary, is the rejection of that will. In this way evil is understood as privation, as the negation of God.[17] While God is the primary cause of all good secondary causes, God is not the cause of sin, which God explicitly condemns. It is often further argued that all suffering (moral and natural) is a consequence of sin.[18] Peter van Inwagen (who claims to be offering a defense, rather than theodicy—a possible explanation for suffering that may or may not reflect God's actual reason) envisages a time when God took a population of prehuman ancestors and gave them the gift of free will along with preternatural powers to live in harmony with others and protect themselves from wild beasts, disease, and random destructive and natural events.[19] The subsequent choice to abuse the gift of free will (original sin, or the Fall) caused Adam and Eve and their descendants to be separated from God, lose their "paranormal abilities,"[20] and so be subject to suffering.[21]

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[11] See Marius C. Felderhof, "Evil: Theodicy or Resistance?," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 (2004) 397–412.

[12] Felderhof, "Evil."

[13] John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007) 42–43.

[14] Hans S. Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014) 17–21.

[15] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* 3, chap. 69.15, http://dhspriory.org/thomas/ContraGentiles.htm. All URLs cited herein were accessed June 21, 2015.

[16] Neil Ormerod, *A Public God: Natural Theology Reconsidered* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015).

Setting aside for the moment the question of whether this view is coherent,[22] in the context of disability (and any illness), identifying suffering with sin needs to be handled with care. It is true that some suffering, even some permanent disability, is caused by a person's own sin. Often enough, a person's suffering is a consequence of someone else's sin—a drunk driver makes a quadriplegic of an innocent woman walking along the sidewalk. In this case sin is the cause of the disability, but the injured person is still entitled to lament its unfairness: "Why, God, didn't you keep me safe?" One common Reformed/Evangelical response is to highlight the seriousness of universal human sinfulness. D. A. Carson, for example, argues that "plague, congenital birth defects, and many other afflictions," while not a product of specific sin, are nevertheless a consequence of divine wrath against the sin in which we are all complicit.[23] The problem here is not only the implications of this view for the character of God, but that identifying disability with sin is inherently demeaning[24] and suggests that disability is a tragedy needing to be eliminated.[25] Conceiving of disability as tragedy provides theological justification for attitudes of pity and exacerbates practices of healing that can alienate people with disabilities.[26] The point is that talk of disability and sin are best kept separate, unless we are talking about disability as a social phenomenon. The label "sin" serves a vital purpose when it identifies the way people with disabilities are marginalized and disempowered. As Thomas Reynolds, responding to his autistic son's question, Why did God make me this way?, writes, "I am compelled to inquire into the social conditions and theological premises that bring this question to his lips. Perhaps in another family, another society, his condition would be seen as a gift, a strength, and not a liability."[27] The suffering of people with disabilities, then, may indeed result from sin, but this is not the whole story.

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[17] Augustine, *Confessions* 3.12; translation consulted: Henry Chadwick, *Confessions* (New York: Oxford University, 1998) 43.

[18] D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) 40.

[19] Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University, 2008) 86.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Creationists take this logic to its absurd conclusion, arguing that prior to the Fall, "there was no survival of the fittest, . . . both humans and animals were vegetarians"—Tyrannosaurus Rex was a plant eater. See Tommy Mitchell, "Why Does God's Creation Include Death and Suffering," 2008, https://answersingenesis.org/suffering/why-does-gods-creation-include-death-and-suffering.

[22] I think it is not. It adopts a "God of the gaps" approach to the relationship between faith and science that is problematic for both.

[23] Carson, *How Long, O Lord?* 45.

[24] Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2007) 162.

[25] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008) 27–28.

Suffering and Greater Goods

According to Stump, neither Augustine nor Aquinas uses the concept of evil as privation as a theodicy,[28] since God allows, or could prevent, any evil that we commit or that is inflicted upon us.[29] Here she cites Aquinas's explicit observation that "whatever happens on earth, even if it is evil, turns out for the good of the whole world."[30] The question of precisely what this good might be lies at the heart of most philosophical theodicies. Van Inwagen, for example, suggests that suffering is central to God's loving plan to rescue us from the consequences of our sin; that to be reunited with God, "human beings must know what it means to be separated from [God]. And what it means to be separated from God is to live in a world of horrors."[31]

Stump carefully nuances this blunt conclusion. Drawing especially on the theology of Aquinas, she develops her case by exploring the nature of love, which entails the desire for the good of, and union with, the beloved. Love of others requires love of self, which is the desire for one's own good and living with an integrated will (an internal union). Understanding "the good" in terms of human flourishing, which is ultimately to love God and one another, Stump describes the impact of the Fall as being a "willed loneliness" that results from the internal disintegration of the will, and that creates a distance from others and shuts out God.[32] In this light, suffering serves God's justifying grace, by "bringing [one] to surrender to the love of God and, through that surrender, to the act of will in faith constitutive of justification."[33] Suffering allows a person to see his or her shallow and temporal desires for what they are, to long for the greater good, and ultimately to surrender to the loving help of God. Here Stump uses Aquinas's notion of the scale of values, which prioritizes some goods over others, with the highest goods being relational—love of God and of neighbor.

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[26] Shane Clifton, "The Dark Side of Prayer for Healing: Toward a Theology of Well-Being," *Pneuma* 37.3 (2014) 204–25.

[27] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion* 33.

[28] Although this reading of Aquinas is subject to debate—see Agustín Echavarría, "Thomas Aquinas and the Modern and Contemporary Debate on Evil," *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013) 733–54.

[29] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* 384.

[30] Aquinas on Romans 8:6, cited in Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* 385.

[31] Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil* 88.

[32] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* 156.

[33] Ibid. 396.

Michael Stoeber comes to a similar conclusion, drawing on the spiritual tradition to identify the contribution of suffering to spiritual transformation, compassion, and empathy.[34] He notes, for example, that suffering is capable of moving people away from self-interest and sensitizing them to the needs of others.[35] He also sets out the importance of the suffering of Christ, which is more than a mere remembrance but is a creatively reconstructed symbol of solidarity and compassion made possible through sacramental practice and the experience of the Spirit. In this context one's own suffering is never forgotten, but is "transmuted into an ongoing active concern for others."[36]

One final example comes from Marilyn McCord Adams, who focuses her theodicy on horrendous evils, which she defines as "evils the participation in which (that is, the doing and suffering of which) constitutes prima facie reason to doubt whether the participant's life could (given their inclusion in it) be a great good to him/her on the whole."[37] These evils would include the rape, torture, and murder of women and children, the accidental running over of an infant son, a degrading death by cancer, and so forth.[38] In response to these horrors, she develops both an aesthetic conception of suffering—noting that victims and perpetrators of evil suffer seemingly irreversible degradation into the subhuman[39]—and an aesthetic theodicy,[40] which finds that even horrendous evil can offer a unique vision of God that can facilitate a divine embrace and thus deep beauty.[41] As with Stoeber, Adams constructs theodicy in conjunction with Christology, emphasizing Christ's sharing in our degradation and our sharing in his.[42] Given the horrendous nature of some evils, Adams also emphasizes the necessity of the afterlife, especially in that she understands death itself as a horror. It is only in the resurrection and renewal of every life—Adams insists on universal salvation[43]—that a balancing of horrors is possible. In the glories of the afterlife, all the horrors (and joys) of life are invested with meaning.[44] Because this is so, Adams claims that our eventual postmortem beatific intimacy with God will confer a new vantage point, in which victims of horrors will recognize even the worst of their experiences "as points of identification with the crucified God, and not wish them away from their life histories."[45] In fact, the importance of belief in an afterlife for theodicy is emphasized by each of the authors mentioned previously. As Stump observes, without reference to the afterlife, the paradox of suffering cannot be resolved. It would be like trying to understand "the pattern of suffering in a hospital without reference to life outside the hospital."[46]

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[34] Michael Stoeber, *Reclaiming Theodicy: Reflections on Suffering, Compassion, and Spiritual Transformation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[35] Ibid. 28.

[36] Ibid. 53.

[37] Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2000) 26.

[38] Ibid. 26–28.

[39] Ibid. 106–7.

[40] Philip Tallon, *The Poetics of Evil: Toward an Aesthetic Theodicy* (New York: Oxford University, 2011).

[41] Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* 161–62.

[42] Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (New York: Cambridge University, 2006).

[43] Ibid. 51.

[44] Ibid. 205–41.

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive response to these samplings of 21st-century theodicy. What I can do, though, is reflect on their potential to provide insight into my personal experiences and, more generally, their implications for the struggles involved with disability. I should note that I am reluctant to equate my own experience to the type of horrendous evils described by Adams, although, as I have already said, every experience of suffering is incomparable, and the losses I have had to deal with have at least caused me to question life's value.[47] In this light, it was a surprise to me to meet high-level quadriplegics who claim that if they could have their life over, they would not change a thing; that disability has enriched their life in multiple ways.[48] The possibility of this enrichment is borne out in research into the well-being of people with spinal-cord injury. While quality of life is negatively impacted by the injury,[49] studies show that many people eventually discover that their disability is a catalyst for self-discovery; that it can deepen family relationships, help and encourage others, become a source for new meaning in life,[50] and encourage spiritual growth.[51] In my short time of living with quadriplegia, I have experienced staggering generosity, heartfelt compassion, courageous determination, and exemplary care. I have been enveloped in the sort of love described by Stump, as people have *walked* with me in and through difficult times. And in my darkest hours, I have sometimes found comfort in the presence of the Spirit and resilience in the power of hope—a resurrection dance outside the constraints of my bed and wheelchair.

Many in the deaf community and others with any number of different types of disability understand their seeming impairment as a gift;[52] and more broadly, it can be argued that disability enriches society. Almost every human virtue arises as a response to hardship, so that the virtues of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22–23)—are potently manifest in communities enriched by people with disabilities. In terms of faith, people with disabilities have unique opportunities to learn about grace (if only through having to frequently extend it to others), to appreciate that God's judgment about them matters more than the (pre)judgments of others, and to know that God's love is not dependent upon stature or success—even though they do contribute substantially to communal life.[53] As Jean Vanier, founder of l'Arche communities, observes, "People with disabilities have profound lessons to teach us. When we do include them, they add richly to our lives and immensely to our world,"[54] not because disability provides able-bodied people the opportunity to be charitable, or because people with disabilities are especially virtuous, but because virtue is best worked out in the midst of the vulnerabilities of life. Reynolds similarly observes:

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[45] Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* 167.

[46] Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* 420.

[47] Clifton, "Grieving My Broken Body."

[48] See, e.g., my eulogy, "In Honour of John Trefry (2 February 1941–14 August 2013) pt.1," http://shaneclifton.com/2013/08/19/in-honour-of-john-trefry-2-february-1941-14-august-2013-pt-1.

[49] R. N. Barker et al., "The Relationship between Quality of Life and Disability across the Lifespan for People with Spinal Cord Injury," *Spinal Cord* 47 (2009) 149–55.

[50] Terri A. deRoon-Cassini et al., "Psychological Well-Being after Spinal Cord Injury: Perception of Loss and Meaning Making," *Rehabilitation Psychology* 54 (2009) 306–14.

[51] Eleanor Weitzner et al., "Getting On with Life: Positive Experiences of Living with a Spinal Cord Injury," *Qualitative Health Research* 21 (2011) 1455–68; deRoon-Cassini et al., "Psychological Well-Being after Spinal Cord Injury"; Irmo Marini and Noreen M. Glover-Graf, "Religiosity and Spirituality among Persons with Spinal Cord Injury: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices," *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin* 54 (2011) 82–92.

[52] N Levy, "Deafness, Culture, and Choice," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 28 (2002) 284–85.

> Living out our interdependency is a source of genuine good. It entails caring for others—represented by a range of disabilities—as essential not only to our own flourishing but also to the common good of the communities in which we flourish. Human solidarity is not found inside the cult of normalcy, but rather in sharing space and welcoming each other vis-à-vis a condition of vulnerability.[55]

Reflecting upon the various ways to conceive of the good that might come from suffering has provided me with resources for imagining ways of transcending my losses and pains. But that good can come from disability does not necessarily justify its troubles or excuse God. Disability does not always lead people closer to God or elicit personal and communal growth, and it is as capable of degrading a person as it is of elevating her. The danger of arguments for the greater good, including those that defer resolution to the afterlife, is that they can trivialize both disability and evil. It is vital that we never lose sight of what is at stake in theodicy—that suffering can be unfathomably terrible (to be fair, Stump, Stoeber, and Adams cannot be accused of doing so). This was brought home to me by correspondence I received from a friend:

> I don't think God is good. I suffered abuse from a Christian minister father and God didn't rescue me; I had to rescue myself. My daughter suffers cerebral palsy and no matter how many thousands of people prayed nothing changed. The recent death of my brother-in-law from cancer was one in thirty-nine cases recorded in the world since 1968. He was a good man. All these things force me to conclude there is no method, reason or consequence

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[53] This insight is from personal correspondence with Rob Nichols of CBM, an organization that works to improve the lives of people with disabilities in the poorest places in the world.

[54] Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2008) 45.

[55] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion* 118.

> because there is no cosmic justice on this earth. If God professes to be just, then how could he endorse things that are unjust?[56]

As Andrew Gleeson notes, the problem of greater-good theodicies is that it is indecent to "acquire goods at the expense of the victims of evil."[57] A good paid for with the price of an abused child is corrupted, and no amount of postmortem compensation or retrospective consent is enough.[58] In fact we should never consent to evil. Thus far I have made no distinction between so-called moral and natural evil, since theodicies generally recognize the horror of all types of suffering, and since both are seemingly allowed by God. The distinction is important, however, because it is one thing to embrace our vulnerability and another thing altogether to accept and justify evil. As Ormerod observes, because evil is privation—the human decision not to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty—it is the absence of meaning and goodness, unintelligible, and so it defies comprehension. "And what is unintelligible cannot be understood, even by God."[59] Consequently, to suggest that God permits evil for a subsequent greater good—as each of the theodicies discussed seems to do—becomes an implicit justification of evil when "in fact, God repudiates evil; God forbids evil."[60]

It is sometimes assumed that free will, which is central to our ability to love and be loved, is itself the greater good that makes suffering of the evil that follows worthwhile.[61] But that assumption mistakes a human capacity for the good to which that capacity is intended. Free will does not justify evil but, since it is central to our identity, it does explain its existence. Without free will we would not be who we are. As Ormerod puts it, "To repudiate the conditions from which we have emerged is to repudiate our own existence."[62] Whether the fact of evil is sufficient reason to deny the existence of God will then be a matter of perspective. Ormerod cites Lonergan, who contends that

> without faith, without the eye of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognizes that God grants men their freedom, that he wills them to be persons and not just his automata, that he calls them to the higher authenticity that overcomes evil with good.[63]

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[56] Personal correspondence, April 8, 2015.

[57] Andrew Gleeson, *A Frightening Love: Recasting the Problem of Evil* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 5.

[58] Ibid. 51–57.

[59] Ormerod, *A Public God* 167.

[60] Ibid. 166.

[61] See Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973); Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University, 1998).

[62] Ormerod, *A Public God* 166.

[63] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1972) 117.

Fragility and Vulnerability

Of course, the problem of suffering is not limited to the consequences of sin, but is inherent to the very nature of the creation itself.[64] My quadriplegia, for example, is the product of dumb luck, and the constitution of the human neurological system and spine. I broke my neck and destroyed my nervous system because I landed badly when jumping a bicycle—an admittedly regrettable decision, but not a sinful one. My friend's daughter was born with cerebral palsy, one of the many risks of childbirth, and his brother's cancer has its origin in processes of genetic mutation that have shaped the evolution of life.[65]

One of the problems with all the theodicies reviewed earlier is that they focus almost exclusively on primary causation, paying almost no attention to the "perfections" (the creative and causal power) of secondary causes. Reinders, for example, suggests that "the distinction between primary and secondary causation does not explain anything at all,"[66] but in my view, Reinders's mistake is that he focuses on primary causation without adequately reflecting on secondary causation and its implications. He ignores the fact that nature has its own reasons for the flow of events, and our fragility and vulnerability go hand in hand with creaturely existence in a material universe.

The focus on secondary causation raises the question as to whether it makes sense for a theist to explain disability and illness as being a product of natural contingency. Discussing a theistic interpretation of the theory of evolution, Crysdale and Ormerod draw on both Aquinas and Lonergan to assert that "what God wills to happen through the unfolding of chance, will occur through the unfolding of chance."[67] This assertion is not a capitulation to metaphysical mystery (as tends to occur in Reformed conceptions of providence that see God as the primary cause of good and evil acts, but as not responsible for the latter), but recognizes that creation in its totality is contingent upon the will of God. Indeed, God transcends time and space, and God's will grounds the totality of the universe's past, present, and future, establishing and foreknowing its laws, including the laws of chance apparent in natural processes such as evolution and quantum physics, and in the contingency that frames everyday life. The key point is that contingency, both good and bad, is real and yet also encompassed by the divine will.

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[64] Van Inwagen argues that "natural evil, according to the expanded free-will defense, is a special case of evil that is caused by the abuse of free will; the fact that human beings are subject to destruction by earthquakes is a consequence of an aboriginal abuse of free will" (*Problem of Evil* 91). To arrive at this conclusion he envisages a point in evolutionary history when primates reached the point of achieving free will, but before the Fall—at which time they possessed "preternatural powers" that enabled them to live in perfect love and protect themselves from wild beasts, disease, and destructive natural events (ibid. 86). I find this argument unconvincing.

[65] Matias Casás-Selves and James DeGregori, "How Cancer Shapes Evolution, and How Evolution Shapes Cancer," *Evolution* 4 (2011) 624–34.

[66] Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics* 188.

[67] Crysdale and Ormerod, *Creator God, Evolving World* 45. See also Neil Ormerod, "Chance and Necessity, Providence and God," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70 (2005) 263–78.

This insight has been especially important to me. In response to the question, Why me, God?, I have come to the view that the only reasonable answer is that injuries such as mine are a part of what it is to be a creature of the earth. In the midst of the experience of suffering, the search for a deeper explanation will inevitably fall short, since it is difficult to see how the challenge of quadriplegia (or cerebral palsy, or any disability or ongoing experience of suffering, loss, and grief) can be imagined to be worth the subsequent benefits that might accrue, however many they might be. I am a quadriplegic, because to be human is to be subject to the vulnerabilities of finite life. It is this contingent finitude, inherent to the cycles of cosmic and quantum physics and the evolutionary processes of biological life and death, that gives rise to the wonders of creation, including the emergence of the human species in general and my personal consciousness in particular. And if I can recognize the goodness of God in creating and sustaining the laws and processes of nature, might it also be possible for me to trust the gracious providence of God in the midst of the suffering that results from the way things are—in my case, the misfortune to have broken my neck? If I were to frame this problem in terms of the greater good, then it is not what is achieved by suffering that tips the scales; it is the wonder of life itself that is worth the suffering that accompanies it.

It is sometimes argued that God could have created things differently, setting up a universe without pain, suffering, and death. But whether or not that is possible (and how could we know?), it would be a universe without the glories of the one we live in, without the beauty of the earth, without humanity, and without our own personal consciousness, since these are all products of the laws of physics and evolutionary biology that have made things the way they are. To wish for a universe without suffering is thus to wish away our own existence; and as Gleeson observes, “There is an absurdity in putting an end to human life to spare us the suffering it involves.”[68]

One problem of modern society, even with all its medical and technological wonders, is its implicit demand that we should live forever in perfect health. We keep our dead and dying out of sight; we abort babies that do not match our ideals of normalcy; we worship photo-shopped images of beauty; and in consequence, suffering, disability, and fragility come as a complete and utter shock. We just do not know what to do with them. In reality, however, there is no theological reason to assume that we should be immune to the consequences of biological existence.

Jesus: Making Meaning out of Suffering

Thus far I have defined suffering as ongoing and meaningless pain that undermines our physical, psychological, social, and spiritual flourishing and destroys the desires of the heart. I have outlined various ways of thinking about why a sovereign and loving God causes or allows such suffering. In exploring the significance of sin, I have reviewed some theodicies that suggest suffering serves a higher purpose. While each of these provides occasional insight into the suffering that often accompanies disability, I concluded that the only adequate explanation is the fragility and vulnerability inherent to biological existence. Human physical and intellectual capacities have evolved in the struggle for survival, so to wish for an end to free choice (and its attendant evil), natural hardships, and horrors is to wish for an end to the human species and the beauty of life on earth. Even so, might Christians have anything more constructive to say about suffering than this stoic and potentially passive response?

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[68] Gleeson, *A Frightening Love* 105.

Above, I defined suffering as ongoing and meaningless pain, which suggests that the answer to the problem of pain might be found in the pursuit of meaning. In this light, Christian theodicies generally draw on Christology as the source of meaning, focusing particularly on Jesus' sharing in and transformation of the experience of suffering.[69] In *Christ and Horrors*, for example, Adams sets out a thoroughgoing christological theodicy. Describing the life and ministry of Jesus, she identifies his healings, natural miracles (such as walking on water), and resurrection as "down-payments on and signal of divine power and intention to follow through with horror defeat" (cosmic re-creation).[70] For Adams, Jesus' story provides us with hope, and ends "the power of matter to ruin personal meaning"; in healing, Jesus reverses horrors; on the cross he is in solidarity with our suffering, sharing the horrors; and in the resurrection he promises the complete defeat of horror, including the universal horror of death.[71]

Notwithstanding the centrality of Christology to Christian theodicy, Adams and Stoeber ignore the more ambiguous elements of the gospel stories. Writing from the perspective of disability, Nancy Eiesland challenges her readers to face up to the conflation of disability and sin in both the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. She notes, for example, that the Gospels suggest a causal relationship between sin and impairment.[72] It is certainly the case that the healing powers of Jesus are central to the gospel story, which reports that "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Lk 7:22 NIV). In terms of theodicy and the fact of permanent disability and terminal suffering, a hermeneutic of suspicion will problematize Jesus' healing the paralytic by forgiving his sins, question his performing an exorcism on a person that seems to be mentally ill, challenge the assumptions behind the reference to the opening of blind eyes as a metaphor for salvation, and so forth.[73] In my own case, as I lie trapped in bed at night after five years of prayer, I cannot help but wonder, did Jesus really heal the paralytic and walk on water? In my church context, these questions come close to blasphemy, but in the context of suffering, such piety is put in its place.

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[69] E.g., Stoeber, *Reclaiming Theodicy* chap. 3.

[70] Adams, *Christ and Horrors* 71–72.

[71] Ibid. 207–11.

[72] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) 71–72.

[73] Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) chap. 3.

Still, these same stories can be read from the perspective of liberation, as being first and foremost about Jesus' compassion for and embrace of those who suffer illness and social exclusion. The Gospel stories serve to establish a basis of hope for those trapped in intractable suffering; indeed, by locating oneself in these narratives, Jesus' encounters of various impairments take on new significance. The compassionate and welcoming meaning of the gospel is most fully established in Luke 14, where the kingdom of God is likened to a banquet in which the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—normally outcasts—are invited as guests to the eschatological banquet.

The cross is especially important for theodicy. Eiesland recognizes the disabled God in the broken body of Jesus:

> I saw God in a sip-puff wheelchair, that is, the chair used mostly by quadriplegics [depending on the level of injury] enabling them to maneuver by blowing and sucking on a strawlike device. Not an omnipotent, self-sufficient God, but neither a pitiable, suffering servant. In this moment, I beheld God as a survivor, unpitying and forthright.[74]

Here Eisland follows a long tradition of identifying the crucified Jesus with marginalized people: the black Jesus, the female Jesus, and now the disabled Jesus. If we move beyond identification to theological conceptions of the atonement—such as satisfaction and penal theories of the atonement—it is the action of God that is normally in view. What is too seldom emphasized is the fact that the crucifixion is first of all an experience of contingent evil and human fragility. That the Messiah is crucified, after proclaiming a message of healing, liberty, peace, and reconciliation, is utterly incomprehensible.[75] In the face of the injustice and horror of the crucifixion, we understand the urgency of Jesus' prayer, "Take this cup from me," and the soulful depth of his final cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" As Jürgen Moltmann has emphasized,[76] we should not move too quickly past Jesus' form of the question, "Why me, God?," or the silence that constitutes the Father's response.

Within the logic of this article, there is analogical significance in thinking about the cross in terms of the distinction between primary and secondary causation. On the one hand, the crucifixion of Jesus cannot be explained, other than to say that he experienced the blunt end of human finitude (and evil). We miss the point if we think there is something unique about his suffering and death—as though the pain he experienced was of a magnitude different from countless others who have been crucified, tortured, or subject to the innumerable types of suffering that go hand in hand with life on earth. We also miss the point if we declare that God crucified Jesus; indeed, since his crucifixion is evil, it has no substantive cause and no explanation. Still, we can say that

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[74] Eiesland, *Disabled God* 89. See Yong, *Bible, Disability, and the Church* chap. 5.

[75] See Peter Laughlin, *Jesus and the Cross: Necessity, Meaning, and Atonement*, foreword Neil Ormerod (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014) 83.

[76] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

God's providence encompassed the cross, a faith fact made clear by God's creating meaning out of the unintelligibility of the cross event.[77] The disciples—and the risen Jesus—experienced this meaningfulness retrospectively. In the midst of suffering there is no meaning to be had—no adequate explanation. Only on looking back does it become apparent that God, in his providential grace, has imbued the cross with meaning.

The meaning of the cross is complex and multifaceted. Lonergan provides helpful insight into how the cross transforms evil into good and meaninglessness into meaning. As to the predicament to which the cross is a response, Lonergan describes the problem of evil in terms similar to those set out earlier. That is to say, God wills the good, but sin has consequences: the deprivation of the good; evil (and its attendant suffering) is the penalty of sin. As the incarnate Son, Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God, the defeat of evil, the overcoming of poverty, captivity, and sickness—a message most fully embodied on the cross where Jesus offers satisfaction for human sin. But satisfaction is not to be understood as divine retribution inflicted on the Son. Rather, it is the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice of the Son and Jesus' choice to submit to evil and transform it into a good. And this is the key point: the cross is a symbol of transformation because the evil done to Jesus is not reciprocated but answered with love and forgiveness. Furthermore, resurrection follows Christ's self-sacrifice: a vindication of his message of love and a promise that suffering is not the end of the story.[78]

So the cross has the potential to transform evil into good, but is it of relevance to the broader problem of suffering—to the pain, sickness, disability, and ultimately death that is an inherent part of life? The case can be made that the gospel of Jesus has always been about more than sin. The incarnation is a celebration of life in all its wondrous fragility; and the cross and resurrection challenge the idea that the cycle of life and death is meaningless—nothing more than blind, cold-hearted chance. Further, the Gospel narrative invites imitation: not a masochistic embrace of suffering, but the deliberate choice to work for the defeat of evil and the minimization of suffering, whatever its cause. For the disciples, the hopelessness and godforsakenness that accompanied the grief of the persecution and death of Jesus—and that was part and parcel of Jewish life under the brutal Roman occupation—was replaced by a new sense of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3). This did not eliminate suffering (was the thorn in Paul's flesh a disability?),[79] but it did give meaning to life and enabled the Christian community to flourish.

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[77] See Laughlin, *Jesus and the Cross* 33.

[78] See Bernard J. F Lonergan, "The Redemption," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, Collected Words of Bernard Lonergan 6, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 3–28; and Mark T. Miller, "Imitating Christ's Cross: Lonergan and Girard on How and Why," *Heythrop Journal* 54 (2013) 859–79.

[79] Yong, *Bible, Disability, and the Church*, Kindle loc. 1142.

Suffering and the Theological Virtues

If the incarnation, cross, and resurrection are capable of transforming suffering by actively creating meaning out of meaninglessness and horror, this transformation is instantiated in the present by faith, hope, and love. These are described by Aquinas as the theological virtues, because they are gifts of grace infused by God, enhancing the human capacity by transforming and enriching the intellectual and moral virtues that enable a person to flourish over the course of the ups and downs of life.[80] Throughout this article I have focused on primary and secondary causation and their implications for theodicy, with particular emphasis on the latter. In terms of transforming meaningless suffering—in making a go of life in the struggle with disability and impairment—the theological virtues become the bridge between God's action and our own, since God works not principally by supernatural intervention, but through cooperative grace, empowering us to have faith, hope, and love. But what does this have to do with theodicy?

Beginning with faith, defined in Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen," we are confronted with the fact that the problem of suffering leads to the potential emergence of doubt. In contemporary church circles, the embrace of doubt and uncertainty has become fashionable,[81] but the experience of doubt in the midst of suffering is no small matter. I am sometimes asked whether the accident and its aftermath have changed my theology, a question that is difficult to answer, largely because I have worked out my theological positions through many years of study. This question has, however, confronted me with the question of whether God exists at all. When you are trapped in bed, staring at the ceiling and unable to move, the line between "Why me, God?" and "Am I praying to myself?" is thin indeed.

In the face of intractable suffering, how does one persist with faith and, equally important, why bother doing so? An initial answer to both questions is that faith is as much a gift as a choice, an idea that again relies on the distinction between primary and secondary causation. Aquinas differentiates between the proofs of God's existence—the products of intellectual virtue—and faith in the existence of God, a gift pertaining to both the intellect and the will. Faith is a virtue, a habit both of mind that pursues the truth found fully in God, and of the will that hungers for the good and so is oriented to God as the ultimate good. Faith is not opposed to reason, but transcends and illuminates it.[82] Of course, Aquinas wrote in an era in which the existence of God was largely taken for granted, and for him, suffering did not undermine faith but, rather, sharpened and directed it, reordering a person's priorities so that she is focused on God rather than on material and temporal pleasures.

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[80] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) 1–2, q. 62. See also Joseph Wawrykow, "The Theological Virtues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University, 2012) 287–307.

[81] Brian D. McLaren, *Finding Faith: A Self-Discovery Guide for Your Spiritual Quest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999) 201.

[82] See Aquinas *ST* 2–2, qq. 1–8; and Eleanor Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003) 361–68.

But does Aquinas's treatment of faith still make sense? Earlier, I cited Lonergan and his argument that "without faith, without the eye of love, the world is too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist."[83] Arguments for the existence of God that are grounded in the intelligibility and beauty of the natural world are offset by the hardship of earthly existence. Theodicies such as those I outlined are intended to help make sense of this conundrum, but without faith they remain ambiguous. However, even with faith this ambiguity persists. While living with a disability I have been unable to regain my once-held certitude that Aquinas associates with faith.[84] I have struggled to know whether I have experienced or simply longed for "God's love poured into my heart through the Holy Spirit" (cf. Rom 5:5). That longing is grounded in the hope that we live in a friendly universe, one in which the effort to address individual and social hardship matters. In any event, faith, even faith as uncertain as my own, provides motivation to resist the *paralyzing* despair that threatens to cause us to give up when pain and trouble become overwhelming. And even uncertain faith, if it is a longing for the good, is still ultimately faith in God.[85]

The difficulty of faith is concerned not just with God's existence but with God's continued work in the world. The question "Why, God?" is shorthand for "Why, God, don't you intervene?" The theological challenge of disability is its permanence and God's failure to respond to countless desperate prayers for healing. In "The Dark Side of Prayer for Healing" I criticized Pentecostal/charismatic theology and practices that focus on miraculous physical healings. Instead, I argued for an understanding of well-being that seeks the flourishing of people with a disability, and that is able to hold together the fact of suffering and the possibility of the good life.[86] Indeed, so-called "supernatural" physical healing is no answer to the problem of pain—not only is it extremely rare (and inherently unsubstantiable); it is also inevitably arbitrary. Until there is no suffering in the world, theodicy remains. Yet, while prioritizing prayer for physical healing is a distortion of faith, denying the presence and activity of God in the world (for example, by the practical atheism of Deism) eliminates faith altogether. Catholic and Orthodox practices of sacramental healing provide a more balanced and nuanced conceptualization, since they seek to mediate the presence and grace of God in the midst of suffering and in the face of death, and stress "efficacious wholeness rather than focusing solely on physical cure."[87] That is to say, faith, expressed and built up through prayer, looks to God to infuse life with a meaning that embraces and transcends its hardships.

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[83] Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 117.

[84] Aquinas *ST 2–2.* q. 4, a. 8.

[85] See Stump, *Wandering in Darkness* 163.

[86] Clifton, "Dark Side of Prayer for Healing."

[87] Lizette Larson-Miller, "Healing: Sacrament or Prayer?," *Anglican Theological Review* 88 (2006) 361–74, at 370.

Faith gives birth to hope. This is vital in the case of spinal-cord injury (and any acquired disability or permanent form of suffering), which, by its very nature, has the potential to lead to hopelessness. Wide-ranging evidence now available shows that hopeful individuals tend to be more resilient, more likely to establish and achieve goals, have better psychological health, and have a greater overall well-being and life satisfaction than those who tend toward pessimism.[88] Interestingly, the grounds of hope can be wide-ranging (e.g., past experience, religious teaching, technological advancements, etc.) and more or less substantive. Studies have found that even unrealistic hope (such as for miraculous healing) actually helps people cope, at least in the early stages of recovery.[89] The theological virtue of hope, though, has a longer-term capacity, since it looks beyond the vicissitudes of daily life, and grounds hopefulness in the character and promises of God. It is more than mere wishful thinking, because it makes a difference to life here and now. As Benedict XVI noted in his encyclical *Spes salvi*, "Faith draws the future into the present, so that it is no longer simply a 'not yet.' The fact that this future exists changes the present; the present is touched by the future reality, and thus the things of the future spill over into those of the present."[90] Theodicies that concentrate on the afterlife as the means of rectifying present horrors go awry if they merely look to the future. Hope's real power is that it transforms the present.

While the theological virtue of hope in God can be unlimited—is anything impossible for God?—in application to living with a disability, it exists in the mean between naive optimism and nihilistic despair. Thus hope enables a person to be realistic about their situation—knowing that fragility and hardship are always companions to the joys of life—but not defined by it. Hope transcends the limits of dependency, paralysis, and a wheelchair; the virtue reaches for a future that defies the constraints of the present.

Finally, this transformation is possible only because of the theological virtue of love—of self, others, and God. The problem of pain raises questions about the love of God, since the cry "Why me, God?" might equally be framed, "Don't you love me, God?" Again, God's love is mediated through secondary causes. I spoke earlier about the possibility of retrospectively imbuing suffering with meaning. Only love makes this a possibility. In this light, the meaning of my spinal-cord injury is found in the constant love of my wife and children, in the ways my parents put their life on hold to care for my family, in the hospital-bed conversations with close friends, in the wisdom and compassion of doctors, in the attentiveness of nurses, and in the encouragement of occupational therapists and physiotherapists. I return this love when all these people experience the joy of my rehabilitation (a process facilitated by faith and hope), when

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[88] Cindy L. Buchanan and Shane J. Lopez, "Understanding Hope in Individuals with Disabilities," in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability*, ed. Michael L. Wehmeyer (New York: Oxford University, 2013) 154–65.

[89] Pat Dorsett, "The Importance of Hope in Coping with Severe Acquired Disability," *Australian Social Work* 63 (2010) 83–102.

[90] Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi* (2007) no. 7, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html.

I respond to their felicitation with gratitude, and when *I* encourage *them* not to lose hope. Over the long run, and even in the face of permanent disability, continued pain, and the loss of many of my heart's desires, it will nevertheless be possible for me to contribute to others in both small and substantive ways, and so to live a life of meaning, transforming the problem of pain into a narrative of the goodness of God.

Conclusion

In this article I have reflected on the potential contribution of theodicy to the experiences of suffering that accompany a disability; conversely I have suggested that disability provides insight into the adequacy of the answers provided by theodicy. The problem of pain asks the question, Why does God cause or allow us to suffer prolonged hardship that serves no meaningful purpose and that keeps us from flourishing? In the first half of the article I considered common theodicies, concluding that sin is part (but not all) of the explanation and the value found in the various personal, social, and spiritual goods that can result from disability and loss. But I also considered that the horrors of suffering can be diminished by greater-good arguments. I then made the case that the problem with most theodicies is that they focus on primary causation, without reference to secondary causation—to the laws of nature and the evolutionary and biological processes that are inextricably connected to the beauty and horror of life. I have taken the view that God works not principally by supernatural intervention but in and through natural processes. In this light, the answer to the question, Why, God, did you allow me to break my neck?, is that I am human, and so subject to the vulnerabilities and contingencies that make me human. This seemingly stoic position raises the question as to whether Christian faith has anything more to contribute, in response to which I described some of the ways the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus can imbue suffering with meaning, or create meaning out of meaninglessness. Finally, I concluded that the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love bring together primary and secondary causation—God's activity and our own—and so help us work toward our own flourishing, as well as the flourishing of others.

It seems appropriate to finish this article by returning to the legitimate complaints of my friend who had experienced abuse, disability, and grief. I hope that it is not glib to suggest that I can perceive God's grace at work in the life of his family, even while understanding why he concludes that there is no cosmic justice, and God is not good. Certainly, there is no justification for the abuse he suffered. It was not allowed by God; nor does it serve any purpose. Yet the evil done to him by his father is transformed (but never forgotten) by his choice to walk the difficult road of forgiveness (following the example of Jesus and empowered by the grace of the Spirit), and therein to learn a very different way to be a loving father to his own children.[91] Likewise, the death of his brother-in-law to cancer, while explainable in terms of the biological cycle of life and death, is not explained by some imagined greater good. But his suffering was given significance by the resolute love and care of his family and friends over the long period of travail until his passing, sharing in grief, and hoping for reunion in the life to come. Lastly, while it might seem impossible to fathom how God could allow the horrors and hardships of his daughters' cerebral palsy, the beauty of her smile and delightful sound of her laughter shows us all how wondrous this terrible life can be.

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[91] Jay McNeill, *Growing Sideways* (Melbourne: self-published on Amazon Kindle, 2011).

Author biography

Shane Clifton received his PhD from Australian Catholic University and is associate professor and Dean of Theology at Alphacrucis College in Sydney. He is coauthor, with Neil Ormerod, of *Globalisation and the Mission of the Church* (2009) and editor of *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*. In October 2010 Clifton had an accident while riding a bicycle that left him a quadriplegic. He has written about his experiences in his memoir, *Husbands Should Not Break* (2015).