

The Problem of Evil Course Outline

What exactly is the problem? *Unde malum?* (whence evil?) was a common refrain in classical writings, but evils only become a problem - give rise to an argument - when there are beliefs about the world with which they seem to conflict. The existence of a benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent God is one such belief. The quantity and kinds of evils (perhaps even the very existence of evils at all) seem to fly in the face of the central claims of theism. Charles Darwin did not lose his faith because of his theories of evolution, but because of the problem of theodicy - the vindication of the justice of God especially in ordaining or permitting natural or moral evil.

This fall, Adult Christian Formation at Ascension will explore one of the oldest and most fundamental concerns of human existence. Since ancient times, questions surrounding evil have preoccupied every major religion, as well as many of history's greatest secular thinkers, from early philosophers to contemporary social theorists. As Terry Tilly said, "The modern age is the age of distance: the first epoch in which impotence and suffering are not the taken-for-granted and normal state of affairs for human beings." We don't promise answers but we do promise faithful engagement in spirited (and Spirit-filled) discussion. Please join us Sunday Mornings at 8:30 AM in the undercroft, beginning September 10.

Session 1 - Lisbon, November 1, 1755

Chapter 1, "The Shaking of the Foundations," from *What Shall We Say?*

The Problem of Evil, "Introduction: Responding to Evils" and Chapter 34, Voltaire, "The Lisbon Earthquake."

"The New Problem of Evil," *Evil and the Justice of God*, N.T. Wright.

Inter Varsity Press, 2006.

Session 2 - Evil and the ancient Greeks

The Problem of Evil, chapter 2, Lucretius, "On the Nature of the Universe;"
chapter 4, Seneca, "On Providence" (in *Moral Essays*)
chapter 5, Epictetus, "Encheiridion"

Session 3 - Evil in Hebrew Scripture

Genesis 3:1-24
The Fall
Handout Enuma Elish

Genesis 4:2-17
Cain and Abel

Genesis 11:1-9
Tower of Babel

Genesis 22:1-19
The Binding of Isaac

Job 1:1-2:10

What Shall We Say? "Interlude - Howl: Job and the Whirlwind"

The Major Prophets

Isaiah 9:13-21; 24:1-13

Jeremiah 4:11-31; 12:1-13

Ezekiel 7

The Minor Prophets

Amos 3:1-8;

Joel 1:1-18;

Hosea 13:9-14;

Zechariah 13:7-9

Session 4 - Evil in the New Testament and early church

Mark

Jesus temptation: Mark 1:12-13

gathering swine in Mark 5:6-16

Matthew 25: 41 the devil and his angels
exorcisms

Luke disciples saw Satan fall like lightning Luke 10:18

And, coming final battle apocrypha;
Mark 13; Matthew 24:15-31; Luke 21:7-28

Paul (and the need for original depravity)
Ephesians 6: 10-18
Romans 10:8ff, 5:7-19;
1 Corinthians 15:17-27

Revelation

Session 5 - Irenaeus, Augustine, and Aquinas

The Problem of Evil, chapter 6, "Irenaeus, Against Heretics"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 10, "Augustine, City of God"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 16, "Aquinas, Summa Theologica"

Session 6 - The Renaissance, the Enlightenment

The Problem of Evil, Chapter 18, Meister Eckhart, Blessed are the poor in spirit

The Problem of Evil, chapter 26, "Milton, Paradise Lost"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 22, "Luther, Prefaces..."

The Problem of Evil, chapter 23, "Calvin, The Institutes of Christian Religion"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 24, "Donne, Batter my heart, three-personed God"

Session 7 - Evil in the 19th and 20th Century

The Problem of Evil, chapter 47, "Nietzsche On the Genealogy of Morality"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 44, "Charles Darwin to Asa Gray"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 42, "Emerson, The Tragic"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 46, "Dostoyevsky, Brothers Karamazov"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 51, "W.E.B DuBois, A Litany at Atlanta"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 57, "C.S. Lewis, Animal Pain"

The Problem of Evil, chapter 61, "Karl Barth, God and Nothingness"

Session 8 – Evil in the 21st Century

“An enemy hath done this.” *A Ray of Darkness*, Rowan Williams, Cowley Publications, Cambridge, MA, 1995.