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Resilience

Growing Stronger Through Struggle

SEPTEMBER 21 & 22, 2017

The Table
CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

5:00	REGISTRATION (HAQQ PLAZA COURTYARD)
6:00	NIGHT 1 WELCOME (ANDREWS BANQUET ROOM)
6:05-7:10	TIM MUELHOFF / MIGUEL DE LA TORRE / KELLY KAPIC
7:10-7:20	BREAK
7:20-9:00	ERANDA JAYAWICKREME / J. KAMERON CARTER / ELEONORE STUMP
9:00-10:00	JAZZ RECEPTION (HAQQ PLAZA COURTYARD)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

5:00	REGISTRATION (HAQQ PLAZA COURTYARD)
6:00	NIGHT 2 WELCOME (ANDREWS BANQUET ROOM)
6:05-7:10	ELIZABETH HALL / JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS / JESSICA HOOTEN WILSON
7:10-7:20	BREAK
7:20-8:30	STACEY FLOYD-THOMAS / MIROSLAV VOLF
8:30-8:35	TRANSITION TO BREAKOUT SESSIONS
8:35-9:20	BREAKOUT SESSIONS
1	THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUFFERING AND POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH ELIZABETH HALL AND ERANDA JAYAWICKREME (TALBOT EAST 007)
2	THEOLOGY AND HOPE KELLY KAPIC AND MIGUEL DE LA TORRE (TALBOT EAST 008)
3	FLOURISHING IN, BEYOND, & THROUGH SUFFERING STACEY FLOYD-THOMAS & MIROSLAV VOLF (ANDREWS BANQUET RM)
4.	NARRATIVE & THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING JESSICA HOOTEN WILSON & ELEONORE STUMP (TALBOT EAST 107)
5	COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUFFERING & POST-RACIAL BLUES JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS, TIM MEUHLHOFF, & J. KAMERON CARTER (TALBOT EAST 108)
9:20-10:00	JAZZ RECEPTION (HAQQ PLAZA COURTYARD)

* ALSO SEE MAP AND LOCATION INFORMATION ON PAGES 2 & 3.

Resilience

Growing Stronger Through Struggle

LOCATIONS

REFER TO NUMBERED MAP AT RIGHT

REGISTRATION / RECEPTION AREA:

TALBOT EAST, HAQQ PLAZA COURTYARD (45)

MORNING INTRODUCTIONS // INVOCATIONS:

ANDREWS BANQUET ROOM, LOWER LEVEL, TALBOT EAST (45)

MAIN SESSIONS / KEYNOTE TALKS:

ANDREWS BANQUET ROOM, LOWER LEVEL, TALBOT EAST (45)

BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

ALL LOCATED IN TALBOT EAST (45)

TALBOT EAST 007, 008, 107, 108, AND ANDREWS BANQUET ROOM

ON CAMPUS COFFEE/DINING:

THE TALON—SOUTH END OF BUSINESS BUILDING (50)

HERITAGE CAFE—AT LIBRARY ENTRANCE (37)

COMMON GROUNDS & EAGLE'S NEST (26)

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CLOSEST BATHROOMS:

LOWER LEVEL AND LEVEL 1, TALBOT EAST (45)

CLOSEST PARKING:

LOT A, LOT D, & STREET PARKING ON BIOLA AVE.



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

5:00PM // REGISTRATION

6:00PM // NIGHT 1 WELCOME & CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION

6:05PM—7:10PM // MAIN SESSION 1

TIM MEUHLHOFF

Scorching Words: Conversations that Cause Us to Suffer

Utilizing vivid metaphors, the ancient writers of the book of Proverbs strive to describe the devastating power of words. “Reckless words” are presented as a “piercing sword” (12:18). A word, spoken in the wrong way, can “break a bone” (25:15). A person’s spirit is easily crushed by a deceitful tongue (15:4). The intensity of a person’s speech is like a “scorching fire” (16:27). Tragically, negative words can even separate close friends (16:28). Those of us who have experienced scorching words directed at us understand the emotional, psychological, and physical suffering that follows. Once wounded, how can we control negative self-talk and a desire to get even? Is it possible, as the Scripture’s suggest, to offer a blessing for a curse?

Tim Muehlhoff is a professor of communication at Biola University where he teaches classes in conflict resolution, gender, and family communication. His most recent book is Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World.

MIGUEL DE LA TORRE

Struggle and Hopelessness: Responding to Oppression and Embracing Hopelessness

For marginalized communities, the struggle for justice can be hopeless. To offer illusionary hope as the means of growing stronger through the struggle all too often maintains oppressive structures. The presentation struggles with a God who at times seems mute, demanding solidarity in the midst of adversity. The presentation also attempts to explore faith-based responses to unending injustices by embracing the reality of hopelessness; rejecting the pontifications of some salvation history which move the faithful toward an eschatological promise which, when looking back at history, makes sense of all Christian-led brutalities, mayhem, and carnage. The paper concludes with a term I have coined in other books: an ethics “para joder”—an ethics that “screws with.” When all is hopeless, when neoliberalism has won, when there exists no chance of establishing justice, the only choice left for the oppressed is to “screw” with the structure, turning over the bankers’ tables at the temple. We struggle regardless of hopelessness because the struggle defines our humanity.

Miguel A. De La Torre is Professor of Social Ethics and Latinx Studies at the Iliff School of Theology. He has served as president of the Society of Christian Ethics, has authored over a hundred articles and published thirty-one books (five of which won national awards), and wrote the screenplay for the international award winning documentary Trails of Hope and Terror.

KELLY KAPIC

Can I Get a Witness: Our Pain and God's Presence

Suffering comes in different forms, but however it comes those who experience it need to have room for both lament and hope. So how do we help one another without denying or belittling the genuine pain of our sisters and brothers? In our brief time together we will consider the practice of bearing witness which allows us to be honest about genuine suffering while also creating space to see God's presence and power in the midst of our questions, struggles, and grief.

Kelly M. Kapic is professor of theological studies at Covenant College, where he has taught since 2001. He is author of Embodied Hope: A Theological Mediation on Pain and Suffering, Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice, A Little Book for New Theologians, and Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in John Owen's Theology.

7:10PM—7:20PM // 10 MINUTE BREAK

7:20PM—9:00PM // MAIN SESSION 2

ERANDA JAYAWICKREME

Making Sense of Suffering: The Psychology of Post-Traumatic Growth

How are we to make sense of suffering in this world? Are despair and ill-being the only outcomes we can expect following tragedy and trauma? Or can enduring significant failure and adversity change your character in truly meaningful ways? Many people's intuition on the question suggests that perhaps yes, our character could be strengthened. This intuition was shared by St. Paul, who wrote that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5: 3-5). Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche's maxim "What does not destroy me, makes me stronger" has become ubiquitous in popular culture. We also admire people who have overcome adversity in achieving laudable goals, such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. What does current psychology research say about this question? Can we trust it? And what insights can we take from this work that can help us successfully address the problem of suffering?

Eranda Jayawickreme is an assistant professor of psychology at Wake Forest University. He is currently the Project Co-Leader of the Pathways to Character Project, a \$3.4 million initiative funded by the John Templeton Foundation examining the possibilities for the strengthening of character following adversity, challenge or failure.

J. KAMERON CARTER

Post-Racial Blues (On Charlottesville, Resilience, Suffering)

Those tremors that you feel are the ongoing reverberations of social events spanning from Trayvon Martin to Sandra Bland, from Michael Brown to Philando Castile, from Ferguson and Charleston to Charlottesville, VA, indeed, from the Middle Passage to the Auction Block. Each and all the effects of white melancholy, such events are but evidence of a theological sickness that's produced misery and suffering (even for white let alone non-white people). This misery is America's and Christianity's "post-racial blues." In this talk, we are interested in this suffering and misery, in the bruising and the bruises, in being black and blue, in the bruised blues, on the one hand. But on the other, and even more so, we are interested in the bass notes that resonate through the very tremors of suffering. These bass notes of insubordination are an alternative tradition of the sacred that is marked by endurance, resilience, and faithfulness performed in and as black malpractice. Nothing less than a poetic reclamation and inhabitation of the earth, black malpractice is the north star towards an otherwise Christianity, towards maybe an otherwise America, towards the alternative—a world of the otherwise in the face of the suffering and misery that yet issues from a racialized world. A compilation of unfinished (because unfinishable) notes, I offer here a meditation on that black sacred malpractice that moves in the break and in the wake of America's and Christianity's post-racial blues.

J. Kameron Carter is Associate Professor of Theology, English, and African American Studies at Duke Divinity School. Working in black studies (African American and African Diaspora studies), using theological and religious studies concepts, critical theory, and increasingly poetry in doing so. Driving his work are questions pertaining to the theory and practice of blackness, indeed, of blackness as an alternate "pedagogy of the sacred" that the black church (at its best) expresses. He is author of Race: A Theological Account appeared in 2008. He has two books near completion: God's Property: Blackness and the Problem of Sovereignty and Post-Racial Blues: Religion and the Twenty-First Century Color Line.

ELEONORE STUMP

Heartbrokenness and the Problem of Suffering: The Story of Mary of Bethany

Mary of Bethany is an exemplar of a person who suffers heartbreak, if the New Testament story of the raising of Lazarus—in which she and her sister Martha figure largely—is understood in a certain way. This lecture focuses on the problem of suffering in connection with the desires of the heart and heartbreak. It shows the way in which, in the narrative, suffering is redeemed in second-personal relationship.

Eleonore Stump is the Robert J. Henle Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University, where she has taught since 1992. She is also Honorary Professor at Wuban University and at the Logos Institute, St. Andrews, and she is a Professorial Fellow at Australian Catholic University. She has published extensively in philosophy of religion, contemporary metaphysics, and medieval philosophy. Her books include her major study Aquinas (Routledge, 2003) and her extensive treatment of the problem of evil, Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering (Oxford, 2010). She has given the Gifford Lectures (Aberdeen, 2003), the Wilde lectures (Oxford, 2006), the Stewart lectures (Princeton, 2009), and the Stanton lectures (Cambridge, 2018).

9:00PM—10:00PM // JAZZ RECEPTION & REFRESHMENTS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

5:00PM // REGISTRATION

6:00PM // NIGHT 2 WELCOME

6:05PM—7:10PM // MAIN SESSION 3

ELIZABETH HALL

Suffering in God's Presence: The Role of Lament in Transformation

Lament is an ancient Christian practice modeled for us by Jesus. Its purpose is to assist us to reconstruct meaning when suffering leaves us disoriented. Drawing on the psychological literature on stress-related growth, I show how the structure of the psalms of lament facilitates the process of growth through meaning-making. The trajectory of lament involves a psychological move from distress to praise, and from disorientation to new orientation. The outcome of lament—the meaning that is achieved—is not primarily rational or propositional, but instead is anchored in the intimate, dialogical relationship with God.

Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Ph.D. is Professor at Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University, where she teaches clinical and integration courses. Her research focuses on meaning-making in suffering, women's issues in the evangelical subculture, and the integration of psychology and theology. Dr. Hall is Associate Editor of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. She was recently awarded the 2016 Narramore Award for Excellence in the Integration of Theology and Psychology by the Christian Association for Psychological Studies.

JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS

The Pain of Being Your Own Worst Enemy: Race, Religion, and the Spiritual Crisis of White Supremacy in Contemporary America

In the 1990s, a neo-Nazi skinhead named Leo Felton was involved in a failed domestic terrorist plot intended to provoke a "racial holy war." The police investigation and subsequent arrest of Felton revealed a surprising and uniquely painful personal story that exposes the complicated and perplexing relationship of race, racism, and religion in contemporary America. In the wake of the recent tragedy in Charlottesville, VA and its terrible

aftermath, Felton's story enables us to examine how the vicious brand of white supremacy espoused by the growing coalition of neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and far right extremists known as the "alt-Right" poses a pervasive and potentially destructive spiritual crisis threatening both the church and society. By examining how the trauma and suffering produced by white supremacy ravages both white and non-white people alike, this presentation offers insights into developing the resistance and resiliency necessary to disrupt and ultimately dismantle white supremacy in our time.

*Juan Floyd-Thomas is Associate Professor of African American Religious History at Vanderbilt Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion. He is author of *Origins of Black Humanism* (2008) and *Liberating Black Church History* (2014) as well as co-author of *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (2007) and *Altars Where We Worship* (2016)*

JESSICA HOOTEN WILSON

Flannery O'Connor and the Call to Suffering

During her years as a graduate student at the Iowa Workshop, Flannery O'Connor kept a prayer journal in which she shared with God her concerns over her mediocre faith and her ambition to write. Through these prayers, scripture reading, and theological study, O'Connor began to fear that the only way to become both a saint and a great author would be a path of suffering. She prays, "It is hard to want to suffer; I presume Grace is necessary for the want." For many Christians, the idea of wanting suffering sounds masochistic. Yet, O'Connor shows through her fiction and her own life story that suffering may be a call by Grace.

*Jessica Hooten Wilson is an associate professor of literature at John Brown University and is the author of *Giving the Devil his Due: Flannery O'Connor and The Brothers Karamazov*, *Walker Percy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and the Search for Influence*, and *A Guide to Walker Percy's Novels*. Currently, she is preparing *Flannery O'Connor's unfinished novel Why Do the Heathen Rage?* for publication.*

7:10PM—7:20PM // 10 MINUTE BREAK

7:20PM—8:30PM // MAIN SESSION 4

STACEY FLOYD-THOMAS

That We May Dare to Suffer: The Moral Muster and Theological Urgency of Human Flourishing

Suffering is the conscious laden experience of realizing that we exist in the realm of the already and the not yet. Nowhere is that clearer than in the formation of American aspirations for the good life, or what we may now call "human flourishing." Since the time of chattel slavery, there have been two underlying principles that have maintained the moral muster and theological urgency of human flourishing while simultaneously creating the gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of our times: white hate and black hope. This paper argues that

suffering—as a theological reality and warring virtue and vice—has its moral reasoning rooted in the manifestation of hate and hope in America across racial lines. We will briefly explore the connectedness of suffering to the racialized reasoning of American Christianity (as evidenced in what Martin Luther King, Jr. called “11 o’clock on Sundays, our most segregated hour of the week”) and how we can be empowered to work to dismantle its structural roots. Ultimately, I will chart the possibilities and offer a challenge that calls the descendants of white privilege and the inheritors of Black persecution into an unknown community in a way in which sacred rhetoric or political correctness are not enough but only truly responding with our actions can we reconcile and resurrect that which has troubled our souls and compromised our lives as people of faith in America.

Stacey Floyd-Thomas is E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Associate Professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. She works at the intersection of ethics, feminist/womanist studies, Black Church studies, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies with an overall approach to the study of Christian social ethics that engages broad questions of moral agency, cultural memory, ethical responsibility and social justice. And she is co-author, with Juan Floyd-Thomas and Mark Toulouse, of Altars Where We Worship: The Religious Significance of American Culture.

MIROSLAV VOLF

Vanquishing Suffering: Apostle Paul and the Victory Over Suffering

Except for the unknown writer of the book of Job, no other biblical author has written more about suffering than the Apostle Paul. Theological wrestling with the problem of suffering must therefore begin with Paul, and do so by placing Paul into conversation with Job. Surprisingly, studies of Paul’s theology of suffering are rare; even rarer are attempts to relate Paul to Job. In this lecture, I hope to make a small step toward remedying the lack. I will sketch some elements of Paul’s theology of suffering and, where it proves fruitful, compare and contrast his take on suffering with that of the book of Job.

Miroslav Volf is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School and the Founding Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. He is author of many books, including Exclusion and Embrace, urging that if the healing word of the gospel is to be heard today, Christian theology must find ways of speaking that address the problem of hatred of the other; After Our Likeness, in which he explores the Trinitarian nature of ecclesial community; Allah: A Christian Response, on whether Muslims and Christians have a common God; and A Public Faith: On How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good. His latest book, published last year, is Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World.

8:30PM—8:35PM // TRANSITION TO BREAKOUT SESSIONS

8:35PM—9:20PM // BREAKOUT SESSION WORKSHOPS

Select one breakout session to attend from the five options below. These sessions will start with a few minutes of brief comments by the speakers to provide context for the session, followed by questions and discussion.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Talbot East 007

**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUFFERING AND POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH:
ELIZABETH HALL & ERANDA JAYAWICKREME**

Talbot East 008

THEOLOGY AND HOPE: KELLY KAPIC & MIGUEL DE LA TORRE

Andrews Banquet Room

**FLOURISHING IN, BEYOND, AND THROUGH SUFFERING:
STACEY FLOYD-THOMAS & MIROSLAV VOLF**

Talbot East 107

**NARRATIVE & THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING:
JESSICA HOOTEN WILSON & ELEONORE STUMP**

Talbot East 108

**COMMUNICATING ABOUT SUFFERING & POST-RACIAL BLUES:
JUAN FLOYD-THOMAS, TIM MEUHLHOFF, & J. KAMERON CARTER**

9:20PM—10:00PM // JAZZ RECEPTION & REFRESHMENTS

CONFERENCE LITURGY

Throughout the conference, we will practice a simple form of Christian liturgy (which means “the work of the people”) for the sake of reflection, meditation, and prayer—and with the hope that we might be transformed by the renewing of our minds, through the work of our lives and words, in action and in character. This will include scripture, prayers, and poetry—all included here to frame and re-frame our perspective as we listen to a flow of educational talks exploring big ideas. We want these ideas to shape and form us at our most inward being and to be reflected in our every action. *Italicized words* are spoken by all.

ONE

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

Confession

Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*

Dear friends, let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

*Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our
own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to
have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to
have done.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those who confess their faults,
restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind*

*in Christ Jesus our Lord;
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy Name.*

Amen.

An Invocation: Veni Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit,
and send forth from heaven
the stream of your light.
Come, Father of the poor,
come, Giver of gifts,
come, Light of the heart.

Best of comforters,
sweet guest of the soul,
sweet healer,
rest in hardship,
cool in stifling heat,
solace in sorrow,

O most blessed light,
fill the inmost hearts
of those who trust in you.
Apart from you
we are nothing,
and everything is toxic.

Wash what is filthy;
water what is dry;

heal what is unhealthy;
soften what is unyielding;
enflame what is cold;
govern what is bent.

To those who trust in you,
who put their confidence in you,
give your sevenfold gifts.
Give the merit of virtue;
give salvation in the final hour;
give unending joy.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

TWO

“Prayer”—A Poem by Christian Wiman

Christian Wiman, “Prayer” (2014)

For all
the pain

passed down
the genes

or latent
in the very grain

of being;
for the lordless

mornings,
the smear

of spirit
words intuit

and inter;
for all

the nightfall
neverness

inking
into me

even now,
my prayer

is that a mind
blurred

by anxiety
or despair

might find
here

a trace
of peace.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THREE

A Poem Adapted for Prayers of the People

Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*

For the peace from above, for the loving-kindness of God,
and for the salvation of our souls, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the Holy Church
of God, and for the unity of all peoples, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For all Christian leaders, ministers, scholars, and quiet servants of God, Lord, in
your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For our President, for the leaders of the nations, and for all in
authority, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For our homes and neighborhoods, for every city and
community, and for those who live in them, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the suffering, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection, and for all the departed, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

For deliverance from all danger, violence, oppression, and degradation, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

That we may end our lives in faith and hope, without suffering and without reproach, defend us, deliver us, and in thy compassion protect us, Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life, to
Christ our God.

To thee, O Lord our God.

A Poem “In Sickness and in Health”—by W. H. Auden

W. H. Auden, “In Sickness and in Health,” in *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1991), 317–20.

Dear, all benevolence of fingering lips
That does not ask forgiveness is a noise
At drunken feasts where Sorrow strips
To serve some glittering generalities

.....

Beloved, we are always in the wrong,
Handling so clumsily our stupid lives,
Suffering too little or too long,
Too careful even in our selfish loves:
The decorative manias we obey
Die in grimaces round us every day,
Yet through their tohu-bohu comes a voice
Which utters an absurd command—Rejoice.

Rejoice. What talent for the makeshift thought
A living corpus out of odds and ends?
What pedagogic patience taught
Pre-occupied and savage elements
To dance into a segregated charm?
Who showed the whirlwind how to be an arm,
And gardened from the wilderness of space

The sensual properties of one dear face?

Rejoice, dear love, in Love's peremptory word;
All chance, all love, all logic, you and I,
Exist by grace of the Absurd . . .

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

FOUR

“Minstrel Man”—A Poem by Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes, “Minstrel Man” (1925)

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You did not think
I suffer after
I've held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
You do not hear
My inner cry:
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die?

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

An Anonymous Poem Written at Auschwitz

A poem by an anonymous inmate at Auschwitz, found on a wall there, from *Last Traces: The Lost Art of Auschwitz*, Joseph Czarnecki (New York: Atheneum, 1989), p.11.

There is grace, though,
and wonder, on the way.
Only they are hard to see,
hard to embrace, for
those compelled to
wander in darkness.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A Reading from Song of Songs

Song of Songs 2:10–13 (KJV, modified)

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, look, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
the flowers appear on the earth.
The time of the singing of birds
is come, and the voice of the dove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth her green figs,
and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

FIVE

The Lord be with you.
And with thy spirit.

A Poem from The Book of Hours—by Rainer Maria Rilke

Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Book of Hours*, in *Rilke's Book of Hours*, trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 127.

It feels as though I make my way
 Through massive rock
 Like a vein of ore
 Alone, encased.

I am so deep inside it
 I can't see the path or any distance:
 Everything is close
 And everything closing in on me
 Has turned to stone.

Since I still don't know enough about pain,
 This terrible darkness makes me small.
 If it's you, though—

Press down hard on me, break in
 That I may know the weight of your hand,
 And you, the fullness of my cry.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

A Reading from the Psalms

Ps. 139:7–12 (KJV)

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;
if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me,
even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,
but the night shineth as the day;
the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SIX

A Reading from the Book of Lamentations

Lamentations 3:17–24 (ESV)

My soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what happiness is;
so I say, “My endurance has perished;
so has my hope from the Lord.”
Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!

My soul continually remembers it
 and is bowed down within me.
 But this I call to mind,
 and therefore I have hope:
 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
 his mercies never come to an end;
 they are new every morning;
 great is your faithfulness.
 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
 “therefore I will hope in him.”

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Holy Sonnet XIV—by John Donne

John Donne, “Holy Sonnet XIV,” in *John Donne. Complete English Poems*, ed. C. A. Patrides and Robin Hamilton (London: J. M. Dent, Everyman Library, 1994).

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for, you
 As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
 That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
 Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
 I, like an usurped town, to another due,
 Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end.
 Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
 But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
 Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
 But am betrothed unto your enemy.
 Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
 Take me to you, imprison me, for I
 Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SEVEN

A Reflection on Redemptive Suffering—by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Christian Century* 77 (27 April 1960): 510. Accessed online at http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/suffering_and_faith/

Some of my personal sufferings over the last few years have also served to shape my thinking. I always hesitate to mention these experiences for fear of conveying the wrong impression. A person who constantly calls attention to his trials and sufferings is in danger of developing a martyr complex and of making others feel that he is consciously seeking sympathy. It is possible for one to be self-centered in his self-denial and self-righteous in his self-sacrifice. So I am always reluctant to refer to my personal sacrifices. But I feel somewhat justified in mentioning them in this article because of the influence they have had in shaping my thinking.

Due to my involvement in the struggle for the freedom of my people, I have known very few quiet days in the last few years. I have been arrested five times and 1960 put in Alabama jails. My home has been bombed twice. A day seldom passes that my family and I are not the recipients of threats of death. I have been the victim of a near fatal stabbing. So in a real sense I have been battered by the storms of persecution. I must admit that at times I have felt that I could no longer bear such a heavy burden, and have been tempted to retreat to a more quiet and serene life. But every time such a temptation appeared, something came to strengthen and sustain my determination. I have learned now that the Master's burden is light precisely when we take his yoke upon us.

My personal trials have also taught me the value of unmerited suffering. As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways that I could

respond to my situation: either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course. Recognizing the necessity for suffering I have tried to make of it a virtue. If only to save myself from bitterness, I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transform myself and heal the people involved in the tragic situation which now obtains. I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive.

There are some who still find the cross a stumbling block, and others consider it foolishness, but I am more convinced than ever before that it is the power of God unto social and individual salvation. So like the Apostle Paul I can now humbly yet proudly say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The suffering and agonizing moments through which I have passed over the last few years have also drawn me closer to God. More than ever before I am convinced of the reality of a personal God.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

EIGHT

A Verse from Four Quartets—by T. S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot, From “East Coker,” *Four Quartets* (1943)

We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise.
In my end is my beginning.

For this, we give thanks to the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans

Romans 8:35–39 (NRSV)

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Final Prayer

Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*


Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever.*

Amen.



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T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*