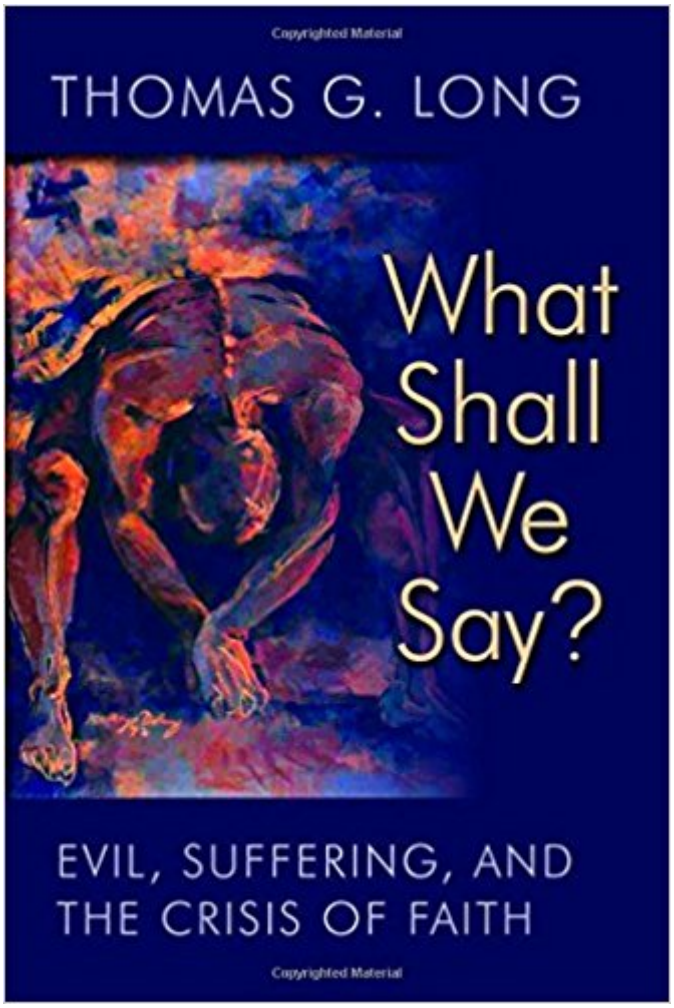
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What Shall We Say?: Evil, Suffering, And The Crisis Of Faith



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Synopsis

Tsunamis, earthquakes, famines, diseases, wars &mdash these and other devastating forces lead Christians to ask painful questions. Is God all-powerful? Is God good? How can God allow so much innocent human suffering?These questions, taken together, have been called the "theodicy problem," and in this book Thomas Long explores what preachers can and should say in response. Long reviews the origins and history of the theodicy problem and engages the work of major thinkers who have posed solutions to it. Cautioning pastors not to ignore urgent theodicy-related questions arising from their parishioners, he offers biblically based approaches to preaching on theodicy, guided by Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares and the "greatest theodicy text in Scripture" -- the book of Job.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Richard Lischer Ã¢â ¬â •Duke Divinity School "Among preachers, Tom Long is perhaps the most broadly read and deeply incisive of them all. . . . Long doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t offer easy answers, but he does open a wonderful conversation."Lillian Daniel Ã¢â ¬â •First Congregational Church, Glen Ellyn, Illinois "Tom Long has done it again, tackling a tough subject with wit, intelligence, and integrity. Moving beyond the ministry of presence, Long challenges clergy to stop dodging the bullet and to answer the hard questions laypeople ask. More importantly, he also gives us the tools to do it well."Religious Studies Review Ã¢â ¬Å“A valuable book for preachers and others struggling with the relationship between God and suffering."The Christian Century "Moving and inspiring. . . . Too

often preachers avoid these kinds of questions, offering pat answers or no answer at all. Long offers not only expert guidance but a push toward finding an answer that is theologically grounded and makes sense of the reality of suffering and evil in this world."Mission Today Ã¢â ¬Å“In many ways, this is a consoling book. Although written from a homilistÃ¢â ¬â„¢s perspective, it is saturated with wholesome Christian theology. . . .This book is good Christian theodicy. It is worth reading LongÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book for its sympathetic Christian perspective on the problem of evil and suffering.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã Â Conrad Grebel Review Ã¢â ¬Å“The author has provided preachers with a helpful resource on dealing with the problem of evil and suffering in a congregational context. Pastors can move beyond providing a Ã¢â ¬Ëœministry of presenceÃ¢â ¬â„¢ to facing the challenging questions and helping people hold onto faith in the midst of suffering. . . .[Long] will assist preachers in proclaiming hope in the midst of sometimes overwhelming evil and suffering.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã Â Religious Herald Ã¢â ¬Å“Few questions plague us more than this: why is there suffering, in a world ruled by a kind of generous God? Long thoughtfully approaches the question from a unique perspective, wondering what exactly preachers should say about these unsettling realities. Narrating Job, a familiar text for these questions, Long offers personal and pastoral wisdom.Ã¢â ¬Â•John T. PlessÃ¢â ¬â • Concordia Pulpit Resources "Long has written a book that deserves attention. He draws preachers to proclaim the power of God made known in Christ, crucified and risen. . . . Long is a craftsman with his prose, and in general his theological reflections are carefully thought and yield sound applications for preaching. I certainly intend to use this as a text in my course on 'Pastoral Theology and Suffering.'" Ã Â

Thomas G. Long is Bandy Professor of Preaching and coordinator of the Initiative in Religious Practices and Practical Theology at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. His other books include The Witness of Preaching and Accompany Them with Singing Ã¢â ¬â • The Christian Funeral.

Too obtuse for everyday use in dealing with people who are hurting. Just my opinion.

This was recommended to me by one of the guys in my church Men’s Group and I found it well-written, insightful, and a good basis for discussion. I was surprised at the conclusion I reached after finishing the first time around, but will be going back for some follow-up on my notes.

Excellent book that addressed the problem of evil in a way that was both informative and

encouraging.

Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching as Candler School of Theology, Emory University, has done it again. He has a habit of writing books on subjects that are pertinent to today. This time it is about innocent suffering. WHAT SHALL WE SAY? EVIL, SUFFERING, AND THE CRISIS OF FAITH, tackles head on the contention that a good God, who is all-powerful should not allow undeserved evil. In particular he responds to Bart Ehrman's book, GOD'S PROBLEM: HOW THE BIBLE FAILS TO ANSWER OUR MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION - WHY WE SUFFER.He reviews all the major arguments over the centuries and recent books on the subject, including those of the new atheists: Hitchens and Dawkins, and Harold Kushner's sympathetic, WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE. His aim is to encourage preachers to deal with the difficult challenges of unbelief from the pulpit and to avoid bromides."There they are out there in the pews, people who want to believe but who are plagued with honest doubts, people who are reminded every day in ways explicit and implicit that their faith in a God who loves humanity and acts in the world benevolently is merely the `unresolved residue of childish fantasy,' people who are pressed by the powerful ideology of science and the pressure of a secular culture to pack their bags and to head out `East of Eden' along the road of unbelief, but who leave reluctantly and with regret and nostalgia, looking back as they go to see if someone, anyone, will speak a word that kindles their faith once again and gives them hope that God is alive and that life is more than a flat, technological world ruled by raw human ambition and power and punctuated by random and meaningless suffering." (p.29)He has some wonderful stories to tell - excellent witnesses to the spiritual mysteries that transcend our understanding and experience. He is aware that every day people in congregations face suffering for which their theology is not sufficient. They want to know that God loves them, and want to be shown how. After discussing all the arguments, and the book of Job, he ends by exploring the teaching of Jesus in the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30). Jesus locates the presence of evil to the work of the enemy, the devil. "To say that the enemy is the devil is not to revert to pre-scientific fairytale images but to say, through the ancient language of the Scripture, that evil has a cosmic, trans-human reality. Evil is not just a failing; it is a force....Evil is not merely a problem; it is a mystery...It is cosmic because it recognizes that evil is a spiritual force; it is not just a result of human error, natural forces, and understandable conflict, but is rather a force that transcends human capacities and rational explanation....God's enemy is a constant presence and a fact of life." (134-137)In my book SURVIVING HURRICANES I say the same thing. The problem of innocent suffering is really the problem of evil, the enemy, the devil, the

cosmic fall. We have to endure it in this present age until the harvest, when the wheat will be separated from the weeds.I commend Long’s book. It is superb. Anyone who has wrestled with the problems of natural disasters and the evil of human beings, accidents and disease, will find it a great comfort.

This book gave one much to think about..a very difficult and profound concept to cover, but Thomas Long did a fine job in this book.

A very exciting book. I’ve read a number of books on, and discussions of, the problem of evil, and this is the best of them all.

very good!

Purchased by a conservative Bible college as a library resource for students.

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