

# *Creative* TRANSFORMATION

**A Special Edition**

# **September**

# **11**

# A Process Response

Resources from  
Process and Faith

A Special Publication of Process & Faith, based on a Relational Vision of Reality

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## **Creative Transformation...**

takes its name from the belief of process theologians that God's work is always creative and always transformative; and that wherever creative transformation is occurring, God is there. This means that instead of clinging to past formulations of faith and the ways of action that used to work, we are striving to be co-workers with God by seeking new formulations and more effective ways of action.

John B. Cobb, Jr.

## **Creative Transformation**

*exploring the growing edge of religious life*

### **Special Edition**

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This is a special edition of *Creative Transformation*, a quarterly publication of Process & Faith. P&F works to provide ways for people interested in process thought to share ideas and resources, especially in local congregations.

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# When Tragedy Interrupts

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-Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

Dear Friends,

*The Process & Faith Council, which is our guiding group, suggested that we prepare a booklet summarizing process responses to the current global and national crisis. What is a "process" response? Clearly, no single group has the process answer. But we offer you our collective reflections in the hope that our sharing will become part of your own resources as you, both individually and communally, think and care and act toward the common good.*

*In this booklet you will find my own short reflection written immediately following September 11<sup>th</sup>, hymns, a liturgy, a sermon, an article, and resources you might send for here at P&F in the form of booklets, tapes, and books. Most importantly, I call to your attention the possibility of bringing a team of Road Scholars to your community to lead discussion. These are international and interfaith young graduate students who are eager to be of service to you.*

Faithfully,

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

Tragedy jars its way into our lives, splitting our souls apart in but a moment. We scream our questions at God: Why did it happen? How can it be? *And where were you??*

A process approach to September 11<sup>th</sup> suggests the following:

1. God did not cause this. Every event involves three major avenues of influence: the weight of the past; God's call to a transforming future; our own response. It is possible to be so governed by a particular interpretation of past events that we override God's call to inclusive well-being. We believe that God called those responsible for these horrors to turn from destruction, and to seek constructive resolutions to their own experiences of tragedy. They chose to override this call.

2. God was present in the situation, despite the destroyers' refusal of God's call. God was present to each individual in those planes, in those buildings; God was present to those who waited in terror for word of their loved ones. God's presence was toward what good was yet possible even in the midst of evil.

3. God is the power of transformation. God calls each of us to respond to the tragedy not with further tragedies, but with a will

toward the inclusive well-being of the world. This well-being involves justice. It involves bringing those who perpetrated the evil to justice through courts of law; it also involves the hope and prayer that those who have done evil will grow in their ability to judge themselves and turn from evil toward good. The well-being of the world also involves us in listening to the full situation, learning why we have evoked such hatred. It involves addressing as much as possible the ills of this world. We can refuse God's call, but we cannot stop God's call toward creative transformation.

4. God is the power of resurrection. Evil does not have the last word. God receives the world into God's own self in every moment, there judging the world and conforming it to God's own character in a process of judgment and transformation. Those who died meet their ultimate resolution in their resurrection into the depths of God.

We pray for those who mourn, and for all who suffer. And we ask that by God's grace we may become God's instruments in this world for good, even in the midst of evil. May we dare the good.

# A Time To Weep

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*A sermon by Patricia Adams Farmer*

*Psalm 27; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

Sunday, September 16, 2001

“It comes at you suddenly. This is a day the WTC towers would have been half-swallowed by the low clouds. You look, instinctively, involuntarily, because it’s a scene you’ve always liked to photograph in your mind. The wisps of the clouds dragging along the side always created different shapes, shadows, a sense of motion while they slid by and the towers stood still and mighty. And they aren’t there. And you just start to cry.”

The words of Jeff Rovin, a friend of ours who lives with his wife, Victoria, a half-mile from the site of destruction in a high rise overlooking what was the WTC.

September 11, 2001. None of us here today will forget where we were on that day when we heard the news of the attack upon America. None of us will forget what we felt. None of us will forget how our hearts sank and our breath stopped the first moment we saw the horrific scenes of the Trade Center Towers cascading down into the dark billowing smoke. It felt surreal, like something out of a movie. Only this was real, whether we wanted to believe it or not. The planes we saw all too clearly crashing into the World Trade Center were not special effects, but steel colliding against steel, full of people just like us. They could easily have been us. In a sense we all were in those planes, a piece of us, fearful, and

out of control of an unbelievably evil scenario that none of us even dared to imagine.

It is a time to weep.

The haunting scenes of New York’s crippled, smoking skyline and the hulk of the military center of our nation’s capital will be forever seared on our minds. September 11, 2001: the day our children lost their innocence, the day our invulnerability was shattered, the day all of us will be changed forever.

What do we make of this as Christians? As people who believe that love is supreme over all evil, how do we make sense of this when we feel evil has gotten the upper hand? Most importantly, how do we find hope in the smoke and rubble that has descended upon the hearts of all Americans?

We cry with the Psalmist: “Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me.” And this is an appropriate cry. There is a time to be sad, a time to be horrified, a time to weep, and now is that time. For unless we take it in, it cannot be transformed.

Jeff and Victoria had hung flags out their window from the 18<sup>th</sup> floor. He e-mailed to us on Friday, a rainy day in New York, “I know it is going to sound strange, predictable, cliches, whatever—the rain has turned from a mist to actual drops. I have the two flags hanging in my window and when I turned and saw



them they looked like they are crying. Now I am too”

It is a time to weep.

Our e-mails from Jeff and Victoria began only hours after the destruction. The first words he wrote were:

“I cannot describe the emptiness. I dread to learn who will not be coming home tonight. This building is home to hundreds of people who work at that site. I can’t think of the children who are going home to no parents tonight. I was working out when the plane flew overhead. I knew, feeling that, hearing it, that it would be bad. Then I heard the blast. I went downstairs and saw what happened. There were people, masses of them, walking uptown bloodied and lost and begging for rides from anyone who had a car. Now it’s

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quiet. But the sirens to St. Vincent's Hospital, which we used to take for granted, now have a sick, sad poignancy."

Amid the sounds of sirens in all our hearts, I want to offer you hope, for hope is the only way for us to respond as Christians, as human beings, no matter what our religion. Hope is our way of helping God to overcome the evil. Even in his dire emotional condition, the Psalmist who cries for the face of God also knows that divine face in an intimate way: "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—my adversaries and foes—they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident."

Only a few hours after the first e-mail, Jeff continues to report:

"The sun is going down and it's eerily still out there. So brilliant a sunset on such a day. So much seems natural and normal. But it reminds me of a room where the geometry isn't quite right. Please tell your congregants that this will not beat us. Any of us. That said, the shock is starting to really settle in as I talk to friends who are devastated or lost or worried about friends. My stock broker was out of town; everyone in his office is dead. Everyone.

"Which is why we have to push on. Because we are alive. And this morning, this afternoon, every

minute was very precious. Not knowing what might come next."

Hearing from Jeff on that black day was a moving experience for Ron and me. It reminds us of Whitehead's beautiful quote: "The Adventure of the Universe starts with a dream and reaps tragic beauty." Out of the rubble, God is able to bring some kind of redemption, transformation, beauty. Even out of the worst evils, if we hope with God through our prayers and actions, we will reap tragic beauty. Tragic beauty does not erase the evil, it transforms it. It's that part of us, that divine part of us, that rises out of the ashes and refuses to be overcome. Tragic beauty is created out of the undaunted human spirit.

Jeff's words were hauntingly beautiful. Writing down our story in our own words is important. I believe Jeff can cope with what he is witnessing better by writing, by expressing his thoughts in words. Those words in turn touch other lives, passing along little sparks of beauty and hope in the midst of ugliness and despair, like a sweet violin's sad melody in the burned-out remains of the World Trade Center. Jeff, as a gifted writer, is able to reap tragic beauty from the evil, which is that glimmer of hope. Other people, who are not writers, are able to bring tragic beauty from their willingness to give blood and offer support to needy people. Doctors are able to volunteer services. All persons are able to offer bits of tragic beauty in their own way. Perhaps prayer is all we have to give, but that is the greatest gift of

all. And in this month of stewardship emphasis, we need to know that prayer is our most powerful gift we can give to God who, in this time of chaos and upheaval, needs and desires our prayers!

In writing about a personal experience of tragedy, it is already transformed. Through telling it, it goes outside of us, it becomes shared sorrow and is transformed. It is good to talk about tragedy and it's important for us to listen to what's being said. God can creatively transform our tragedy, but we need to express it in some way, to someone who is willing to listen.

The Psalms are just such expressions. They were written over hundreds of years. Some of them were written during Judah's darkest days when enemies were on all sides. So the poets, the writers of the Psalter, including King David, wrote poetry expressing every range of human feeling, including revenge and hatred. The poetry, our Psalter, is an expression of tragic beauty.

But remember, the poets did not act on all their feelings. Through poetry they were able to express them to God without acting out in violence. The Psalms tell us that all emotions are part of our humanity and we should express them: telling our stories, writing them down in poetry and journaling, expressing them to someone we trust.

But channeling anger, how we direct it and act on it is so very important. We Americans need to express our anger but be very careful how we direct it. If we channel it into blind, irrational war,

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we will find ourselves caught in a war cycle with long-term repercussions and untold loss of lives. I, as many religious leaders, believe there is an enormously important difference between finding the terrorists and bringing them to justice, and retaliating out of a need for blind revenge, only to find ourselves in a quagmire of unending violence. We must be very careful how we work out our anger and frustration in these delicate and unstable nations where religious fanatics are eager to give up their lives for what they believe will be rewards in the afterlife. We must know the mindset of our enemy and practice wisdom rather than knee-jerk retaliation if we are ultimately to overcome this evil. As Nathan Baxter said Friday at the beautiful service at the National Cathedral: "We must not become the evil we so deplore."

We must be careful, too, that we do not typecast a certain segment of the population and demonize Arab people or the Islamic religion. We must remember these terrorists do not represent all Arabs and certainly not all Muslims. Islamic terrorists are an evil, twisted version of Islam, using the name of Allah to kill the innocent, just as Christians during the Crusades used the name of Christ to kill Arabs. Any religion can become evil if it becomes "us vs. them." Religion is meant to unite, not divide. Jeff writes on day 2 of the disaster: "Yet . . . color and creed vanished among the people I saw today in the street. If there is hope, it lies there."

If we are true followers of Christ, we will respect and love other cultures and religions. As another good friend of ours in Washington, D.C., Dr. Bruce Epperly, wrote to us on September 11, "This is a time for love, not fear."

It is a time for love. It is important to know that we are not alone. On Wednesday morning I received a call from Israel, from friends there who wanted to let us know they are thinking of us. I talked with Mayan, Brit, and Sahar (who is



serving in the Israeli military). All of them expressed their sorrow at what has happened to America and offered words of support and understanding as we now face our vulnerability. I always thought they were the ones who would need *my* support as terrorism is a daily event for them. This family that lives in a suburb of Tel Aviv is just as glued to their TV sets as we are. They are deeply anguished with us. I found this profoundly comforting. But more than that, as they sounded to me as close as next

door, I realized that we are next door. We can no longer be separated.

This is a time to recognize that we are deeply interconnected and inextricably bound to what goes on in the rest of the world. We need one another. We need to better understand other countries, other religions, other mentalities, and seek peace. We can no longer live with our neo-isolationist mentality. It is time to enter, for better or worse, the delicate fabric of humanity that makes up this crazy, beautiful, horrifying world.

Yes, it is a time to weep. It is a time to grieve, and as Christians we know that God weeps, too. On September 11, 2001, those airplanes-turned-into-missiles pierced the very heart of God as they plowed into their targets. They crucified Christ all over again, just as the nails pierced his hands and the spear pierced his side. The blood and water that flowed from his side is like the blood of those innocents who were killed on September 11. We must help God, not further this piercing of God's heart with knee-jerk retaliation but with justice and good sense for the future of our nation and our children. We become co-creators of peace and justice when we choose this way, the "third way" as the chair of our elders calls it, which is not denial or sinking back into helplessness. Neither is it revenge and irrational retaliation. The third way is confronting the problem head-on and doing every intelligent thing we can to understand, bring those responsible to

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justice, and prevent this ongoing terrorism that threatens the safety of all global citizens.

This national tragedy will have redemptive effects if we don't lose our hope. The God who is our light and salvation is the God of hope.

Jeff continues to report from what is happening at ground zero, and I end with this e-mail we received on

Thursday: he says, "I will tell you the absolute MOST ironic thing. From the rooftop, where we sat often in the gazebos, we often faced the towers. Up there, one thing is so different that I weep thinking about it. You will too. Know what you can see clearly from our favorite chairs now that the towers are gone? The Statue of Liberty."

Let us pray: God of Liberty and Peace, bring sanity back into our world through our hope and prayers, our wisdom and our patience. May we find the road of healing and may each of us find a way through the tears with our prayers, our creativity, our gifts, and our actions of beauty. AMEN.

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## When Sudden Terror Tears Apart

*Carl P. Daw, Jr.*

When sudden terror tears apart  
the world we thought was ours,  
we find how fragile strength can be,  
how limited our powers.

As tower and fortress fall, we watch  
with disbelieving stare  
and numbly hear the anguished cries  
that pierce the ash-filled air.

Yet most of all we are aware  
of emptiness and void:  
of lives cut short, of structures razed,  
of confidence destroyed.

From this abyss of doubt and fear  
we grope for words to pray,  
and hear our stammering tongues embrace  
a timeless Kyrie.

Have mercy, Lord, give strength and peace,  
and make our courage great;  
restrain our urge to seek revenge,  
to turn our hurt to hate.

Help us to know your steadfast love,  
your presence near as breath;  
rekindle in our hearts the hope  
of life that conquers death.

Words by Carl P. Daw, Jr.

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C.M. (suggested tunes: BANGOR, DETROIT)  
or C.M.D. (suggested tune: THIRD MODE  
MELODY)

*Editor's Note: BANGOR can be found in The Book of Praise (Presbyterian Church of Canada); DETROIT can be found in the new Presbyterian and United Methodist Church hymnals.*

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# A War Against Terrorism

John B. Cobb, Jr.

*If the United States really wishes to reduce terrorism, it can make profound changes in its foreign and military policies.*



## ***I. Will a War Against Terrorism Reduce Terror?***

Terror is a terrible condition. Terrorism, as the intentional effort to generate and extend terror, is a horrible evil. The evil is not only the death and destruction that is caused but the widespread effect on the whole fabric of society. When people feel insecure the patterns of life to which they are accustomed have to be changed. They are willing to sacrifice personal freedom. They look at neighbors with suspicion. National resources that should go toward meeting human needs are soaked up into defense expenditures. Business is disrupted.

There may be a possibility that the United States can lead the world into a significant reduction of terrorism. If so, we may snatch real gain from the ashes of destruction in New York and Washington, D.C. But this depends on an honest appraisal of the role of terrorism in our own global actions and an appraisal of its complex causes.

Unfortunately, the greater likelihood is that we will extend and increase the role of terror in the world. Currently, we are undertaking to increase terror in Afghanistan. It is true that our target is in one sense limited to those responsible for attacking us. But the assemblage of huge military forces is accompanied by threats that create terror in the civilian population of Afghanistan. And this is clearly not unintended. Further-

more, their terror is not unrealistic. There is some danger that what remains of Afghan civilization will be wiped out by American bombs.

If the United States really wishes to reduce terrorism, it can make profound changes in its foreign and military policies. For the sake of pursuing its global policies, the United States has made extensive use of terrorism. Much of the war we supported in Afghanistan against the Soviet-supported government there involved terrorism. Indeed, we supported and trained both bin Laden and the Taliban in terrorist tactics.

In Latin America terror has been a major implement of military and conservative regimes in suppressing the opposition of peasant and indigenous peoples. We have called this "low intensity warfare" and we have instructed thousands of Latin American soldiers in these methods at our training camp in Columbus, Georgia. The disappearances and death squads that have been, and still are, so large a part of life in Latin America for decades now have expressed our support of terrorism there.

Some define terrorism as terrorist acts directed against governments. This means that the actions of police and soldiers against people who resist the government are not identified as terrorist even though their systematic intention is to instill terror. We might then say that low-

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intensity warfare as a means of keeping a government in power is not terrorism. We might then suppose that the United States has usually not employed or supported terrorism.

But even when we limit terrorism to acts against governments, we cannot claim that we have held back. We engineered the overthrow of a democratically elected government in Chile. This involved terrorist actions and initiated a reign of terror against the supporters of the legitimate government. We supported the terrorist tactics of the Contras against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Earlier we overthrew Mosadegh in Iran.

The truth is that moral horror about acts of terrorism depends very much on who they are directed against. If they are directed against those who threaten our global policies, they are regarded as acceptable means in the maintenance of world order. If they are directed against us, they are simply vicious and wholly inexcusable. They even justify our intensification of the use of terror in retaliation and in defense of our interests.

Consider the situation in 1985. Ronald Reagan met with a group of leaders of the Afghan mujahedin, with whom Osama bin Laden worked closely. Reagan called these men the moral equivalent of our founding fathers. At

that time, Nelson Mandela, in a prison in Robben Island, was listed as a terrorist on the official watch list of the Pentagon.

Now it would be an overstatement to say that the only reason that the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings and the Pentagon were so shocking was that, in this case, we were the victims rather than the

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oppressed.*

actors. They were shocking also because of their scale, their visibility, and their extraordinary success. Also they were directed at the most visible symbols of global power rather than at the relatively powerless. They showed that no one was safe. Wealth, geography, and military dominance protect no one. Hundreds of millions of powerless people have grown accustomed to terrorism, learning how to survive in spite of it. Now other hundreds of millions, citizens of rich and powerful nations, have discovered that they, too, can be the objects of terrorist attack.

It would be a great exaggeration to

suggest that we now understand the experience of the victims of low-intensity warfare in Latin America or of those who were tortured in Chile because of their support of the legitimate Allende regime. It would be an equal exaggeration to suggest that we now understand the experience of the people of Afghanistan who suffered through the years of warfare, fomented by us, that replaced a Marxist government with the Taliban. Our suffering cannot be compared with theirs. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that we will learn through this event some compassion for the sufferers from all forms of terrorism including those that we have inflicted. It is possible that we may psychologically identify with the victims of terrorism and refuse to support its perpetration on others. Such a change in public opinion could change the course of history.

I have concentrated on examples of how the policy of the United States has fomented terrorism. Let me hasten to say that we are not alone. Most governments, when they believe their vital interests to be at stake, employ terrorist tactics if they believe they need to do so. What is historically unusual, in fact, is the extent to which such countries as the Western democracies and Japan have avoided the use of terror internally. Although people in other countries have

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suffered terror at their hands, those living within their borders have been largely immune.

Even here we must not overstate the case with regard to our own nation. For decades local governments in this country allowed the Ku Klux Klan to use terror systematically as a means of holding in check the aspirations for justice of the black community. Some ghetto dwellers to this day experience the police more as an occupying force that rules by terror than as a servant of society dedicated to justice for all. In some of our prisons, order is maintained by terror. Terror was systematically employed against Native Americans for centuries in order to drive them off their lands. Even today their efforts to find justice have sometimes been met by terror. Euro-Americans as well sometimes experience the police as terrorists when their protests seem to threaten the interests of the rich and powerful.

However, if we compare all of this with the use of terror in the Soviet Union against its own citizens, or that of the Taliban today, we will be impressed by the fact that many, many citizens of the United States have never been victims of terrorism. Terror against our own people has not been a part of standard American policy. The Ku Klux Klan was finally disempowered and other would-be terrorist groups have been marginalized. Blacks and Native Americans have had some success in getting public support against terror. Hundreds of millions of people in other parts of the world feel only envy for the extent

to which our lives are free of terror. A serious effort to reduce the amount of terror in all other countries to the level of that that still functions in the United States would constitute an enormous advance in international affairs.

A move in this direction is not easy. It would be comparatively easy for the United States now to end its instruction in low-intensity warfare. What little justification it ever had ended with the Cold War.

***There is another danger of the war against terrorism. It could lead us to think that the greatest evils in the world today are the result of the overt violence this term identifies.***

We could stop using the Drug War as an occasion for supporting terrorism in Colombia and other Andean countries. We could resolve to allow democratically elected governments in Latin America to develop their own policies. We could cease fomenting rebellions in other parts of the world, especially those that we know will use terror as a major means of gaining and preserving power.

But there are uses of terror that are far more difficult to end. Consider the situation on both sides of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The state of Israel came into being through the use of terror against the British rulers. The British had vacillated between opening Palestine to Jewish settlement and protecting the rights of the Palestinians. The Jews forced the departure of the British through terrorist acts. The heroes of Israel were terrorists.

Are they to be condemned? They were passionately concerned that in a world that refused to welcome Jews, even when their lives depended on finding a new home, there be some place to which they could come. Killing a few innocent people seemed a small price to pay to achieve this goal. They succeeded, and they established the State of Israel. To do so they needed to reduce the Arab population of the region. To this end they employed terror against them, so that many fled. Was that use of terror justified?

Since the exercise of terror in relation to the Palestinians and their subsequent subjugation aroused deep resentment and anger among their victims, these also have resorted to terrorism. They attack civilians more often than police and soldiers. Their weapons are far inferior to those of Israel, and their voice of moral protest falls on deaf ears. From the point of view of many of them the only way to get any attention at all to their oppression and suffering is to employ terrorist methods. Are they justified?

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The response of Israel is like that of any government. It is committed to doing whatever it must to keep its people safe. Overall the effort is to terrorize the Palestinian people into submission to their fate. The methods include assassinations of suspected leaders, bombarding villages and neighborhoods, and torture of prisoners. Is this justified?

What will a war on terrorism mean in the context of Israel and the Palestinians? Many Israelis believe it should mean that we will support the ending of all restraint on their part in the suppression of Palestinian terrorism. Palestinians fear that this way lies genocide. Many Palestinians believe it should mean the end of terrorist acts against them and allowing them to establish their own state according to the resolutions of the United Nations. Many Israelis fear that this means the abandonment of their numerous settlements in Gaza and the West Bank and a nation without defensible borders surrounded by enemies only too eager to destroy it.

It is encouraging that as a first step in the war against terrorism the United States government put enormous pressure on both sides to end hostilities and return to negotiation. But what next? How can the war on terrorism bring about a compromise that will satisfy both sides sufficiently that they end the use of terror against the other?

Consider more broadly the problem. The powers that be have multiple weapons at their disposal. Although they frequently resort to terrorist methods, they often have

alternatives. But the oppressed have fewer choices. They have no soldiers and police to employ against the oppressing powers. They have little if any access to the media that shape public opinion. If they lash out against their oppressors, their actions will almost always be terrorist in nature. It is these actions of the oppressed that most often come to mind when the word "terrorism" is used.

For this reason, there is danger that the war against terrorism will be a war against the oppressed. The acts of governments in suppressing opposition will not be the object of criticism. Indeed, these acts, however calculated to inspire terror among the oppressed, will be justified by the need to prevent acts of terrorism that threaten the ruling classes. This approach will increase the number of people who live in regimes of terror. It may reduce their terrorist acts by removing from them the last glimmer of hope. But it is more likely to drive many of them to ever more desperate acts of terror against their ever more violent oppressors.

There is another danger of the war against terrorism. It could lead us to think that the greatest evils in the world today are the result of the overt violence this term identifies. There is no doubt about its importance, but even more suffering is engendered in other ways.

An economic embargo does not come under the heading of terrorism. But the suffering it generates may be more terrible. Consider Iraq. We imposed an embargo for

the purpose of forcing Iraq to end its efforts to produce weapons of mass destruction. The hope was that the desire to end the embargo and get back to normal economic life would make the government of Iraq cooperative. If this had happened, we could all celebrate.

It did not happen. Instead, the government of Iraq, headed by another of our U.S.-trained terrorists, has allowed the common people to feel the full brunt of the embargo, using their suffering to generate greater and greater hatred toward us. Its military might and its weapons programs have been little affected. Hence the actual result of the embargo has been the death of hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps millions, most of them children. This supposedly more humane instrument of foreign policy has had consequences considerably more horrible than any terrorist act to date. Is it more important to end terrorism than to end the weekly dying of thousands of Iraqi children?

Many of us believe that an even more important cause of suffering in our world lies in the methods of corporate globalization to which the United States government, along with most governments, is committed. Despite criticism of details, most Americans of good will continue to support these basic policies believing that global economic growth is the solution to the problem of poverty. Others believe that the top-down development, which destroys existing communities and means of livelihood for the sake of increasing

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corporate investment, exacerbates the problem of poverty and reduces the capacity of the Earth to support even its present population. This is not the place to debate this issue. But it is the place to question whether the War on Terrorism should take precedence over continuing the debate about economic globalization and the worldwide dominance of corporations.

There is a clear connection between these two issues. The terrorists singled out the greatest symbol of global corporate power, the World Trade Center, for their primary attack. Clearly, from their point of view, the corporate globalism that dominates the world is an enemy, perhaps the greatest enemy. There are hundreds of millions of people, perhaps billions, who agree. Many of them think that the loss of life and wealth involved in this act of terror is less horrible than the decades-long suffering and growing hopelessness that is their lot. To end acts of terrorism without addressing the reasons that they are directed against global corporate rule may not be a blessing to the world as a whole, even if it restores the sense of innocent security to the American public.

In this connection it will be important to watch the response to future protests against globalization. At Seattle, police were generally restrained in their responses. Since then police have become steadily more violent. At Genoa they attacked and beat up sleeping protestors, presumably to inspire terror so as to deter them from continuing their protests. The

prospects for police response to the planned (and subsequently called off) protests in Washington, D.C. in late September were disturbing. The danger is that the use of terror against nonviolent protestors will accelerate dramatically, with the threat of terrorism as its justification.

The hope is that governments dedicated to reducing terrorism will allow peaceful protests to proceed peacefully and arrest those protestors who are violent. Governments could shift from treating protestors as a threatening enemy toward genuine dialogue. The media could send representatives to the impressive teach-ins that accompany these protests and report the profound thinking that accompanies them. We could encourage an honest national debate. But this would require that governments and the media attain some independence from corporate control. In the absence of such independence, peaceful protest will be met with terror, and serious argument will be kept out of the mass media and of electoral campaigns.

## ***II. Do Christians Have Anything Distinctive to Say?***

To a large extent Christianity functions much as any ideology. It strengthens ties among Christian believers much as Islam strengthens ties among Muslims and Judaism, among Jews. Christians are more likely to go to the defense of other Christians than of others, and Muslims are more likely to go to the defense of other Muslims. Belief in God leads to the conviction that those of the true faith are especially valued and cared for.

This binding together has great value. It tends to weaken barriers erected within each community toward other members who disagree about the correct interpretation. It works against individual selfishness and religious nationalism. It reduces tendencies to racism. It contributes to the mutual support that we all so critically need. It provides an identity that gives meaning and purpose to life.

In the present instance the tendency is to associate ourselves as victims as part of Christian civilization and our attackers as representative of Muslim civilization. Fortunately, many American Christians have accepted the idea that the United States is a religiously pluralistic nation, so that it is important, from a Christian point of view, that Muslims as Muslims not be blamed or assigned second-class status as Americans. Despite many incidents of abuse and destruction against Muslims, Christian and governmental leadership have spoken well on this subject. We have denied that those who attacked us represent Islam. We have recognized that all of our monotheistic traditions have the danger of absolutizing themselves in the name of the one God and defaming all others. We repudiate this tendency in the Christian tradition.

As Christians, we love our country, and we recognize a special obligation to relieve the suffering of other Americans. We understand that a healthy world requires healthy societies in which people take special responsibility for one another's needs. A cosmopolitan-

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ism that regards our responsibilities as directed equally to all works against the need for effective community. One Christian objection to globalization is that it breaks down healthy local and national communities.

Nevertheless, we repudiate nationalism. Although we have a special responsibility to our nation, we cannot view the world in terms of what advances the causes of just this one nation. We must recognize that the perspectives of other nations are just as valid as our own. The suffering of people in other parts of the world grieves the heart of God as much as our suffering. Our task is to view world events dispassionately and neutrally, not in terms of their bearing upon us. While we seek to bind up the wounds especially of fellow Americans, we need to view our national action both present and past as objectively as we can.

This is where we affirm our heritage from the prophets of ancient Israel. We find a culmination of that prophetic tradition in Jesus. Just for that reason, the fact that we worship God, as we know God in Jesus Christ, does not mean that God loves us more than others. It does not justify our lack of concern for people in other parts of the world with other beliefs. It certainly does not justify our support of policies that harm them for our gain. On the contrary, it means that we should strive for a greater obedience to God's call for love than we expect of others.

This prophetic tradition is present in all three of the great monotheistic

faiths. Sadly, it does not shape the responses of most believers to crises. But there are exceptions. There are Jews who transcend communal Jewish feeling in order to call for real justice for Palestinians. They pay a great price, as prophets have always paid, in terms of the hatred they arouse among other Jews. In response to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., a few Christians have called for our national recognition of the terror we have inflicted on others. Their

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voices have as yet been too muted to attract much attention. But when and if they are widely heard, we can expect that most of their fellow Christians will denounce them. There is a great emotional need for both Jews and Christians to feel righteous in their anger. The prophetic challenge to that self-righteousness is most unwelcome, especially at the time of crisis.

Yet it is precisely that kind of self-

righteousness that underlies the acts of terror against us. The depth of conviction of what constitutes righteousness that led to willingness to die in the process of inflicting a wound upon us is based on just that same unwillingness to see ourselves in the inclusive context. If we respond by justifying ourselves in inflicting a larger wound on others somehow related to our attackers, our religious psychology is just like theirs. If Christians fail to offer the prophetic witness against our sins, we will have used our faith simply to sanction the normal reactions of sinful humanity rather than to offer its distinctive contribution.

No one has made the distinctive point clearer than Jesus. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Mt. 5:43-44.) If we love bin Laden, we will try to see the world through his eyes. That does not mean that we will agree with him. It does not mean that we will fail to undertake to bring him to justice. It does mean that once we have seen ourselves through his eyes, we will no longer be able to act self-righteously. We, too, collectively and individually, are sinners. While we hold others accountable for their crimes against humanity, we will recognize that we too have committed and are committing crimes against humanity. That is not a comfortable recognition, but our faith calls us to live in the light of painful truth.

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# How Are God and Evil Related?

David Ray Griffin

*An excerpt from the Hard Issues  
Booklet of the same name, available  
from Process and Faith*

. . . the world's creative power is, in part at least, a real and necessary part of the world itself. That is, creative power is shared and has to be shared by God and the world. The world influences God and God influences the world. But God cannot take away from the world its inherent power any more than the world can take away God's power.

Out of our belief in the world's influence on God, along with our belief in God's love, we think that events in the world can cause God to suffer. . . .

At the same time, however, process theism asserts that God never allows evil to have the final word. The suffering of Jesus, which is so central in Christian language, truly tells us something about God. God does suffer with us, and as God takes the suffering and even the evil of the world into God's own life, the way is opened to redeem the evil of the world, since the divine point of view can see possibilities that are hidden from us. After every tragedy, God begins immediately the process of healing, not through a unilateral intervention into the world, but through a persuasive call to our world to transform itself. Thus, although God never quits, so to speak, on the evils that beset us, God is

dependent on our own cooperation for an effective resistance to them.

It is easy to see what a difference this way of thinking makes when we turn back to the problem of evil. Supernatural theism gave God the power to control the world completely, or at least to interrupt it now and then. People inevitably asked why the world did not *seem* to be controlled by a perfectly good being, and why if God could and did intervene from time to time in the affairs of the world, God did not stop some particularly horrendous events.

Supernatural theism has no good way to answer these questions. Process theism, with its more "naturalistic" view of the relation between God and the world, sets us free from those unanswerable questions.

## **God as persuasive**

But process theism does not just free us from the supernaturalistic view and its problems. It also opens a new way of thinking of God and thereby of noticing the signs of divine grace in our lives and in the world in general. The flip side of saying no to the image of God as controlling everything, or as at least able to do so, is the image of God as persuasive and evocative, of God as a lure or "call forward" to the good.

The evolutionary development of the world over the past several billions of years, with its increas-

ingly complex forms of order, fits the idea of a creator who has continually enticed the world to embody new forms. In our immediate experience we are aware of being drawn to express and realize certain types of value—to create beauty, to discover truth, to be fair in our dealings with others. These experiences reflect the fact that God works continually on our experience through the persuasive power of ideals. When we become convinced that the power who now influences us in this persuasive way used this same method to create our universe, including creatures like us with the power to think this idea, we realize that this kind of power is the supreme power of the universe.

We believe that the supreme power of the universe is perfectly good. And this *theoretical* solution undergirds the *practical commitment* to overcome evil. It denies that God needlessly created evil, and also that God could single-handedly eliminate it but refuses to do so. It also says that God is always working to overcome the evil that has developed, and that God does this by persuading us, the creatures, to overcome it. Given God's effectiveness in creating the universe and us, we believe that God's persuasive power can also overcome evil. But we also know that God's success depends upon our responsiveness.

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# Road Scholars Program

An interfaith group of “Road Scholars,” trained in process theology, is prepared to go out in teams of two for the purpose of speaking briefly to congregations and leading them in practical theological discussions about September 11<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath.

We are all shattered by these events. If in your community there is confusion about the role of God in this tragedy, if you refuse the logic of vengeance and are concerned about future steps, then invite our young scholars to come to your community.

We believe that process thought has the resources for addressing the issue in a specific and practical way. We are offering two topics:

**September 11: Where Was God?  
A Process Response**

**September 11: Where Do We Go  
From Here? A Process Perspective**

This program is limited to Southern California, but open to any kind of community or group interested in process theology. It is an interfaith program representing Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Jews. It is also an international program involving international students together with USA students. We believe that this

diversity can enrich the program especially in this particular time.

We are available almost every time during the week and weekends. We ask you to contribute financially according to your community’s usual practice.

## ***How to bring Road Scholars to your community***

For more information, or to set up an appointment, write letters or e-mails to:

Road Scholars/Process and Faith  
1325 North College Ave.  
Claremont, CA 91711  
[gianluigi@ctr4process.org](mailto:gianluigi@ctr4process.org)

You can also reach Gianluigi  
Wednesday 9-11 a.m. and  
Thursday 9-12 a.m. at (909) 626-3521 ext.1288

***Two topics offered:***

***September 11:***

***Where Was God?***

***A Process Response***

***September 11:***

***Where Do We Go***

***From Here? A***

***Process Perspective***

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# A Worship Service

*Jeanynne B. Slettom*

## Opening sentence

“I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

## Call to worship (from Psalm 71)

One: In you, O God, we take refuge; be to us a rock, a strong fortress.

Many: For you, O God, are our hope, our trust.

One: We have seen many troubles and calamities, yet you will revive us again.

Many: You will comfort us when our strength is spent.

One: Let us worship the God of refuge and hope.

**Hymn:** *O God our Help in Ages Past*

## Prayer of Confession/Invocation

Merciful God, we come to you this morning in pain and confusion, anger and grief. We ask you to make your presence known to us, to be the measure of what we say and do in the days and weeks to come. Open our eyes, that we may see your vision for the well-being of all creation. Open our minds, that we may receive the truth you have sown throughout the nations. Open our hands, that we may freely share the blessings you have given us. Open our hearts and flood our souls with discernment and love. Amen.

## Assurance of Pardon and Hope

God is present in every moment of our lives and every cell in our bodies. There is no place where God is not. Receive the good news . . . now, in this moment. Believe it, and keep believing it in every moment to come. This is the promise of God and the truth of the Spirit: in Jesus Christ we are transformed.

## Affirmation of faith: Psalm 23 (unison)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Hebrew Bible:** Psalm 46

**Hymn:** *Saranam*

**Epistle:** I John 4:16b-21

**Gospel:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Sermon:** “What Can I Do?” (see next page)

**Pastoral Prayer,** concluding with the Prayer of St. Francis (unison)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled  
as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

**Hymn:** *This Is My Song*

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## Sermon points

- In the wake of disaster, everyone is asking, what can I do? Onsite medical personnel provide medical treatment; rescue workers do their work; respite workers provide food, etc., even politicians have a job to do.
  - Elsewhere: People have responded to the call to give blood; they are flying flags from their houses and their vehicles.
  - But it doesn't seem like it's enough. Over and over we ask, what can I do?
  - The medical workers, the rescue workers, the respite workers, the politicians, the news media—they are all responding according to their professional expertise, their professional identity.
  - What is our expertise? What is our identity? Our Christian faith is our expertise, our identity is that we are Christians.
  - And what does our faith call us to do? Refer to Matthew 25.
  - Our faith calls us to preach—to live—the love of Christ; to BE Christs to one another.
  - This is not just a call for tolerance, but a call for radical love of all people.
  - Educate, promote understanding, encourage interfaith dialogue. This is our expertise as people of faith, specifically as Christians: to fight prejudice, to resist hatred.
  - But our tradition also gives us permission to ask why?
- We have a biblical tradition of asking the hard questions, of examination of our personal and national lives.
  - In the disaster of exile, the Jews asked the hard question: why did this happen to us? They looked at themselves and their practices—as individuals and as a nation—and their relationship to God. In their effort to understand, they recreated, renewed, revived their faith. They found a new way to live in the world, in relationship to their God. They became a community that endured when other ancient peoples fell off the pages of history.
  - When Jesus died, people again asked why? They looked at themselves and their society, and they came up with an answer that spread throughout the world. They came up with a new faith, a new understanding of how to live in the world, in relationship to their God.
  - This is our tradition—forged out of corporate and self-examination.
  - So what can we do? We can ask the hard questions about ourselves and our country. We can live a life of serious examination—of our own lives, of our nation's policies, of our world.
  - We can practice love. Recall the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words."

- Preach love, practice love, and when this democratic country acts (and as a democracy it always acts in your name and in mine) demand love. (Cf: John 13:34 "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another"; also, the epistle and gospel readings).

***"Preach the gospel.  
If necessary,  
use words."  
~St. Francis***

## November Lectionary Notes

The lectionary notes for November were written by John b. Cobb, Jr., and include his further reflections on September 11 and its aftermath. Access notes at the Process and Faith web site:

[www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org)

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# Sometimes

*Richard Leach*

Sometimes I look and I see what is charming  
in every land under the sun—  
the food, the fables, the fabrics,  
the new songs to be sung—  
and it's easy to picture all people  
as one human family,  
sharing the blessings of God  
in every land under the sun.

Sometimes I look and I see what is vicious  
in every land under the sun—  
the torn and stained human fabric,  
the fist, the blade, the gun—  
and still I know that all people  
are one human family,  
needing the mercy of God,  
waiting for justice from God,  
in every land under the sun.

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This song is arranged for soprano soloist and is part of a  
larger work, *Peace Cantata*, by Richard Leach and  
Curt Oliver. For the music, you may contact:  
Curt Oliver at [curtngail@qwest.net](mailto:curtngail@qwest.net) or  
Richard Leach at [bleach3@mindspring.com](mailto:bleach3@mindspring.com).

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# Who Will Speak a Word of Warning

*Richard Leach*

Who will speak a word of warning  
to a world whose wealth expands,  
as the growing wealth is gathered  
into ever fewer hands?  
Christ, you speak a word of warning  
for the church to know and tell:  
greed is death and life is giving;  
hands that give receive as well.

*Winning hymn in the Macalester-  
Plymouth United Church Hymn  
Contest, 1996*  
(Suggested tune: EBENEZER  
or TON-Y-BOTEL)

Who will speak a word of warning  
to a world where truth gives way,  
as the claims of pow'r and priv-lege  
shift and shape the truth each day?  
Christ, you speak a word of warning  
for the church to heed and share:  
Truth is not the claims of power!  
Truth is hurt and hope and prayer.

Who will speak a word of welcome  
to the greatest and the least,  
calling those with pow'r to service,  
calling all to share the feast?  
Christ, you speak a word of welcome,  
for the church to tell and live:  
All who hunger, come, be seated;  
Take what Christ is here to give.

Richard D. Leach, 1996  
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[www.selahpub.com](http://www.selahpub.com)

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# Additional Resources available from Process and Faith

## **Books**

*How Are God and Evil Related?* A Hard Issues booklet by David Ray Griffin; \$2 members/\$1.75 non-members

*The Fall to Violence*, by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki; \$15.95

*Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, edited by Stephen T. Davis (with contributions from David Ray Griffin and John B. Cobb, Jr.); \$22.95

## **Videotapes**

*September 11: A Process Response*, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki; \$24 members/\$20 non-members

*Human Suffering and the Power of God*, Rabbi Harold Kushner, interviewed by John Cobb; \$23.95/\$19.95

**Web site: [www.processandfaith.org](http://www.processandfaith.org)**

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