

IN A NUTSHELL - by Isabel Carr

The Unitarian Universalist Viewpoints on EVIL

as Excerpted from Several Essays by Ministers and Teachers of the Movement

Rev. Dr. Paul Rasor, Dir., Center for Study of Religious Freedom, Virginia Wesleyan College.

“Unitarian Universalists and other liberals have always emphasized the positive aspects of the divine and human nature. As a result, critics sometimes charge that liberals don’t truly understand the reality of evil. Yet liberals are not naïve about evil; they just have a different framework for understanding it.”

Rev. Victoria Safford, White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church, Mahtomedi, MN . “Evil is the capacity, within us and among us, to break sacred bonds with our own souls, with one another, and with the holy. Further, it is the ability to excuse or justify this damage, to deny it, or to call it a virtue.”

Rev. Patrick O’Neill, First Unitarian Congregational Society, Brooklyn, N.Y.

“People are almost equally capable of both good and evil, but most of the time – say three out of five – people choose the good. This seesaw tilts just a few degrees in this tentative world, but those few degrees are the difference between peace and Armageddon. The job of the church is to put the few stubborn ounces of our weight on the side of goodness, and press down for all we are worth.”

Rev. Elizabeth Lerner, Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Springs, Maryland.

“The ancient Greeks viewed order and chaos as part of a series of opposites that balanced the world ... While some chaos is necessary to keep any system from stagnation, too much chaos keeps any system from the ability to nurture, protect, or cherish . . . Although evil is tangible, it is not the devil, it is not a being with intent to destroy us or buy our souls or undermine the kingdom of God”

Rev. James Ishmael Ford, First Unitarian Church of Providence, Rhode Island. “As we make our choices within the world, in each of our actions that follows those choices, we open the gates of good and evil. So, of course, there is evil. Knowing and accepting this is very important. But, there is something beyond. When we discover that profound unity which is true, and the realm of discrimination which is true - in that fraction of a second we are open to something incredible, healing, and compelling.”

Rev. Judith Meyer, Minister Emeritus, Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Monica, California.

“What is evil? An aspect of human nature. Apply enough pressure to any of us and something ugly will surface. Evil isn’t some malevolent power floating around in the universe, waiting to penetrate some unsuspecting soul. We do it all by ourselves.”

Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Bethesda, MD.

“I see evil as the willful separation from - and lack of concern for - the “common good.” . . . We will overcome evil when we refuse to play the game or to be silent, when we make a determined effort to understand evil as a possibility that awaits transformation.”