working draft

What's Wrong With This Picture? God, Evil and Suffering[1]

Amy G. Oden

My interest in this work is to see what Wesley and some of his successors have had to say about evil and suffering. I see the problem of evil as an urgent one at the end of the twentieth century. Theological trajectories for the twenty-first century will not be able to afford the luxury of skirting this human reality and theological problem. What has John Wesley to say about evil? How does he account for it? How have his successors understood the origin and reality of evil? How is God's goodness understood and proclaimed in light of evil and suffering? These are the questions that motivated this research. This paper, then, presents an initial survey of theological responses to evil. I will lay out the problem, look at Wesley's treatment of the problem, turn to some nineteenth and twentieth century views, identify some important shifts and raise questions for discussion.

I. The Problem: Evil and Suffering

The problem is most often posed this way: If God is all-good and all-powerful why does God permit evil? Why doesn't such a good God prevent or eliminate evil? More precisely, "An omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil,"[2] so why doesn't she? Further, a common distinction is made between moral evil, attributed to the moral agency of humans, and natural evil, attributed to natural forces within the universe.

The problem of reconciling evil, moral or natural, with the goodness of God constantly knocks at the doors of the Christian community. We know that following Christ does not shield us from poverty, cancer or the murder of our children. While we profess "God with us" and find in that proclamation considerable comfort and hope, we may still ask why an all-good and all-powerful God created a world in which poverty,

cancer and the murder of children are possibilities at all? In what way is God said to be "good" in light of these realities seemingly hard-wired into creation? What do we mean when we proclaim God good? The spiritual dissonance many Christians feel in this claim is honest and deserves treatment.

The problem of evil is not a merely speculative question. It is a very concrete one that determinedly confronts believers in daily lives of faith. As theologians of the church we are called on to address these painful contradictions and interpret the language of the church regarding God's nature. The signal event of the twentieth century, the holocaust of millions of men, women and children within a "Christian" society has raised profound questions about our faith, our understanding of ourselves, and our understanding of the nature of God. Dorothy Soelle speaks for many when she says,

> It simply went beyond my powers to conceive of a powerful God who could look at Auschwitz, tolerate it, participate in it, observe it, or whatever. If he is all-powerful, then he is devoid of love. Such was my conclusion.[3]

More recently and on a much smaller scale my city witnessed the bombing of a building with hundreds of innocent workers inside. What sort of God allows human freedom these parameters? Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities throughout the city had to struggle with how to defend their God.

One immediate move to mitigate the agony of the question is try to define "evil" such that it is relative to possible goods. In this response there is no "genuine" evil as such, there are only negative outcomes for particular beings, all of which are valued as good in the larger scheme of things, a sort of "Father Knows Best" approach to evil. Yet such maneuvers to ratchet down the reality of evil are misplaced . The defense of God's goodness cannot come at the expense of the trivialization of vast suffering. To name but one example, the accounts from the nineteenth century of African-American girls and women who were, evidence suggests, consistently and regularly subjected to the abusive, sexual whims of their slave masters leads speak of genuine evil.[4] Efforts to deny

"genuine" evil in the world leave God in the precarious position of requiring these girls' terror and degradation in order to maintain human freedom. Richard M. Gale comments that "It is easy to construct a theodicy, as well as a defense, if you demand little of an omnibenevolent being, thus the point of the bumper sticker, 'God exists, He just doesn't want to get involved.'"[5]

For many people, the claim that "His eye is on the sparrow" jarringly contradicts daily experiences of meaningless suffering, pain and evil. Attempts by Christian theologians to either downplay the reality of evil or repeat platitudes of everything working out for good undercut the power of the gospel and feed the incredulity of many outside Christianity. It may not be an exaggeration to say that evil and its concommitant suffering is the principle ground for atheism. Thus, the problem of evil is a pressing one not only internally as we seek a coherent doctrine of God and meaningful liturgy, but is a pressing one externally, that is, for a credible Christian witness to the world.

One interesting research note should be mentioned here. In conducting this research I was surprised as I perused the indices of books related to Wesleyan studies or by theologians associated with the Wesleyan tradition. The entries "evil" and "suffering" have few listings or are not listed at all in many books. "Sin" may be found more often as an entry, though still surprisingly absent in many texts.

II. Wesley's Treatment of the Problem

Unde malus? John Wesley was well aware of this problem both within the Christian communion as well as for its witness to the world. At many points throughout his career he engages this question, putting it variously. "Why are sin and its attendant pain in the world?"[6] "How could a Wise, Just and Good God, place his creatures in such a State, as that the Scale of Evil should preponderate?"[7] Quoting from Dr. Watt's "Doctrine of Original Sin" Wesley writes:

> In the civilized parts of the world, there is scarce on person sick or in pain, miserable or dying, but several others sustain a considerable share of misery, by the strong ties of nature or friendship. This diffuses a personal calamity through whole families. This multiples human miseries into a new and endless number."[8]

And again,

> But, to wave for the present the sins and follies of mankind, may we not infer from his miseries alone, that we are degenerate beings, bearing the most evident marks of the displeasure of our Maker? View the histories of mankind; and what is almost all history but a description of the wretchedness of men, under the mischiefs they bring upon themselves, and the judgments of the great God? ... if we look over the universe, what public desolations by plague and famine, by storms and earthquakes, by wars and pestilence! What secret mischiefs reign among men, which pierce and torture the soul! What smarting wounds and bruises, what pains and diseases, attack and torment the animal frame![9]

Describing the human condition, Wesley notes that such misery carries a special burden for the poor:

> As for the poor, how does the sultry toil exhaust their lives in summer, and what starving wretchedness do they feel in winter! How is a miserable life sustained among all the pains and fatigue of nature, with the oppression, cruelty, and scorn of the rich![10]

Wesley returns to the question of evil and suffering over and over again throughout his life. From a letter to his father in December 1730 to sermons in the last decade of his life, Wesley works to explain the apparent necessity of evil in the universe.[11] Albert C. Outler confirms this sense that Wesley had a "serious preoccupation, both early and late, with the problem of evil, and especially *moral* evil."[12]

Further, this is not a theoretical problem for Wesley. His "parish" of eighteenth century England felt very keenly the injustice and caprice of both moral and natural evil. Infant deaths during the first year of life ran close to 50 percent in England. Epidemics were not uncommon and disease not well understood. The Methodist people themselves

experienced their share of illness and natural disaster as well as well-documented persecution and violence. [13] How could the good God of creation tolerate these sufferings?

The doctrine of original sin plays a central and crucial role in Wesley's theological anthropology. Its implications, however, go well beyond understanding fallen humanity and salvation. Simply put, original sin accounts for the origin of all evil. Wesley claims that all evil is the result of the fall of the human will. God created the world in perfection, beauty and justice, so evil does not inhere in the origins of creation (we will return to the question of the goodness of God in creation below). Rather, the fallibility of the will introduces evil into creation. In his sermon, "The End of Christ's Coming" (1781) Wesley describes the unraveling of "the whole difficulty":

> And God created man, not only in his natural, but likewise in his own moral image. He created him not only in knowledge but also in righteousness, and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind, so were all his affections. . . . But it cannot be doubted he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore not impeccable. And this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand question, *unde malum*? "How came evil into the world?" It came from "Lucifer, son of the morning"; it was "the work of the devil." "For the devil," saith the Apostle, "sinneth from the beginning"; that is, was the first sinner in the universe; the author of sin; the first being *who by the abuse of his liberty introduced evil into the creation.* "He, of the first, If not the first archangel," was tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way first to pride, then to self-will.[14] (italics mine)

The devil, as the "first sinner of the universe," abused free will bringing evil into creation. The resulting defect permanently lodged in the human will is evidenced abundantly in the sinfulness that leads to manifold human misery.[15] Evil is the act of not choosing good, acting out of accordance with the divine will.[16] Through Adam all humanity inherits a will bent by sinfulness. The original state of the *imago dei* in humans is marred if not entirely obliterated by Adam's sin, a problematic and important

connection for Wesley's notions of sanctification as the reordering and renewing of the image of God in a person. Still, according to Wesley, the traditional categories of natural, moral and penal evil are understandable consequences of the abuse of free will.[17] Moral and penal evil are merely just deserts of human sinfulness. If people embrace moral sin, moral evil will befall them. Penal evil is just punishment for those who have chosen to sin. Natural evil is another matter, literally. How it results from Adam's sin, we will address shortly.

Wesley is keen to show, against many of the so-called optimists of his day, that humans did, in fact, have free will. This concern may have been not so much to trumpet the glory of human freedom as to deny that evil was constitutive of matter itself:

> Evil did not exist at all in the original nature of thing. It was no more the necessary result of matter than it was the necessary result of spirit. All things then, without exception were very good.[18]

Evil did not have to enter creation. But it did enter through the exercise of freedom. Human free will genuinely exists. But this does not settle the question of the origin of evil, for one might still ask, as Wesley does, "Why did God give them that choice?"[19] This question is not unlike the one recently posed by a system analyst for the Internet after a recent world-wide dysfunction, "Why create a system that allows for human error?"[20] At this point Wesley makes the modest claim that it is not inconsistent with any of God's attributes, namely, goodness and justice, to give humans "the choice of life and death."[21] We are still not at a satisfactory answer, for given a free will, some are much better at making good choices than others. When we look around the table at a pastor-parish relations committee meeting we may ask ourselves why some are so gifted in grace while others so meanly endowed. "Why God is pleased to bestow on these persons such a measure of virtue and happiness we can no more tell than why he is pleased to bestow such a measure of suffering as he does on others."[22] In fact, Wesley finally retreats into mystery. To the question, "But why did the good God suffer me to be

so prone to pride?" he offers this answer: "And here at least we must hold; here we have nothing more to do but to rest on his good pleasure, and to own that 'his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out!'"[23]

But how is natural evil the result of original sin? Wesley shows that the entire chain of being, the blueprint of the cosmos, was perverted by Adam's sin. Through the created order even "brute creatures" could share in God's blessings, but only as they

> flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that 'the creature', every creature, 'was subject to vanity', to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils. . . . The very foundations of their nature are out of course, are turned upside down.[24]

(One wonders how animals rights activists might use such an argument today to further justice for all creatures.) The point here is that the material world is not immune from the effects of the fall. Indeed, its very structure is "turned upside down." In his many treatments of natural disaster, particularly landslides and earthquakes, Wesley points to God's sovereignty over all of nature. Nothing is random accident. In "Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Late Earthquake at Lisbon" (1755) he argues that whatever the natural causes, these events "are still under the direction of the Lord of nature: Nay, what is nature itself but the art of God, or God's method of acting in the material world?"[25] Charles Wesley, in a sermon "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," which Jackson and subsequent editors attribute erroneously to John, explicitly draws a causal connection between original sin and natural evil. One could hardly state it more strongly:

> earthquakes are the works of the Lord, and He only bringeth this destruction upon the earth. Now, that God is himself the Author, and sin the moral cause of earthquakes (whatever the natural cause

> may be,) cannot be denied by any who believe the Scriptures [. . .]
> Sin the cause, earthquakes the effect, of his anger. [26]

While John did not write these words, they are consistent with his view regarding natural evil: 1) it is a result of original sin, 2) it demonstrates God's power and 3) it is used by God to punish humanity justly. Interestingly, in a sermon preached at Epworth he proclaims most clearly this view of natural sin as punishment. This sermon followed a disastrous fire which had served to merely postpone rather than cancel a widely anticipated horse-race. In "Public Diversions Denounced" (1732) Referring to the fire, Wesley pummels his congregation with his astonishment at the town's blindness to God's certain wrath:

> Do not all men know that whatever evil befalls them, it befalls them by God's appointment? And that he appoints every evil of this life to warn men to avoid greater evils? That he sends these lighter marks of his anger to awaken men, that they may shun his heavier vengeance, and be timely advised, by feeling part of it, to change their ways, and not suffer his whole displeasure to arise? [27]

He goes on in the sermon to show that "there is no evil in any place which the Lord hath not done." [28]

It is important to note in centering his explanations of both moral and natural evil on original sin Wesley depends heavily on the idea that Lucifer lead a rebellion of creatures against the Creator, a biblically questionable notion. [29] In the above quoted sermon he even goes so far as to claim that God may use evil spirits to effect his will. Logically, the premise of God's sovereignty demands it:

> Not only his blessed angels, but all things, serve him in all places of his dominion: those wicked spirits that rule the darkness of this world, and those men who are like them. . . It makes no difference whether he executes his purpose by the powers of heaven or hell, or by the mistakes, carelessness, or malice of men. If a destroying angel march forth against a town or country, it is God that empowers him to destroy. [30]

Wesley has a consistent, even systematic, view of the origins of both moral and natural evil. The fallibility of the will accounts for both. God's sovereignty, goodness and justice are preserved. However, the cost of preserving them is high for twentieth century readers. Many would not find in Wesley satisfying (and that may be the problem) answers to questions as to why all humans carry Adam's guilt, why God allowed human error in the first place, and why God's blessings to the rest of creation depend on human moral agency.

III. Some Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Treaments of Evil

We turn now to a brief look at some attempts by nineteenth and twentieth century theologians in the Wesleyan tradition to address the problem of evil, particularly as it relates to the goodness of God. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries explicit treatments of evil and suffering are more difficult to find, but are embedded within the theological systems of Methodist writers in the United States. This portion of my research is cursory and still in progress. I present here only initial patterns and need to read further.

While the scope of this paper does not allow for a historical survey of theologians there are some important shifts to identify. Robert Chiles talks about "revised theological motifs" in American Methodist theological history from 1840-1890.[31] The triumph of common-sense philosophy's interest in freedom and responsibility enlarged the role of human free will in Methodist thought. Daniel Whedon, Miner Raymond, W.F. Warren and John Miley all reflect a shift to categories of free personal agency.[32] The upshot is an increasing rejection of "native depravity" and any notion of original guilt. While some voices continue to be raised over this wholesale displacement of human depravity from the center of Wesleyan theology, the train is on its tracks. Chiles describes John Miley's developed "ethical Arminianism" which is illustrated in

> His efforts to eliminate all remnants of Augustinian realism by his critique of native guilt, his insistence on governmental justice as the key to the atonement, and his tendency to compromise the gracious basis of man's freedom in his philosophical doctrine of responsibility... [33]

We might imagine here the theological equivalent of a zoom lens that tightens the view of the theological landscape to one actor, the human. The basic transition in American Methodist theology from "sinful man" to "moral man" tends to magnify the role of the person in salvation and dilute the dialectic of sin and grace. Nineteenth century emphases on practical, experiential holiness allow our gaze to remain largely in the mirror. While Wesley holds to a clear and strong doctrine of original sin, guilt and subsequent depravity, his theological heirs move it from the center and transform its meaning. Ultimately, prevenient grace itself will come to be seen, not as salve for the ailing human soul, but as undistinguished from human nature itself, acting in its freedom.[34] Moral evil is easily accounted for by this radical human freedom. It is no surprise that discussion about the nature of God is increasingly irrelevant. Neither God's goodness nor God's justice need be explored or defended when all depends on human freedom.

Still, the question of natural evil and the origin of evil remains. Richard Watson addresses original sin head on and follows Wesley with little modification: Adam's fall introduces sin. However, he does not take the next step to explore the ultimate ground of evil. In his *Institutes* it is Satan and the "doctrine of diabolical influence" which taint creation. [35] Miley offers a partial answer to "In what sense did God permit the fall?": "if the punishment of sin is just, the permission of sin cannot be unjust." [36] This at least attempt to offer some defense of God's justice if not God's goodness. Chiles says that "Miley disputes Wesley's belief that as a result of the fall man is offered even greater glories through the redemptive economy. The attempt to vindicate God in this manner impugns his holiness by making sin necessary to the greatest good." [37] Albert Knudson, a liberal theologian of the early twentieth century, says this about the origin of evil: "The

only responsibility that God has for sin is in providing for its possibility."[38] This possibility shows God's "faith in the power of his own redemptive agency."[39] The problem of the origin of evil and the nature of God are left relatively unexplored as nineteenth and early twentieth century American Methodism attends to questions related to theological anthropology.

In the twentieth century both process and liberation theology take on the question of the origin of evil and God's nature in light of it. Again, a full survey of these creative and thoughtful developments will not be accomplished here. We depart at this point from looking only at sources within the Wesleyan tradition. One feature of much twentieth century theology is that denominational identities and distinctions become less central to the theology itself and more historical accidents of the theologians.

The revisionist metaphysics of process theology has suggested that the problem of evil rests in traditional models of God. As long as God's omnipotence or sovereignty entails controlling every detail of the events in our world God must be responsible for genuine evil.[40] A process model of God holds that God's omnipotence does not entail having all the power there is, thereby controlling every event, but that "God's power is persuasive, not controlling."[41] The process view of reality, simplified, argues that in each moment, each actuality freely becomes even while determined in part by that which has preceded it. These actualities, while interrelated, are self-determining, not coerced by the divine will, and so can influence the future. While the eternal aim of God is harmony and the maximization of the good, genuine evil can arise out of the potency of actualities. The structure of reality entails evil as a constituent. Still, in process metaphysics, God is "freed from the suspicion of being unjust."[42]

Liberation theologies have taken suffering more seriously than perhaps any other movement in twentieth century theology. The context of liberation theology is the insistent reality of human suffering. Desmond Tutu makes this proclamation:

> Liberation theology more than any other kind of theology issues out of the crucible of human suffering and anguish. It happens when people cry out, "Oh, God, how long?" "oh, God, but why?" All liberation theology stems from trying to make sense of human suffering when those who suffer are the victims of organized oppression and exploitation, when they are emasculated and treated as less than what they are: human persons created in the image of the Triune God, redeemed by the one Savior Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Paraclete. This is the genesis of all liberation theology and so also of black theology, which is theology of liberation in Africa. [43]

While all of theology must be contextualized within the frame of historical suffering, liberation theology has focused largely on suffering caused by injustice and on Christian praxis in light of God's liberating love. For example, Gustavo Gutierrez has argued in his work that poverty is an evil, an expression of sin and incompatible with God's kingdom of love and justice. [44] Gutierrez seeks God's self-revelation in the poor. Unlike process theology which deals with theodicy by modifying traditional ideas about God, liberation theologies discover God anew in solidarity with the poor. Gutierrez does not give ground regarding God's transcendence claiming that only when we enter into solidarity with the suffering can we experience God's utter freedom and gratuitous love. [45]

Feminist theology as well has been less interested in evil as it inheres in the structure of reality and more concerned with its consequences for human and other life. Many feminist theologians reject traditional notions of an omnipotent God because of the social consequences of theologies based on submission, self-sacrifice, or obedience to this God. Worshipping a God "in control" has become too often the rationale for violating and abusive power over others in order to enforce God's will. Dorothy Soelle has, throughout all of her extensive writings, struggled with the origin and nature of evil, asking how, after the reality of the holocaust, one can still talk about an almighty God. Soelle transforms God's omnipotence into God's powerlessness, as embodied in Jesus Christ, through which "God himself is no longer one who imposes suffering, but a fellow sufferer." [46] The "abba" of Jesus is a loving God who does not avoid suffering through

impassability but who feels our pain. Our only way to this God is through Jesus and his cross:

> The son was closer to me than the father, he revealed what the father could not communicate to me: love without privileges; love which empties itself and takes on the shape of a salve, a proletarian love which prefers to go to hell as long as others are condemned to stay there. [47]

Soelle reflects other liberation theologies in this focus on the cross and the resurrection as the central symbols of God's power. Power is not gained in submission and obedience but in solidarity and freedom, the two elements of Jesus' suffering. Liberation theologies have kept a focus on evil through emphases on solidarity with the oppressed, God's preferential option for the poor, active engagement of the gospel with political and economic spheres, and God as suffering along with God's creatures.

On another front, one contemporary systematic theologian working self-consciously in the Wesleyan tradition has suggested that "One had best not speak prematurely of Christian theodicy without first studying carefully the scriptural teaching on providence." [48] Thomas C. Oden argues for a renewed understanding of the orthodox teaching on God's providence as the best remedy for those disturbed by evil. [49] A careful and proper treatment of the questions posed by the problem of evil follows a "time-tested" sequence that moves "from God to creation to providence to anthropology to salvation to ecclesiology and sanctification." [50] Only within this larger theological context that begins quite expressly with the nature and being of God can the questions of this research be adequately addressed according to Oden. Outside of process theology, his treatment of evil as it bears upon a doctrine of God is the most systematic, careful and thoroughgoing of any I could find. He takes seriously the problem of evil both metaphysically and pastorally.

IV. Some Important Theological Shifts

Several important shifts have occurred in attempts to offer some meaningful explanation of the reality of evil in creation. The role of original sin as the central culprit has been diminished without providing alternate explanations. This downplaying of original sin reduces the role of human sinfulness itself in evil. We have increasingly come to see humans as free yet not entirely responsible, removing human culpability through a thoroughgoing historical determinism. This view often goes something like this: we are morally neutral creatures, but are predisposed through historical and environmental factors to particular behaviors and choices for which we are not fully responsible. People may make bad choices, even evil choices, but historical and environmental factors play a central role. This is sometimes expressed in the widespread victim mentality much addressed in United States culture. A diminished role for original sin is a problem when it leads us to take our own sinfulness less seriously. It can allow us to see instances of evil and suffering as discrete events in history which are environmentally specific and unrelated in any organic way to our own lives. The suffering of others is "theirs" separate from our own lives or any larger reality of evil.

Some contemporary theologians have tried to address these shifts by interpreting historical and environmental factors in terms of structures of systemic evil, thereby incorporating them into traditional notions of the structure of original sin and its inheritance.

During this same period of shifting away from the doctrine of original sin, the question of why God allows natural evil has been largely neglected, the main exception being process theology. Questions about God's putative goodness in the face of

overwhelming natural evil continue to be disturbing. Both process and liberation theology modify components of the classical understanding of God. Process theology revises notions of God's power, while liberation theology revises notions of God's experience. Still, questions remain.

V. Questions for Discussion:

My interest in this paper has been to raise the issues that I believe face Wesleyan communities of faith in the twenty-first century, both internally and externally. For Wesleyans in North America, the challenge is and has been simply to get these issues on the table. Most Methodists (and other Americans) function out of a very narrowly focused self-reference: if I'm OK, God's OK; if I'm not OK, God is either the bad guy or non-existent. Evil and suffering as others experience them or as they inhere in reality itself seldom get to the center of our theological conversations. Our doctrines about God remain undeveloped as a result. The following questions are to begin discussion.

1. What modifications, if any, in Wesley's doctrine of God are necessary to confront the realities of evil and suffering?

2.What posture is appropriate from the Christian community regarding God's goodness in light of evil and suffering?

3. What ecclesial and liturgical expressions might enable us to confront the realities of evil and suffering?

END NOTES

1. I want to thank the Bridwell Library of Southern Methodist University of a Research Fellowship which allowed me to conduct my initial research.

2. David Ray Griffin, *God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 9.

3. Dorothy Soelle, *The Strength of the Weak: Toward A Christian Feminist Identity*, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 98 quoted in Lucien Richard, *What are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering*? (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 75.

4. M. Shawn Copeland, "'Wading through Many Sorrows': Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist Perspective" in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 109-129.

5. Richard M. Gale, "Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatment of Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 215. He goes to say that "The whole idea of a deity who is so vain that if his children do not choose to love and obey him he will bring down all sorts of horrible evils on them and their innocent descendant is horrendous. Think of what we would say about a human father who treated his children in this way."

6. "The Promise of Understanding," *Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975-), 4: 285. Hereafter this edition of Wesley's works will be designated *BEW*.

7. "The Doctrine of Original Sin," Part III, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Third Edition (1872) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1958), IX: 346. Hereafter designated *Works*

8. "The Doctrine of Original Sin," Part IV, *Works*, IX: 369-70.

9. "The Doctrine of Original Sin," The First Essay, Section 2, *Works*, IX: 383.

10. *Ibid.*, 385.

11. Barry E. Bryant, in *John Wesley's Doctrine of Sin*, (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1992), cites the following: *BEW*, 25: 240-2 (1729), 25: 258 (1730), 25: 264-7 (1731); *Arminian Magazine* (1778-97), 3 (1780), 604-6, 607-11; "The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4: 285; "The End of Christ's Coming" (1781), *BEW*, 2: 476. Further, he notes that Wesley's "Sermon Register" indicates twenty-seven instances of preaching between 1742 and 1789 on the text of 1 John 3:8.

12. *BEW*, 2: 471.

13. See Franklin Wilder, *The Methodist Riots* (Great Neck, New York: Todd and Honeywell, Inc., 1987); Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945); D. Dunn Wilson, *Many Waters Cannot Quench: A Study of the Sufferings of Eighteenth-century Methodism and their Significance for John Wesley and the First Methodists.* (London: Epworth Press, 1969).

14. "The End of Christ's Coming," *BEW* 2:475-6. In Bryant, 130.

15. "God's Approbation of His Works" (1782) *BEW* 2:399. Quoted in Bryant, 127.

16. *BEW* 25:241-2 (Dec 19, 1729), in Bryant, 129. Note here an important distinction from the Augustinian notion of evil as the absence of, rather than the deviation from, good,.

17. "The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4: 285.

18. Much of Wesley's extensive treatise "The Doctrine of Original Sin" is spent making this case.

19. "The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4: 285.

20. "All Things Considered," National Public Radio, July 16, 1997.

21. "The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4: 285.

22. *Ibid.*, 286.

23. *Ibid.*, 287.

24. "The General Deliverance," (1781) *BEW*, 2: 442-3. I am indebted to Barry E. Bryant's exposition of Wesley's view of the "chain of being," 92-103.

25. *Works*, XI: 6.

26. *Works*, VII: 387.

27. "Public Diversions Denounced" (1732), *BEW* 4: 319.

28. *Ibid.*, 320.

29. On Wesley's views of Lucifer's rebellion and self-will see "The End of Christ's Coming," (1781) *BEW* 2: 476 and "Of Evil Angels" (1783) *BEW* 3: 16-29.

30. "Public Diversions Denounced" (1732), *BEW* 4: 320-321.

31. Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 49-58. Eventually this shift will result, says Chiles, in a move from "liberal evangelicalism" to "evangelical liberalism," 66.

32. *Ibid.*, 55.

33. *Ibid.*, 60.

34. *Ibid.*, 193f.

35. Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, ed. J. M'Clintock (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1850), 2 vols.

36. John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Eaton and Mains; Hunt and Eaton, 1892, 1894), 1:437 quoted in Chiles, 131.

37. Chiles, 131.

38. Albert Knudson, *Systematic Theology* 2: 269 quoted in Chiles, 142.

39. Albert Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1933), 270.

40. David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 17. Also see for a process treatment of evil, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1981); Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).

41. Griffin., 276. Also see Dalton DeVere Baldwin, *A Whiteheadian Solution to the Problem of Evil* (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1975), 314f.

42. Hans Schwartz, *Evil: A Historical and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 183.

43. Desmond Tutu, "The Theology of Liberation in Africa," in Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., *African Theology en Route: Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, December 17-23, 1977, Accra, Ghana* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 163. Jon Sobrino puts it this way: "The task of theology is to find its place in the reality of this suffering world, to find a place within the very suffering of this world." Jon Sobrino, "Theology in a Suffering World: Theology as *Intellectus Amoris*," in Paul Knitten, ed. *Pluralism and Oppression, Theology in World Perspective*, The Annual Publications of the College Theology Society, vol. 34 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 159.

44. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Sister Chridan Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1971) 164 f. See also Gutierrez, *On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987); *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll: Orbis Books; Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1984); *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Works*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).

44. Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 87 f.

46. Dorothy Soelle, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, International, 1990), 187-188.

47. Dorothy Soelle, *Beyond Mere Dialogue: On Being Christian and Socialist* (Detroit: Christians for Socialism, 1978), xix.

48. Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume 1.* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987), 272.

49. Oden, Chapter 7, "God's Care for the World," pp. 271-315.

50. *Ibid.*, 272.