

# Hymns and the Nature of Evil Toward a Sung Theodicy:<sup>1</sup> A Hymnwriter's Musings<sup>2</sup>

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Few days seem to go by without the news of a natural disaster in some part of the world. In recent memory we have had the super-storm Sandy and before that hurricane Katrina. Such events raise questions for our liturgy and use of hymns and the degree to which either should reflect or seek to account for such events. Historically hymns have been seen as the praise of God sung, the means of internalizing doctrine, and of making scripture memorable, though some years ago Wainwright underlined his belief that such a definition of a hymn should not be applied narrowly.<sup>3</sup>

When I began to learn theology I did so as a scientist. Writing verse helped me to make sense of theology, of a language that felt foreign. Simultaneously I needed to integrate my own understanding of the world and, indeed, that of the cosmos. Translating, as it were, the Bible or doctrine into verse helped this process. As time has gone on I have used hymn writing to make sense of personal grief and international tragedy, of issues of science and faith, and of the very nature of God.

The purpose of this paper is to take that process further by examining the way in which hymns may be used to explore one particular aspect of theology, that of the nature of evil. Technically this subject is referred to as theodicy. This may seem to be a strange subject for the hymn writer, yet if hymns are statements of belief, expressions of praise, or vehicles of lament, then to have integrity they must, from time to time, touch on the subject of evil. For those who wish to gain an overview of this aspect of theology John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*<sup>4</sup> is invaluable.

At the end of any study of theodicy we are likely to be left without a satisfactory explanation for the origin of the evil that we describe when, for instance, an earthquake or tsunami is not simply seen in isolation, but as it harms humankind. To suggest that such evil has its origin in The Fall cannot, as John Hick observed, 'be saved from the charge of self-contradiction and absurdity'.<sup>5</sup> Yet there is still a strand in popu-

lar belief and even sophisticated theology that pictures God as arbitrary, vindictive, and even fascist. As Catherine Keller says, 'Calvin is right [. . .] God is right there in the midst of every event'. But as she goes on to say, 'Calvin assumed that to *participate* in an event is to *control* it'.<sup>6</sup> For her this aspect of Calvinism makes little sense. Nevertheless it is a counter to an unhealthy dualism which seeks to separate God from the reality of evil in the world, however hard it may be to take. It places the responsibility for natural disasters firmly at God's door.

This path of exploration is not new. Biblically it begins, perhaps, with the book of Job. A nineteenth-century Unitarian minister reflecting theologically on suffering, wrote, 'One end we do know, that suffering and evil are inseparably connected with this life'.<sup>7</sup> In recent years science has begun to demonstrate the truth of this in quite a stark manner. It is generally accepted that the existence of life on this planet is dependent on a delicate balance of circumstances. This is not simply the 'goldilocks effect' relating to the position of our planet in relation to the sun, but is rooted in the geological nature of the planet itself. It has been stated that if the structure of the earth's crust was different from what it is, that is if it was not fragile, dynamic, open to fracture, constructed of tectonic plates moving constantly, inexorably, causing eruptions and earthquakes, then there would be no life here at all, at least not as we know it. The existence of life on this planet is dependent on the dangerous, unpredictable nature of the structure of the earth. At a very simple level the movement of the earth's crust has generated mountains and valleys, vast basins in which condensing water could rest to form seas. And in these seas we believe life began.

So our theodicy must take account of the fact that the existence of life and the possibility of earthquakes are immutably linked. If we believe in a creative God, then that God must bear responsibility for the nature of this creation. It is another step altogether to suggest a link between natural disasters and the judgment of individuals or nations by God. Thomas Sherlock

(1678–1761), Bishop of London at the time of the London earthquakes (1750), blamed them “on everything from plays and operas, to cock-fighting and boxing during Lent, to the availability of novels, which he dubs ‘vile abominable Pictures of Lewdness’”.<sup>8</sup> While many people would find such conclusions laughable, the response of a significant number of Christians to AIDS/HIV has been to see this disease as God’s judgment on a particular expression of sexuality. This became harder to justify as the infection began to be found outside the lesbian and gay population.

Where this digression leads us is to the conclusion that perceived evils such as natural disasters, human disabilities, disease, and disfigurement are integral components of creation. Indeed, some of these are essential for the world to be as we know it at all. In a very real sense God is responsible, if we believe in a creator God, but these so-called evils, while being necessitous for existence hold no value judgment in themselves. As earthquakes are not a sign of God’s judgment, neither is, say, disability. In a theological sense all of these are, in effect, neutral. This understanding points back toward some accommodation with the ideas expressed in the book of Job, not least that swift judgments should not be made in the face of suffering. Neither earthquakes nor HIV are judgments imposed by God in relation to supposed sins. Both are part of the nature of creation as it is known and experienced. To think otherwise attributes to God a very poor sense of aim as there is just too much collateral damage for these to be tools of judgment. They lack the precision of justice, let alone mercy.

In the light of this brief overview of theodicy it is now the purpose of this paper to look at the way in which hymns have been used to explore or give expression to theodicy. Given that this genre is a powerful means of imparting and internalizing doctrine this is surely an area of significance for any church that sings its faith. In historically modern hymnody the first comprehensive use of hymns in this context was made by Charles Wesley in two collections, *Hymns occasioned by the Earthquake, March 8, 1750<sup>9</sup> Part I and Part II*. A detailed examination of these hymns has been provided by Karen Westerfield Tucker.<sup>10</sup>

What follows is a brief survey and commentary on twentieth and twenty-first century hymns relating to similar events. In relation to theodicy this is only a preliminary investigation, as texts relating to other issues such as, for instance, illness and disability, are beyond the scope of the present paper, though they are an ongoing subject of interest and research.

This examination will begin with an example that keeps closest to accepted theological custom. *Sing Psalms*, published by the Free Church of Scotland in 2003, follows in the tradition of metrical psalmody in providing a paraphrase of Psalm 68. Thirty-five verses are condensed to eighteen stanzas in 88.88.88 with no

less than six tunes suggested, one of which is ABINGDON. The text begins with contrasting sentiments, faithful to the psalm:

1 May God arise, and may his foes  
be scattered far and put to flight.

and then at verse three:

3 But may the righteous all be glad;  
may they rejoice and sing aloud.

Verses seven and eight of the psalm are set in the hymn as follows:

7 When you, O God, went out and led  
your people through the desert plain—  
when through the wilderness you marched,

8 Earth shook and heaven poured down rain  
before the God of Sinai’s hill,  
before the God of Israèl.

As the psalm develops, the theology which undergirds it becomes plain:

19 Praise to the LORD, our Saviour God;  
our burdens daily he relieves.

20 [. . .]  
The Sovereign LORD defeats the grave;  
he has the power from death to save.

21 The LORD will crush his enemies’ heads,  
the skulls of those who practise sin.

22 ‘From Bashan I will bring them down,  
and from the sea’s depths bring them in,

23 That you may plunge your feet in blood,  
which dogs will lick up as their food.’<sup>11</sup>

There is not much commentary here on natural disasters, but it is clear that a theodicy which places both responsibility and judgment in ‘God’s hands’ in an undiluted, un-interpreted form is still viable for some in the twenty-first century. One strand of traditional hymnody depends on a reiteration of scripture with little commentary and with rare juxtaposition of texts from different parts of the Bible. Such a juxtaposition was something at which Charles Wesley excelled.

The question remains, what response can be made to the earthquake, the tsunami, the mudslide, the hurricane, the tornado? For some, all remains unanswered as ‘God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform’. This God ‘plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm’.<sup>12</sup>

John Schimminger, responding to an earthquake in Haiti in a hymn, ‘O Source of all that was and is to be’, posted on the website of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada in 2011,<sup>13</sup> acknowledges that ‘. . . We see Your hand creating ever a new thing . . . By quaking, flood and fire you shape the earth’. The path which humans take is ‘unknown’, a wandering, ‘Yet must we turn from self, from hearts of stone, /And turning, to the path of Kindness keep’. The tenor of this text seems to want to attribute warning, if not judgment, to natural events in order that in response to the witnessing of such things the singer is bid to, ‘. . . make the Christ, your Love, our all, /Con-sid’ring all things else idolatry’.

Michael Forster takes a step further, suggesting that it might be appropriate to pray to God to preserve humanity from such incursions, and so his 'O God of truth and justice' has the following lines:

Come not in fire or earthquake,  
or sign of worldly power,  
but let your gentle whisper  
announce the hallowed hour!<sup>14</sup>

Forster goes on to recognize the reality of 'storms of life' but asks that 'the voice of stillness' might calm and remake us, that fixing our faithful hearts on the Saviour we might, 'ride the threatening wave'.

June Boyce-Tillman's approach to the subject is more romantic, more pastoral. For her 'patchworks of sound' include, amongst other things, 'the vibrations of earthquakes and bees/ Of the laughing fire's crackling and murmuring breeze' and all of these together go to make up '. . . the song of the earth'.<sup>15</sup> Yet she writes of this text that it 'encompasses some of my deepest beliefs about the nature of music and its relationship to the earth'.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that she is making theological connections which are stronger than the simplicity of the text might imply.

Apparently less idyllic is Forster who, in a hymn that echoes the title of the book *Cry Freedom*, set in South Africa's apartheid era, writes:

Cry 'Freedom!' for the victims of the earthquake  
and the rain,  
where wealthy folk find shelter and the poor must  
bear the pain;  
where weapons claim resources while the famine  
strikes again.<sup>17</sup>

Forster moves through a sequence of situations in which freedom is sought for those who are suffering and touches on the way in which theology is manipulated by believers to offer answers where the doubt of Job might better be professed:

Cry 'Freedom!' in the church when honest doubts  
are met with fear,  
when vacuum-packed theology makes questions disappear,  
when journeys end before they start and myst'ry's  
crystal clear!<sup>18</sup>

That last line opens up the way into the theological question that has been a thread running throughout this paper. The reality of earthquakes is recognized and in different generations humanity has understood, to greater or lesser degrees, how the cosmos works, how creation is strung together. The task of the theologian and, it could be argued, the hymn-poet who brings theology to bear on experience, is to ask where is God in all of this?

Kim Fabricius is forthright in offering more questions than answers as he writes:  
Children die from drought and earthquake,  
children die by hand of man.  
What on earth, and what for God's sake,  
can be made of such a plan?

Nothing - no such plan's been plotted;  
nothing - no such plan exists:  
if such suffering were allotted,  
God would be an atheist.

That last line contains a frightening oxymoron. Ultimately Fabricius moves toward an open-ended conclusion:

Answers aren't in explanation,  
answers come at quite a cost:  
only wonder at creation,  
and the practice of the cross.<sup>19</sup>

' . . . quite a cost' is a subtle expression of massive understatement and he knows it.

The Swedish authors Anders Frostenson and Arthur Lundkvist, as translated by Fred Kaan, take this further. When, 'Earth is shaken to its bed-rock', shaking our confidence, our only hope, they write, is to face 'God with God',<sup>20</sup> perhaps an allusion to lament. The authors and translator teeter between charging God with consequential carnage and an expression of almost unquestioning faith for 'All we have to do is trust him [that is, God], willing nothing but his will and purpose'. At this point the hymn has an unexpected twist for 'his constant love, [is] strong, persuasive, seeking out, and finding, all who live'. It is as though Frostenson and Lundkvist are saying that this unerring trust is rational because the God in whom it is placed, in essence, loves. This sense of trust in a loving God is something with which Charles Wesley would undoubtedly have concurred. It contains echoes of Calvin's interpretation of the opening verse of Psalm 22:

When the Psalmist speaks of being forsaken and cast off by God, it seems to be the complaint of a man in despair; for can a man have a single spark of faith remaining in him, when he believes that there is no longer any succour for him in God? And yet in calling God twice his own God, and depositing his groanings into his bosom, he makes a very distinct confession of his faith.

Calvin goes on to point out that people wrestling with God find in themselves the weakness of the flesh but at the same time give evidence of their faith.<sup>21</sup> The challenge is actually to enter into the struggle, to be secure enough in faith to complain to God.<sup>22</sup> To return to Frostenson and Lundkvist, there is in their text the beginning of an incarnational theology that finds God in the midst of the chaos of destruction. What is lacking is any developed sense of the lament, charging God with the monstrous destruction reaped by an earthquake, to which Harrell Beck alludes, observing that the psalms recognise the need even for thanksgiving to derive from reality and sometimes hardship. There is no real thanksgiving when people have not had to struggle to achieve it.<sup>23</sup> In support of this Beck quotes Emily Dickinson:

Without darkness there is no light,  
Without silence, no word.

Praise and lament, therefore, stand in antiphonal relationship.

This gap begins to be filled in a hymn by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette which begins

God, we've known such grief and anger  
As we've heard your people cry.  
We have asked you, "How much longer?"  
We have sadly wondered, "Why?"

Gillette, recognizing a world of suffering, pleads to obtain the reassurance that God will not abandon humanity. She then offers the comfort that through 'grace comes resurrection' and 'love casts out fear'; that there is comfort for the grieving and 'Hope is ours for, God, you love us!'<sup>24</sup> This moves the singer on but the transition from hopelessness to assurance will be, for many, almost too easy. Neither is the inter-connectedness of the nature of the earth and human existence addressed. This paper will now offer some preliminary explorations of this theme.

The first question to be addressed reaches back to Wesley. It has already been mentioned that Thomas Sherlock was unequivocal in his certainty that the earthquakes of 1750 emanated as a judgment of God. It will also be remembered that, while Charles Wesley shared Sherlock's context, he was less certain of the fate of those who died. As suggested above, our understanding of nature now places an even greater question mark over a theodicy predicated on God's judgment, while at the same time holding in tension God's responsibility for the way the world behaves and the fate of humanity and, indeed, all that has life. And so, echoing Fabricius, when I see an earthquake I want to ask:

Is this the judgement of a God,  
a God who wind and waves obey?  
Where is compassion, grace and love  
when earthquakes, death and fear hold sway?<sup>25</sup>

One response is to simply, humbly, say, 'we do not know':

Yet, Lord, so much in nature  
we cannot halt or change:  
flood, hurricane and earthquake  
destructive, sudden, strange.  
Lord of the earth's resources  
we ask, bewildered, why?  
Amid these mighty forces  
teach us humility.<sup>26</sup>

Simply watching the television screen brings a sense of helplessness which raises for me the question: 'What is the logic of this pain, when grace is [apparently] lost from human sight?' I want to reflect on what I, as a lay person, know of geology and cosmology.

We know this world is finely set,  
this globe is tuned for life and birth.  
Tectonic plates that drift and shift  
create the chance of life on earth.

And that raises another question of the Psalmist. If it is assumed that geologists have gotten it right, that leads to a reasonable conclusion that, 'There is no other way to be'.<sup>27</sup> Yet everything is riddle, contrast, and contradiction:

The good of God is clear to see,  
the evidence is strong,  
but can distort our point of view—  
what do we make of wrong?

What of the earthquake, wind and fire,  
not just the still, small voice?  
What of the twister's wild lament  
or cancer's random choice?<sup>28</sup>

And so where is God? And how is responsibility borne? God is sharing in all of this with us:

Our God of power, God of cross,  
knows human pain and shares our fear  
in frail communion and loss.<sup>29</sup>

Another English writer, Gareth Hill sees

. . . innocence [. . .] fractured  
by nature's shifting force,  
and paradise is ruptured  
as life is swept off course.<sup>30</sup>

At this point the questions that are being posited must not be sunk beneath meaningless platitudes but may, but must, be prayed. Hill goes on to ask:

How dare we speak of heaven  
made human for our sakes,  
or preach a loving Father  
when seas and mountains quake?

Hill answers his own question from a position of faith that is open to some of the same criticism that was directed to Gillette, but this feels more solid in terms of its presentation:

We dare because our story  
speaks of a love that came  
to bear the cost of dying  
and still would be the same.

The text rejects the sharp, almost crude, language of Fabricius, yet it has its own strength. Hill goes on to speak of our souls taking refuge in Christ so that 'Though all the world should crumble, / we hope, O Christ, in you'. Again, for many, this may not be entirely satisfactory. The media present horrific images of destruction and it must be asked whether, as these situations are imagined or experienced, the texts that are sung are literally realistic or theologically defensible. I attempted to provide this picture:

In every face we see the pain  
of grief and human loss;  
the hell we cannot understand,  
we cannot count the cost.  
In each disaster we recount  
earth's shifting, changing ways.  
Creation brings its agony,  
a challenge to our praise.

And what of God's responsibility?  
And was God midwife at the birth  
confounding our belief?  
Or is our God outside the frame,  
removed from human grief?  
For ages we have tried and failed  
to understand this flaw,  
that God should let such evil rise,  
while mixing love and awe.<sup>31</sup>

The writer and the singer are to be left with open, unanswered questions. I am still struggling, like Wesley, to make sense of both theology and experience. My cry is one seeking explanation, a cry of lament. It is further explored in the following text:

If God created all we see  
then ours is still a timeless cry;  
we cannot understand God's sense;  
we ask again the reason why.

Looking to the cross I see something of human suffering shouldered by God:

Was this prefigured by a cross,  
this site of human agony;  
the tumbled timbers, broken walls,  
where people struggle to be free?

and so I described the tension of the transcendent God immanent through incarnation:

This cannot be the way of God,  
yet God is in this quaking mess,  
is in the people crying out  
in pain and terminal distress.

If this thesis is correct then as Christ is followed in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit perhaps humanity can enable incarnation now, for as

God seeks the dying, nail pierced hands  
reach deep within this grief and loss.

and

Our every word or touch of love  
speaks of the gift of grace and cross.<sup>32</sup>

If God is in the turmoil and if God has no hands but human hands in this generation then God reaches with those hands into the heart of suffering and, enigmatically, is there in the people who are sought.

And so I seek to describe, as did Wesley, what I see and hear reported:

Tectonic plates beneath the ocean's surface,  
uplifted, twisting life and limb and wave.

The landscape that was home has lost its features,  
destruction means that few are left to save.

An empty chair amid such devastation  
where cars like toys, are lifted, spun about;

There is a sense of helplessness, of anguish, in the watching of a television screen or the reading of a newspaper that echoes through the text: "and 'where is God' we want to cry and shout." I then begin to form a prayer that might be echoed:

Incarnate God, we need your present spirit  
to live within your people at this time,  
to energise our prayerful words and actions,  
to offer grace to life's discordant rhyme.

God, offer hope to those who feel forsaken,  
to those whose lives have spun and turned  
around;  
to those whose grief defies all consolation,  
bring grace and love and hope and solid  
ground.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that those who have reflected on natural disasters in hymnody have tended over the years to try to put theology and experience alongside one another and have sought to make sense of both. Alan Gaunt struggles in this way:

The baby sleeps in mother-love's strong arms,  
she holds him anxiously against her heart,  
as innocents are killed and parents grieve.

Earthquake and storm, war and indifference,  
tear love apart with ruthless disregard,  
and hopeless grief can see no reason why.

For Gaunt all that is left is to hold firmly in faith to what appears, for him, as a real hope, for he has looked into the hell of what human life in this created world has to offer and still feels that:

God's mother-love continues through all joy  
and deepest grief; it keeps in its own heart  
-and will not lose—each single infant born.<sup>34</sup>

As knowledge about the natural world has grown, theology has developed and evolved. Naturally, some people have held to ideas that have stood the test of time. Others, in expressing new interpretations, have altered our perspective and sometimes pushed the bounds far enough to be regarded as at least doubtful or unsound, at worst, heretical.

Moving for a moment away from the specific theme of natural disasters to something more general, it is not unreasonable to hold to the opinion that theological belief must always be provisional because we are human. It is never, in the words of Sydney Carter, fixed or final<sup>35</sup> for humanity does not have the total knowledge and understanding of the mind or nature of God. Even the words 'mind' and 'nature' are perhaps too anthropological rather than 'godological'.<sup>36</sup> It is not that people should stop seeking after truth, but we need to realize that our understanding of this truth is perhaps as mobile and unsettling as the tectonic plates on which we are standing. Each time humanity learns a little more its understanding is, or ought to be, changed. If nothing changes, then that understanding and theology, are at risk. Perhaps we need to develop the humility to admit that if when truth is found, and there is a temptation to frame and dogmatise it, then the point has been missed. Human understanding can never be complete, is always dynamic, always subject to change.

Such a progressive theology<sup>37</sup> is predicated on the provisional nature of religion. While this theology may draw conclusions, these are always open to critique, modification, change or even, ultimately, abandonment. Progressive worship gives expression to such

theology and it is the nature of liturgy and worship that they are not simply dependent on a theology, but are also the crucibles in which such theology is explored and sometimes formed. It is reasonable to suggest, with Walter Brueggemann, that this has been so for millennia. The prophets exercised prophetic imagination.<sup>38</sup> This enabled them to envision the possibility of hope in the midst of hopelessness, modifying the theology on which they had depended prior to the exile of 586 BCE. In general terms this theology had presumed that YAHWEH resided in Jerusalem and that the exile had distanced them from their God. They were enslaved to the status quo in which they found themselves, distanced from God's power and help. Ezekiel, and others like him, provided a poetically imagined alternative that was at once radical and liberating. The theology of enslavement was challenged as the dry bones in the valley put on flesh, walking out of the captivity of a redundant theology to freedom:

Look: gnawed and bleached, dismembered bones,  
a desert valley strewn with stones,  
a metaphor of hopelessness,  
for people worn with weariness.

It took a poet's way with thought,  
an image that his mind had caught:  
imagine flesh and new found life,  
a counter to historic strife.

And now the bones take human form  
assaulting each expected norm,  
this is the genius of his plan.  
Ezekiel was no 'also ran'.

The people heard the prophecy,  
a seed of hope: they might be free;  
within the darkness new found light,  
an end to years of constant night.

The message that they heard, we share,  
when God seems absent, God is there;  
when all is hopeless God is found,  
while shaken faith knows solid ground.<sup>39</sup>

This lesson of humble, provisional understanding and trust, providing a springboard for imaginative theology, is a lesson that needs to be learnt again in this present time and circumstance to enable us to grapple with the questions with which humankind is presented in the twenty-first century. Musicians and hymn-poets may lead the way.

For this to work there is a need to look at scripture through the eyes of the people whose writing later became canonized. It is clear that the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures were feeling their way. The images of God that they use are sometimes contradictory. Their understanding of the Divine is a work in progress. Yet as later generations have declaimed and

so often judged, they have codified what was speculative and exploratory, and the spirit of God has been diminished and emasculated. Somehow the church needs to reclaim that prophetic spirit that permeated the Hebrew Scriptures, that enabled new adventures of faith, new discoveries of the unfathomable grace and freedom of God. This is notwithstanding the fact that within the Hebrew Scriptures that process of codifying was already taking place as laws were formulated and ideas concretized. St Paul saw such constraints, barriers, and walls being broken down by the person of Jesus. They were soon to be re-built by the church over generations.

Brueggemann pointed to the capacity of the prophets and the psalmists to push back the boundaries of expectation, even to the point of changing firmly-held theological opinion by the use of imagination set free through the medium of poetry. It is this audacious skill that might usefully be regained today to enable our hymnody not simply to re-state doctrine and theology, but actually to explore and form it. This idea can be awe-inspiring, yet perceived as dangerous until it is remembered that within the Hebrew Scriptures where movements of faith are discerned there is also poetry and, arguably, music. This is not limited solely to the Psalms. Scholarship suggests that the whole of Hebrew Scripture may well have been marked for cantillation enabling it to be sung.<sup>40</sup>

The music and the singing are as important as the words. When hymns are sung the theology is embodied. It is taken in, translated, interpreted, and transmitted. In the process singers are, perhaps physically and mentally, formed or changed. Not pushing the metaphor too far, is it in any way like eating—what is eaten becomes part of us and it can nourish or poison? So what is sung, and even how it is sung, becomes immensely significant in a way that has not before been envisaged. It is one thing to read a text which remains remote, like looking at a cookie and not eating it; it is something altogether different to take the text in and to re-transmit it. This might be done by reading aloud. The sheer physicality of singing, the presence of music, steps everything up a gear. Wesley knew that. That is why hymns were so important. The hymns provided multiple scriptures or interpretations, theology or doctrine. This is also why our hymns can provide us with tools for theological survival in a changing and challenging world.

Only a dynamic theology allied to a means of addressing difficult issues can truly fit the church for the challenges of a scientific world that seeks to answer everything and is increasingly dissatisfied with trite or banal answers to fundamental questions. In addition, hymns act as a medium to enable the exploration of themes such as theodicy unconstrained by formal patterns of thought and open to a spiritual dynamism that builds on the past while making all things new. This is

why such writing must continue on into the future unless some other medium that can discover, express, and embody hope is found to take its place. 

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Theodicy is the area of theology which deals with the problem of evil.

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from the Inaugural Bard Thompson Memorial Lecture given at Drew University, March 2012.

<sup>3</sup>Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology* (London: Epworth, 1980), 198–200.

<sup>4</sup>John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, 2010).

<sup>5</sup>Hick, 69.

<sup>6</sup>Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 81.

<sup>7</sup>Lant Carpenter, *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (Bristol/London: Philp and Evans; Smallfield, Mardon and Green, 1840), 388.

<sup>8</sup>A letter from the Lord Bishop of London, to the clergy and people of London and Westminster; on occasion of the late earthquakes by Thomas Sherlock, 1750, quoted in The Geological Society web-site <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/gsl/geoscientist/atlarge/page7908.html>

<sup>9</sup>These collections in both original and modernized texts can be accessed at Duke University's site <http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts/charles-wesley>

<sup>10</sup>Karen Beth Westerfield Tucker, "'On the Occasion': Charles Wesley's Hymns on the London Earthquakes of 1750," *Methodist History* 42 (2004), 197–221.

<sup>11</sup>*Sing Psalms* 2003: Metrical translation of Psalm 68 © Psalmody Committee of the Free Church of Scotland.

<sup>12</sup>William Cowper (1731 – 1800).

<sup>13</sup><http://www.thehymnsociety.org/hymns/index.cgi?read=944>

<sup>14</sup>Michael Forster (b. 1946) © 1993, Kevin Mayhew.

<sup>15</sup>'Sing us our own song, the song of the earth', June Boyce-Tillman (b.1943) © 2006, Stainer & Bell.

<sup>16</sup>June Boyce-Tillman, *A Rainbow to Heaven* (London: Stainer & Bell, 2006), 152.

<sup>17</sup>Forster © 1992, Kevin Mayhew.

<sup>18</sup>Forster © 1992, Kevin Mayhew.

<sup>19</sup>Kim Fabricius © Rev K.C. Fabricius.

<sup>20</sup>Fred Kaan (1929–2009), translated from the Swedish of Anders Frostenson (1906–2006) and Arthur Lundkvist (fl. 1976), English translation © 1976 (London: Stainer & Bell).

<sup>21</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Psalms*, Vol. I, city: publisher, 357ff.

<sup>22</sup>Harrell Beck, 'The Psalms of Lament', address to the Annual Conference of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, audio recording, 1982.

<sup>23</sup>Beck, 'The Psalms of Lament' recording.

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<sup>28</sup>'Such bright green leaves, the auburn fall', Andrew E. Pratt © 2006, Stainer & Bell.

<sup>29</sup>Pratt © 2010, Andrew Pratt. <http://www.twelvebaskets.co.uk>

<sup>30</sup>Gareth Hill, 'When innocence is fractured' © 2005, 2011, Gareth Hill /Song Solutions CopyCare, 14 Horsted Square, Uckfield, TN22 1QG, England. [www.songsolutions.org](http://www.songsolutions.org).

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<sup>34</sup>Alan Gaunt (b.1935) © 2011, Stainer & Bell.

<sup>35</sup>Sydney Carter, *Rock of Doubt*, (London: Continuum, 2005, 1978), Ch. 4.

<sup>36</sup>My own term designed to emphasise what 'theological' really means.

<sup>37</sup>Progressive Theology as I understand and apply it is best defined on the Progressive Christianity web-site: <http://progressivechristianity.org/about-us/>: 'We promote an understanding of Christian practice and teaching that leads to a greater concern for the way people treat each other than for the way people express their beliefs, the acceptance of all people, and a respect for other religious traditions.'

We affirm the variety and depth of human experience and the richness of each person's search for meaning, and we encourage the use of sound scholarship, critical inquiry, and all intellectual powers to understand the presence of God in human life.

We are opposed to any exclusive dogma that limits the search for truth and free inquiry, and we encourage work that eases the pain, suffering and degradation inherent in many of the structures of society, as well as work that keeps central to the Christian life fair, open, peaceful, and loving treatment of all human beings.'

<sup>38</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

<sup>39</sup>© Andrew Pratt, 2012, <http://www.twelvebaskets.co.uk>

<sup>40</sup>For an introduction to cantillation see *Hebrew Cantillation Marks And Their Encoding* <http://www.lrz.de/~hr/teamim/intro.html#synt>. For an in depth exploration see Suzanne Haik-Vantoura, *The Music of the Bible Revealed*, (Berkeley: Bibal, 1991).