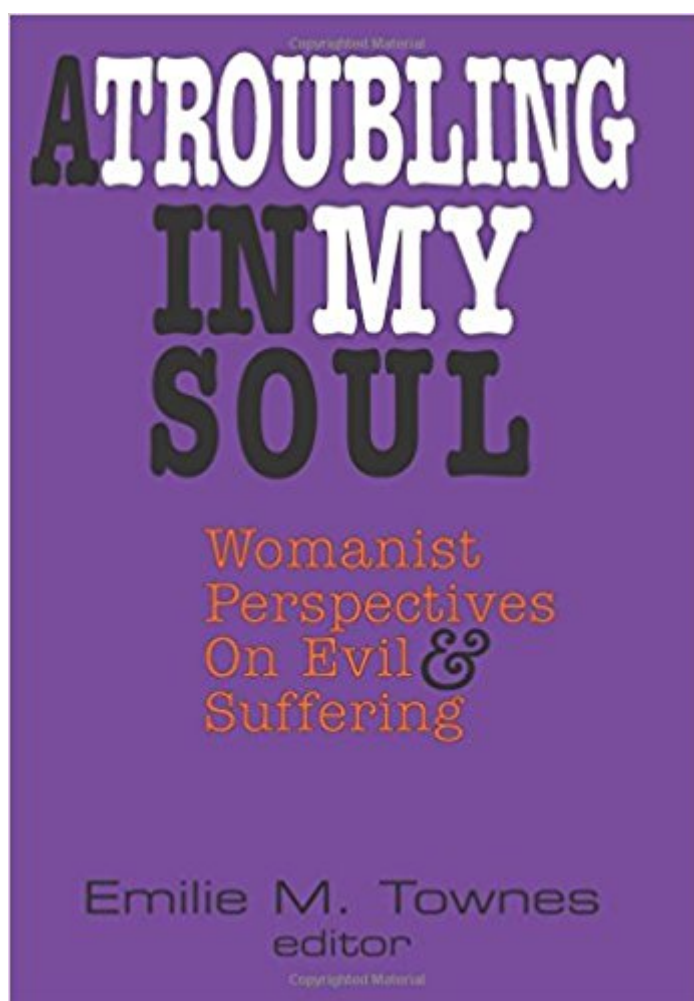


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# A Troubling In My Soul (Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies In North American Black R)



## Synopsis

In *A Troubling in My Soul*, well-known womanist theologians explore the persistent question of evil and suffering in compelling new ways. Committed to an integrated analysis of race, gender, and class, they also address the shortcomings of traditional, feminist, and Black theologies in dealing with evil. Taking Alice Walker's definition of "womanist" as a framework, in Part I, "Responsible, in Charge," Clarice J. Martin explores "If God exists, why is there evil?"; Frances E. Wood shows how Christianity's idealization of suffering has harmed African-American women; and Jamie T. Phelps recounts the historic exclusion of African-American women - and men - in the Roman Catholic church. Part II, "It Wouldn't Be the First Time," includes Marcia Y. Riggs on the 19th century Black club women's response to moral evil; Emilie M. Townes on a womanist ethic based on the example of Ida B. Wells-Barrett; and Rosita deAnn Mathews on the role of chaplain-clergyperson as priest, prophet, and employee. Part III, "Love's the Spirit," includes M. Shawn Copeland on the narratives of enslaved and/or emancipated women of African descent; Delores S. Williams on sin and suffering in Black Christian theology; Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan on the spirituals as an Afrocentric Christian response to evil; and Karen Baker-Fletcher on the life of Dr. Anna Julia Cooper and the vitality of voice in womanist experience. In Part IV, "As Purple Is to Lavender," Patricia L. Hunter exposes the cosmetics industry's impact on Black women's self-understanding as creations of God. There is also Jacquelyn Grant on how a theology of servanthood degenerates into an apologetics for exploitation; Katie Geneva Cannon on the African-America folk sermon as genre; and, finally, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes on how Alice Walker's observations that one "loves food," "loves roundness," and "loves oneself" stand in opposition to the dominant culture's dictum that one can never be too rich or too thin. Vigorous and forthright, A T

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *A Troubling in My Soul*, well-known womanist theologians explore the persistent question of evil and suffering in compelling new ways. Committed to an integrated analysis of race, gender, and class, they also address the shortcomings of traditional, feminist, and Black theologies in dealing with evil. Taking Alice Walker's definition of "womanist" as a framework, in Part I, "Responsible, in Charge", Clarice J. Martin explores "If God exists, why is there evil?"

Great resource and work from a womanist perspective

This book is a foundational work in womanist scholarship. It analyzes suffering and evil individually, communally and systemically. A great read and resource.

Very pleased.

The Rev. Dr. Emilie Townes is dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, as well as Professor of Womanist Ethics and Society. She has also written/edited books such as *Womanist Justice*, *Womanist Hope*, *In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness*, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care*, etc. She wrote in the Introduction to this 1993 collection of writings, "This collection of essays was born in water and fire. Its final days were shadowed in the inferno and anger of the Rodney King verdict." The ongoing question of this collection is "Where is the Black church as we face evil and suffering in the United States and in our world?" The womanist scholars and practitioners in this volume represent some of the voices of African-American women in the church. The common theme each author addresses is the nature of evil and suffering from a womanist perspective as she confronts the reality and the hope of the African-American community. The four parts of the book are based on the definitions of womanist found in Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers'*

Gardens. African-American women in the church and in theological education have begun to explore Walker's definitions. Perhaps the most common understanding of womanist is that she is a woman committed to an integrated analysis of race, gender and class. This arises from a deep concern to address the shortcomings of traditional feminist and Black theological modes of discourse. The former has a long legacy of ignoring race and class issues. The latter has disregarded gender and class. Yet womanist reflection maintains its critical perspective of feminist and African-American traditional ways of analytical reflection. (Pg. 1-2) She continues, "Yet the anchor for womanist thought is the African-American church and its people. The history of the Black church is not only religious, it is social" the essays in this book are, of necessity, theoretical and practical. The impulse of womanist thought is to challenge, as it remains a part of (and issues from) the African-American religious community as well as traditional academic discourse. It is both descriptive and prescriptive in light of the real life and death struggle that Black women wage, individually and communally, in seeking to shape a just social order. (Pg. 2) She concludes, "The contributors to this anthology begin with their particular experience as a rigorous sounding board and offer piercing analysis as they construct an alternative vision. These visions have an underlying theme of justice and equality. However, the method and the strategy to achieve such ends vary in a womanist stance" womanist reflection encourages creativity rather than conformity in proposing solutions to evil and suffering. There is a troubling in the souls of the contributors. Yet there is a witness to the power of hope. Such hope emerges in the midst of the struggle. The hope given testament to in this collection demands an active witness. Such a hope can only be sustained by the Spirit. (Pg. 9) Essays in this anthology include "A Clarion Call to Awake! Arise! Act!" [by Marcia Riggs, author of *Awake, Arise, and ACT: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation*]; "A Womanist Perspective on Sin" [by Delores Williams, author of *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-talk*]; "The Wounds of Jesus" by Katie G. Cannon [author of *Black Womanist Ethics*]; "Living in the New Jerusalem" by Ms. Townes herself, and many others. Just to give you a brief sampling of what is contained in this anthology, here are a few excerpts: "A womanist ethic rejects suffering as God's will and believes that it is an outrage that there is suffering at all. Although the details of analyses may differ, a womanist ethic must be dedicated to eliminating suffering on the grounds that its removal is God's redeeming purpose. [Emilie Townes] (Pg. 83-84) "Womanist theology affirms this position of power from the periphery by encouraging the necessity of retaining one's sense of dignity despite the system's advances and demands. Certainly

whenever or wherever possible, African-American women should utilize power from the center to make change. When that cannot happen, power from the periphery will at least allow us to maintain our sanity, culture, and vision despite the onslaughts. By acting ethically and with integrity, we will survive. We must choose a place within it where we can maintain ourselves and not sell our souls for acceptance into the tenuous security of a system or a promotion. It is never worth losing your soul to gain the world. [Rosita deAnn Mathews] (Pg. 105) If we start from a new premise that God is no longer male and God is not made in the image of the dominant culture, women of color can begin to reimage ourselves. Women of color can believe that we are also created in the image of God. If we, as women of color, are willing to reimage and redefine ourselves not as other but as Godlike, then innumerable ways of lifting self-esteem and claiming the right to live whole, healthy lives can emerge. [Patricia L. Hunter] (Pg. 191) This is a relatively early anthology, but it contains a wide and deep variety of essays, that will be of great interest to anyone studying womanism, womanist theology, the Black church, contemporary theology, or Black Studies in general.

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