

## How Active Is Your God?

Ken Briggs | Mar. 13, 2011 | NCR Today

Here we are again. Calamities pile up on one another and the nagging, eternal still small voice cries, "Where is God in all this?"

Nature demolishes the Japanese, a Lybian madman murders his own people, a Wisconsin martinet destroys a basic human right -- and those are just the headline grabbers.

The old theodicy question arises again. How could a good God allow these assaults? Christians who sincerely believe God interevented to heal Aunt Victoria of a stroke may cringe at the suggestion that the same Omnipresent One also must have caused human and natural disasters, or at least tolerated the human treachry in the name of free will. But that's the implication of a faith that's consistent.

Deism always appears to provide a clean solution. God winds up the watch and lets it run from a remote location not unlike the owners's box in the former National Football League, without interference. But that leaves out personal experience of God, the hallmark of most Christianity, and posits a deity of chilling indifference. It isn't the God than Jesus mirrors. Yet the One manifested by Jesus is a selective micro-manager.

Nobody has resolved this dilemma over the course of eons and it's doubtful anyone will. Historians and Bible scholars point out that God envisioned by believers over the centuries evolved from an Activist to a Silent Partner. These days many Christians carry a variety of God images to suit different purposes, like shoes in a closet (Imelda Marcos notwithstanding). The God who saves the high school ski team from the avalance gives way to the avenging God who defeats the enemy; the loving God who awards a job promotion isn't the same as the God who starves the people of Gaza. There are no smart alecs here.

The most I can make of this discomfort in the rush of current agonies is that the essential Gospel promise that we are never abandoned no matter how bad it gets not deprived of the strengths and comforts that flow therefrom. It's not exactly satisfying but does offer a measure of reassurance.

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