

Wrecking Our Faith

"Why Does God Hit People With Beer Trucks?"

Calvin Miller poses the theological conundrum in Act III, Scene II of his play *Fred 'n' Erma*. The plot concerns Mike Harris, a teenager who suffers a head-on with a semi full of suds. Madge, chief gossip in the church prayer chain, explains to her friends the MacArthurs that the youth's wild living egged God on to vehicular wrath. Madge vows to inoculate her own life from such acts of divine sovereignty by keeping her daughter on the true path. "I'm sure never gonna raise Etta Louise so that God has to hit her with a beer truck to teach her his high and lofty ways."

Subsequent evidence reveals, however, that Mike, far from a drug-crazed poster child for judgment, lives an exemplary life. In light of this disturbing development, Fred MacArthur asks his wife, "Erma, why does God hit people with beer trucks?"

Traffic-induced theodicies seem to haunt Miller's writing. In *O Shepherd, Where Art Thou?* Pastor Sam must betray his megachurch principles to minister to a dying trucker after a fatal crash. In *The Table of Inwardness*, a modern devotional classic, Miller tells the true story of a priest who happened on a holocaust, created when a gas tanker smashed into a family car. The flames cooked everyone alive. When the priest came upon the scene, he knelt and prayed. "His prayer," Miller writes, "Christified the event."

Everyone seems unsettled because of recent revelations that Mother Theresa often doubted the existence of God. The unsettling thing would be if, walking daily through the slums of Calcutta, she never questioned it. The unsettling thing should be that we, who live in the same world that contains Darfur and drive-by shootings and suicide bombers, do not doubt more often.

If God pointed dual-axle thunderbolts at all those who deserved punishment, "This Bud's for you" would become my epitaph. "Why did God do it?" is a valid question that we must ask although we cannot adequately answer it. "What does God call me to do about it?" is the next question, and perhaps the best answer (certainly always the first) is prayer.

Keep Truckin'
Doug