



THE BEREA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Problem with Progress

“For those who subscribe to progressivism—and in a sense technology makes us all progressives now—progress by definition is good, always good, self-evidently good, unquestionably good. Reaction, by definition, is bad. According to the improvement myth of the Enlightenment creed, the world is getting better and better. Whatever *is* today is not only right but a great deal better than what was yesterday. And of course, whatever is coming must be a great deal better still. The word *progress* simply makes it so and tells us so. We are not asked to think. We are not even given the opportunity or the criteria to judge for ourselves. If it’s progressive, by definition it must be good. If it’s reactionary, it obviously must be bad, and that’s the end of it. Discussion over.”

- Os Guinness, *Carpe Diem Redeemed: Seizing the Day, Discerning the Times* (InterVarsity Press, 2019), 62

Traditions Fulfilled

“This is a hallmark of Paul’s defenses—the faith he proclaims in the resurrected Jesus is not a transgression of the traditions of the fathers, but is in fact their fulfillment (cf. [Acts] 23:6).”

- Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Baker Academic, 2020), 75

“The Question That Never Goes Away”¹

David Anguish

From Philip Yancey comes the following:

On March 11, 2011 . . . a 9.0 magnitude earthquake shook the east coast of Japan for three to five minutes. . . [with] such force that, incredibly, it jolted Japan’s largest island some eight feet closer to North America. All was still for forty-five minutes as residents picked themselves up and surveyed the damage.

Then came the wave.

A wall of water, first taking shape far out in the ocean by the quake’s epicenter, accelerated to 500 mph as it sped toward land. The coastal region of Tohoku had subsided two feet, opening wide the gate for the onrushing wave, so that the tsunami crashed over protective sea walls like a giant stepping over a curb. Videos shot on iPhones by eyewitnesses (some retrieved from corpses) resemble the special-effects scenes from a horror movie: ships, houses, and trucks tossed around like toys, a modern airport suddenly submerged under water, a nuclear reactor tower exploding in a thick black cloud.

A year later, Yancey visited Japan to speak to groups on the theme, “where is God when it hurts?” Touring the devastated area to gain perspective, he saw mind-boggling destruction, not because the Japanese had made no effort to rebuild—they had worked quite hard to do so—but because the devastation had been so overwhelming. He saw mountains of debris, some seventy feet high and as large as a city block. When he wondered how many cars had been destroyed, a colleague googled it: 410,000. In one town, they saw a freighter, two-thirds the size of a football field, beached on the foundations of what had been a residential neighborhood. No one could figure out how to get it back to the ocean, half a mile away.

One woman drove over an hour on temporary roads for a service with a church that met in a printing plant because their building had been destroyed. She told of finally seeing a hand reaching down to pull her from the pile of garbage and rubble where she had been buried for two days. She had lost everything—family, friends, and her town. She grabbed

Technology Deified

“This ability to dominate and control nature will inevitably, according to at least some cultural analysts, lead to the deification of technology, resulting in a culture which ‘seeks its authorization in technology, finds its satisfaction in technology, and takes its orders from technology.’”

– Alister McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (InterVarsity Press, 1996), 33; citing Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (Vintage, 1993), 71

Old Testament Parodied

“The law written on the heart’ [Jer 31.31-34] means much more than a new upsurge of sincerity in keeping it. We have already seen that the Old Testament from the beginning had called for obedience from the heart. The popular parody of the Old Testament as a religion of external legalism is far from the truth.” - Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (IVP Academic, 2014), 104

On Worship

“[William Willimon] tells a delightful story of visiting with a man in his congregation who confessed to having great hatred towards his job foreman. He even feared that some day he might physically attack the man. Willimon suggested that he begin each day with praying for this man—as the Lord has taught us to ‘pray for our enemies.’ When the man thoughtfully considered this unwelcome suggestion, he mused openly, ‘I don’t remember us praying for our enemies in church.’” - Wendell Willis, *When You Come Together: The Theology and Practice of Congregational Worship* (Christian Studies Press, 2010), 38

Yancey’s hand and said, “Please don’t forget us! They forgot me for days, now they forget my town. I want to know why!”

Why?! Hurting people, several of whom appear in Scripture, have asked that question for centuries. I was introduced to it academically in a Christian Evidences course as a college junior, but my personal and purposeful pursuit of it began the next fall when my roommate from the year before, among the best people I have ever known, died in a plane crash 38 days after his wedding. In the 46 years since, I’ve read books, taken undergraduate and graduate level courses, written papers, and presented numerous sermons and classes on texts and topics related to the primary question, “Why?”² I did so out of personal interest, but also out of the conviction that we should think about the questions ahead of time to be better prepared when—not if—the trials come (Jas 1.2).³

The Bible never ignores the question. In fact, it keeps coming up throughout its pages, in both testaments. None, of course, asked more fervently, boldly, or painfully than Job. His case is classic, not because he discovered “the answer”; so far as we know, he was never told the reasons for his trial. No, it is classic because Job exhibited exemplary faith and showed what matters most when we suffer. “Now I see you,” said Job to God (Job 42.5). And with that he was finally comforted.

But that’s not all Job teaches about the matter. If it was, it might suffice to have only the Sunday school version of the story many have settled for (chapters 1-2 and the “happy ending” in 42.7-17). As Job wrestles with his trial, and debates his friends about its cause, he shows important things we need to remember when we face our trials which, though they may not be as debilitating as his were, or as devastating as those that came with Japan’s 2011 earthquake and tsunami, are nevertheless every bit as troubling because they are *ours*.

I’ll make some additional observations in part 2.

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Notes

¹ The title and quotations herein are from Philip Yancey, *The Question That Never Goes Away: What Is God Up To—Or Not—in a World of Such Tragedy and Pain?* (Brentwood, TN: Creative Trust Digital, 2013), Part 2, Kindle.

² Those presentations have invariably struck a chord with hearers.

³ A conviction that was only strengthened when my wife was diagnosed with stage four kidney cancer and died just 2½ months after we learned her diagnosis. To read our story and some of my reflections on it, see my sermon, [“Why Them and Not Us? When the Answer to a Prayer is ‘No!’”](#) or the article, [“Hear My Cry, O God,”](#) that appeared in *Abundant Living* magazine.

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