

“Could God Have Ordained the Holocaust?”

I have read an article titled “God, Evil and the Holocaust,” and I have also read an article called “Did God Ordain the Holocaust?” at <http://deoxy.org/godholoc.htm>. Both talk about the Holocaust, but in different terms.

From what I have read on articles on evil and suffering, it really seems to me that there are two views or ways of looking at evil and suffering. 1) Those who think of suffering or evil as part of the Fall and a way Christians are tested in their faith in God. 2) God intended evil for good (punishment or a necessity) or He is not powerful to intervene or “Why can’t he intervene if He loves us so much when the suffering or evil in the world today is too unbearable?”

Honestly, I really trust and agree with the article on the Probe website. I have always and still believe in a God who is loving and merciful and just. Yet, the article in the other website which I have pasted (the link above) does provoke me to think differently about the Holocaust. Is the author of that article’s reasoning flawed? Is he correct in saying that God ordained the Holocaust? He does form a good argument out of the bible.

Thanks for your letter. You ask an interesting and important question. The question not only touches on the problem of evil, but also on the nature of Divine sovereignty and human freedom. Concerning the latter issue, please see my previous response to the question, [“Does Calvinism Make People into Choiceless Puppets?”](#) I think this response will be helpful in rounding out the discussion.

For more on the problem of evil, please see Rick Rood’s article [The Problem of Evil](#) and my brief e-mail response at

["Is God the Creator of Evil?"](http://www.bible.org). Finally, please visit bible.org for a large array of articles and e-mail responses dealing with the problems of suffering and persecution at www.bible.org/topic.asp?topic_id=77.

Now for my own brief response. First, I'm personally hesitant to say that we should apply (without any qualification) the OT references cited in the article you mentioned to the suffering of Jewish people in the Holocaust. God did say these things, of course. And He did bring such suffering on His people in the Assyrian invasion of Israel (722 B.C.) and the Babylonian invasion of Judah (605-586 B.C), as well as at other times. However, in my opinion, God is no longer relating to the world on the basis of the Old Covenant and Mosaic Law. Rather, a New Covenant is now in effect (see Hebrews 8, etc.).

Second, the author of the article you cite seems to deny any human responsibility in the Holocaust. But the Bible clearly affirms a measure of human freedom and moral responsibility (see my e-mail response mentioned earlier). Of course, the Bible is also very clear about God's sovereignty. Ephesians 1:11 describes God as "Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will." A good example of God's sovereignty and human freedom and responsibility can be seen in the crucifixion of Jesus (see Acts 4:27-28).

I think we're forced to conclude that God did at least permit the Holocaust. And some Christian theologians would indeed say that He ordained it (in the same sense in which He has ordained whatever comes to pass). How one understands the details of this is rather controversial among evangelicals and I'll leave you to think through this on your own. Everything which happens in history, some argue, is simply the outworking in time of God's eternal decree. Nevertheless, the Bible also seems to affirm that man has some genuine freedom and is therefore morally responsible for what he does. Thus, the Nazis acted freely in the Holocaust and are morally responsible before God for their sins.

Much more could be written on this subject. For more information, please visit the links above. Also Rick Rood, at the end of his article, lists the following resources for further study:

Resources for Further Study:

- Blocker, Henri. *Evil and the Cross*. Tr. by David G. Preston. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Briggs, Lauren. *What You Can Say...When You Don't Know What to Say: Reaching Out to Those Who Hurt*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1985.
- Carson, D.A. *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.
- Craig, William Lane. *No Easy Answers: Finding Hope in Doubt, Failure, and Unanswered Prayer*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1990.
- Dobson, James. *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.
- Dunn, Ronald. *When Heaven is Silent: Live by Faith, Not by Sight*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. *Deserted by God?* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993.
- Geisler, Norman L. *The Roots of Evil*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978.
- Kreeft, Peter. *Making Sense Out of Suffering*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986.
- Lockyer, Herbert. *Dark Threads the Weaver Needs*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1979.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Suffering & God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Plantinga, Alvin C. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974.

Hope this helps.

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