

"This is an era of grace, not 'nice.'"

—Martin Zender

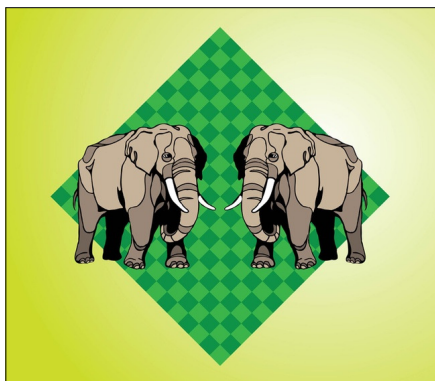
Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

God is ultimately responsible for the Holocaust



Yes, it is true: I believe that God is ultimately responsible for the Holocaust. This is because I believe that God is responsible for everything, including grass, trees, people, elephants—even Barack Obama. God is responsible for what does happen, and for what does not happen. Does this make me a religious nut job? Hmm ... Am I a religious nut job because I believe *Scripture*?

I believe what God wrote concerning Himself. I also believe that God is the One most qualified to tell us about these things. So, if He has lost control of His universe, I trust He would have the guts to *tell* us He has lost control of His universe,—because, *really*, what could be a more important thing to know?—but since there are no verses which *say* God has lost control of His universe, then I, for one, am going to trust those verses that say He *is* in control of His universe—verses such as 1 Corinthians 5:18: "All is of God"—are true as they stand.

MY EXPERIMENT

One time, I tried to limit that "all" of 2 Corinthians 5:18. Yes, I tried to believe as most of my so-called Christian

friends believe (oh, wait; I don't *have* any Christian friends; never mind; for the sake of this story, let's say I do) that God is only in control of *some* things. So I conducted an experiment one day to see what my poor Christian friends (the ones I don't really have) must feel like, who limit the "all" of 2 Corinthians 5:18 to mean, "some." So there I was, trying to make the "all" of "All is of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18) to mean, "Not very much is of God," or "Only the good things are of God."

IT GOT UGLY, FAST

What happened? I ended up getting hot flashes. I broke out in a sweat that required three beach towels to absorb. My system simply did not care much for a wholesale denial of God's sovereignty.

But I went there anyway; I went there, in my mind, for the greater good. The way I look at it is: I'm Martin Zender, and I owe it to my public to go to "The Scary Place" where Christians live all the time, so that I could later report *concerning* that Scary Place from my Scripturally-correct (I-am-sane-by-default) mind.

So, I went into a world—at least in my mind—that was under the absolute sway of Satan—"absolute" meaning that God cannot interfere with Satan, nor undo anything he does, nor influence anything he decides, because Satan has a free will. Believe me, I get what "free" means in this context; it means, "apart from influence." That's the teaching of the Christian religion: Satan has a free will, and poor

God is doing the best He can to control him.

Away I went, then, into The Scary Place. Oh, my friends. There were all sorts of weird lights and sounds in The Scary Place, back-dropping the specter of a God Who was busy running around His universe trying to catch up with all the bad things Satan did *by the second* (Satan is *so* full of evil tricks), hacking all the while like a three-pack-a-day smoker. Poor God was trying so hard to make sense of the mess that the world had become (wishing all the time He had not created Satan), that He could barely catch His breath. But the worst was yet to come.

Right there, in the middle of my vision, was an image of God crossing His fingers.

Can you believe it? I felt really embarrassed for God. I had to look away, even in the vision. I could not even look in the face of a God Whose fingers were forced to resort to the stupidest human

superstition.

Thankfully, my vision ended. In an attempt to recover from it, I drank five beers—and I don't even like beer. But I had to drink five Coronas to dull the pain of the terrible five minutes during which I had experienced God hoping for the best in His own universe.



... God is responsible for the Holocaust

IS GOD ONLY IN CONTROL OF GOOD PEOPLE?

Do you want to become a religious nut job? Is that what you're looking for? Is this your sacred quest? Maybe you're already there. If not, try this: Try the Christian belief that God is only in control of the *good* people in the world. (WARNING: Have some beer handy!) If God is only in control of good people, then He is not in control of anyone, because Romans 3:10 says, that there is no one good, no not one.

Need a bottle opener yet?

BACK TO THE HOLOCAUST

Back to the topic at hand. Either way, the Holocaust happened. Right? It's a done deal. So now there are two ways you can look at it. You can say, wow, that one really got out of hand; God must have been in some far corner of the universe drinking a Corona, when a bunch of Jewish people finally prayed loud enough and long enough to snag His attention and let Him know what was happening down here, so He could rush over to Germany and say the rosary enough times to get some rogue Russians to shoot Hitler. Then, while God watched transpiring events from His undisclosed location (not even *He* knows where it is; He thought the Russians would kill Hitler, but Hitler killed *himself*), He choked on Corona foam and said, "Whew! That was a close call! Thank God for those Jews. Thank God for those Ruskies. Why didn't *I* think of any of this?"

You can either believe *that*, or believe God is in control of His entire universe, including all the people in it.

CHECK OUT THIS GUY

Isaiah 45:7 says, God created evil. I once confronted a guy with this verse, and the guy said, "I can't believe that." I said, "But it's a *Scripture* verse." The guy replied, "I'd have to see it out of the King James Version." So I showed it to him out of the King James Version, and he said, "I *still* don't believe it."

EVIL IS MORALLY NEUTRAL

Evil is morally neutral. It can be bent toward either good or bad purposes. If you don't believe that, consider the crucifixion, which was the most heinous evil ever to occur on this planet—agreed? Are we agreed on that? Yet it became the source of the greatest blessing.

In the original language of Scripture, evil means "to break." So God breaks stuff in order to rebuild it stronger than it was: to show His power. Even human bones do that—they break, and then come back stronger. God is the One Who made bones do that; it's a principle. Evil has a purpose. God created it, uses it to contrast good, and then will abolish it from His universe when the universe has learned good via the contrast of evil.

IT'S NOT MY FAULT, PEOPLE

Look, I hate that the Holocaust happened. I hate that people die in this world. If I were running the world, no one would die. Everyone in my world would eat chocolate-covered raisins for breakfast without getting fat, and palm trees would sprout in Milwaukee. But I'm not God. I'm a regular guy. Yet even regular guys can believe in the reality and the glory of resurrection. What about death? As a regular guy with a regular mind, I know that I can't have the glory of resurrection without the horror of death. Without death, what kind of resurrection is one left with? None. So stop



cursing death while lauding resurrection; you cannot have one without the other. You are welcome to hate death—go ahead; I do it all the time,—but don't wish it had never come; it *had* to come, to contrast its opposite. Since God invented resurrection *before* death, He had to create death (it is included in the "evil" of Isaiah 45:7) to highlight resurrection. Once it is highlighted for *everyone* (1 Timothy 4:10), then death is abolished (1 Corinthians 15:26).

WHO IS THE WHACKO?

You think *my* teaching is whacko, that all is of God,—even the Holocaust—and God knows what He's doing and will eventually work out everything for good, so that even the victims of the Holocaust will end up praising Him, when they eventually find salvation in Him, because He's the Savior of all humankind (that's 1 Tim. 4:10, by the way)? You think *that's* whacked out? How about the standard Christian belief: That the Holocaust victims are now in HELL, burning in flames, their flesh peeling off their bodies, screaming in agony in the sight of God,—in spite of the fact that God sent His only begotten Son to save them—and that they're going to be there for eternity. Oh, and by the way, these are God's chosen people ("Thanks for choosing us, God!"), but they were just too stubborn for God, and they didn't believe in Jesus (Idiots! Why weren't these people smart enough to save themselves?), so it serves their sorry Jewish asses right. ...

OH! That's a *beautiful* belief. Yes, that's a winner of a belief; that's *real* normal.

If you are reading this today, and you have to admit that what I have said makes sense, then thank God you're not a Christian. Maybe you and I can meet for a Corona sometime, and we can talk about our few-and-far-between Christian friends who think we're nuts. ■