



The Blood Curse LIE

Greg Albrecht

Memorial to the Murdered
Jews of Europe. Berlin.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!" —Matthew 27:24-27

A toxic and Christless belief persists within Christendom, fatalistically concluding the crowd's reply to Pilate was a self-pronounced curse on the Jews, an argument for the unfathomable outpouring of hatred of Jews since the crucifixion of Jesus.

MYTH OF THE BLOOD CURSE

The myth of a *blood curse* evolved and gained credibility, casting God the Father in the mold of a vengeful, punitive and retributive god who takes delight in pain and punishment. This myth of a blood curse presumes the horrific pogroms, persecutions and ethnic cleansings the Jews have suffered over the last 2000 years, climaxing in the Holocaust, were their own fault. The *blood curse* proposes all Jewish suffering since Christ's death is God granting their self-condemning wish that the blood of Jesus would be on their hands.

This malignant superstition is also used as a

justification to absolve all anti-Semitism—virulent hatred of Jews—by saying that God uses the hatred or bigotry of other humans to ensure the Jews got exactly what they asked for and richly deserve.

The so-called *blood curse*, the myth that a crowd gathered before Pilate accepted responsibility the death of Jesus on behalf of all generations of Jews, is ludicrous for many reasons.

Three specific reasons speak against the fallacious *blood curse* and its bitter harvest on the Jews.

PRECONCEIVED CONCLUSIONS

First, reading a *blood curse* into Matthew 27:24-27 is an example of how scripture might be used to arrive at any predetermined conclusions in the mind of those who twist scripture to suit their own purposes.

If we impose preconceived notions on biblical passages, we read our biases and prejudices into the text, rather than subjecting ourselves to the potential teaching that springs from that text.

Instead of assuming that God holds all Jews responsible for all time, thus ensuring horrific suffering after a statement made in the heat of

the moment, a Christ-centered interpretation asks us to place ourselves in this crowd. Instead of blaming others, we might consider how we all have times when we embrace Jesus, and other times when we scorn him.

Instead of falling for hateful and vindictive superstitions, as Christ-followers, we are more likely to read ourselves into the time and place described in Matthew 27:24-27. Instead of the despicable conclusion of a *blood curse*, Christ leads us to ask the question posed by the African-American slaves in the spiritual, “*Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?*”

This detestable lie of the *blood curse* on all Jews is a voodoo-like belief. It is an example of the illogical and superstitious notion of what generically is called “collective guilt.”



COLLECTIVE GUILT

Second, *Collective guilt*—assigning blame to whole people groups for the actions of a minority, is itself another attempt to blame and condemn. It lays blame on the whole for the sins of the part. Despite the fact that a small minority of radical Muslims are terrorists, many people today

see any Muslim and instantly judge them as being a violent, bloodthirsty terrorist.

We are all humans, regardless of our religious background and racial heritage. Some Jews today blame all Germans for the Holocaust—even though virtually every German who was actively engaged in the Holocaust is now dead.

I know Jews who refuse to buy or drive a German car made by Volkswagen, BMW or Mercedes. For that matter, I know some American veterans of World War 2 who are not Jewish, but nonetheless refuse to own or drive a German or Japanese car.

Of course, we are free to boycott any product we wish for whatever reason. We are free to avoid violating our conscience, but ***we are not free, in Christ, to condemn all for the sins of a few.***

I was not yet born when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941. As I grew up in these United States, I heard the American version of World War 2 so often, read so many books and saw so many World War 2 movies, that it was difficult for me to realize that all Japanese are not guilty of what happened in World War 2.

My wife and I have a dear friend named Jack, who, as a young Japanese American growing up during World War 2, was assigned to an internment camp because the U.S. government was concerned that some Japanese-Americans would be more loyal to Japan than to the

United States. Knowing Jack as a friend helps me realize the stupidity of stereotyping people, pigeonholing everyone of a particular race, culture or religion.

MONSTROUS LIE, MONSTER GOD

Finally, *this monstrous lie of a blood curse on the Jews turns God into a monster.* It crucifies the love, mercy and grace of God and recasts God as a god of evil who takes pleasure in the pain and suffering of humans.

Misunderstandings and perversions of God grow like an out of control Frankenstein monster until a monster-god is mainstreamed and accepted as the norm. Like a plague born by a toxic virus, lies and deceptions about who God is become accepted as truth.

The god created by the myth of a *blood curse* is a tyrannical god who demands that the consequences taken by a few cause misery for many. The preposterous myth of a *blood curse* eventually became accepted as truth and in the process, condoned and excused hatred, warfare and bloodshed. As Jesus said in John 16:2, there would come a day when those who kill others think they are doing God a service.

We are blaspheming God when we, imperfect and finite human beings, undertake to smear and corrupt the name and attributes of our perfect, loving, eternal God. There is nothing on “God’s green earth” that justifies a belief that God holds his children responsible for the mistakes of others. We

are not robots—God has not rigged the final outcome of our lives. To cite C.S. Lewis,

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right... free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of... creatures that worked like machines would hardly be worth having.

The happiness which God designs for all of his creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to him and to each other in an ecstasy of love

and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

When we are truly free in Christ, we individually admit and accept responsibility for the consequences of our actions, we surrender our condemnation of others and we certainly do not blame God as the cause of suffering and misery. □

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The Sign that Saves the World

Look to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth!

—Isaiah 45:22 —

Brian Zahnd

P eri and I are on our way to speak at the Christ at the Checkpoint conference in Bethlehem and we're spending a few days in Florence, Italy exploring the cradle of the Renaissance.

Visiting the museums and art galleries, I've seen hundreds of crucifixion paintings, and I've tried to view each one with a reverent eye. I never look at depictions of Christ crucified with a jaundiced eye. Their religious nature and ubiquitous presence may illicit a yawn from the secular cynic, but not from me—I'm an incorrigible Christian.

I believe the cross is where Christ saves the world. Looking at the cross with the right eye, the reverent eye of

humble faith, is the locus of salvation. The cross is the sign that saves the world.

The crucifixion of Jesus is easily the most depicted event in

human history. How many billions of crucifixes have been formed, fashioned, carved, and painted over the past two millennia? And yet what is it

that is being depicted in these billions of crucifixes? On a purely objective level, it is the torture and murder of an innocent man at the hands of those who run the world by the means of violent power. The crucifixion is the damning indictment of the world as it has been arranged.

The cross tells us that when the Son of God entered our world—the world created by Cain and all the kings who followed in his bloody wake—our systems of violent empire and sacrificial religion nailed him to a tree. This is the moment when the principalities and powers



Coptic cross in the Temple of Isis, Philae, Egypt