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HOW BLOOD MARKS THE BOUNDS OF THE CHRISTIAN BODY

Overtures and Refrains

THIS BOOK HAS THREE GENESES: SIMIANS, SEX, AND SACRIFICE. All three came unbidden, presenting symptoms or unsought oracles of blood.

In the winter of 2008, trying to get a break from theology, I found myself in a boat on the Kinabatangan in Borneo, looking for orangutans. Having heard the (misleading) statistic that humans are "98% chimpanzee,"[1] I couldn't lose the idea that the biblical word for DNA might be "blood." And that brought on questions like, "What if the blood of Christ was the blood of a primate?" And "Why did God become simian?" (See Chapters 6 and 9.) I tried to treat the questions. They weren't academic, and I had other books to write. But they wouldn't go away, and my husband told me I was writing a book despite myself.

In the fall of 2008, assigned, for my sins, to write a "theology of same-sex relationships" for the Episcopal House of Bishops, I heard that "the trouble with same-sex couples is, they impugn the blood of Christ." What did that even mean? And who were these people with their strange blood-fixation? (See Chapter 5.)

In the fall of 2009, I remembered Michael Wyschogrod, whom I had first read twenty years earlier. I had been telling granting agencies I would figure out what Hebrews 9:22 meant by "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." (See Chapters 3 and 7.) I discovered that the most interesting thing about Christian commentary on that passage is how thin it is. If you look into Christian

[1] For a hilarious takedown of that pseudo-statistic, see Jonathan Marks, *What It Means to Be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes*, with a new preface (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Ra'anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Introduction to Theme-Issue," *Blood and the Boundaries of Jewish and Christian Identities in Late Antiquity*, published as *Henoch* 30.2 (2008): 229–42 is elegant and compatible. Unaccountably it came to my attention only as the book was in production.

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commentaries on "without the shedding of blood" you find either *domestication*, so that, in Aquinas, bloodshed needs no explanation at all, or *evasion*, as in Calvin, where "blood" means something entirely different from physical blood; it means "faith." This is a choice of frustrations: so blasé as to take sacrifice for granted, or so offended as to dismiss it outright. Briefly I hoped that Philoxenus of Mabbug interpreted the "labor of blood" as that of childbirth, but colleagues with Syriac said it wasn't so simple. (See the excursus to Chapter 4.) Origen is wonderful, but everything means something else. None of the Christian commentators I read were trying to understand what Wittgenstein called the "deep and sinister" in the appeal to blood.[2]

Then I remembered how Wyschogrod, the Jewish Barthian, does something better than all the Christian commentators I consulted. He finds blood strange. Wyschogrod neither evades blood, nor does he, by repetition, disarm it even more effectively. Here is a sample, longish but abridged:

> A dumb animal is to be slaughtered. [It emits no] sound of terror because it does not understand the instrument. It is then swiftly cut, the blood gushes forth, the bruiting begins [the sound of an artery's turbulent flow, blood rushing past an obstruction]. [T]he animal's eyes lose their living sheen. The blood is sprinkled on the altar, the animal dismembered, portions of it burned, [others] eaten by the priests who minister before God in the holiness of the Temple. This horror is brought into the house of God. [What leads from] slaughter to the holy?
>
> Sacrificial Judaism brings the truth of human existence into the Temple. It does not leave it outside. It does not reserve sacred ground only for silent worship. Instead, the bruiting, bleeding, dying animal is brought and shown to God. This is what *our* fate is. It is not so much, as [often] said, that we deserved the fate of the dying animal and that we have been permitted to escape [that] fate by transferring it. It is rather that our fate and the animal's are the same [fate] because its end awaits us, since our eyes, too, will soon gaze blindly and [fix] in deathly attention on what only the dead seem to see. In the Temple it is [we human animals] who stand before God, not as [we] would like to be, but as we truly are, [realizing] that our blood will soon enough flow as well. [We see, not the animal in place of us; we see ourselves with the animal. It is not one who dies that another may live; it is both who die together.] Enlightened religion recoils with horror from the thought of sacrifice, preferring a spotless house of worship filled with organ music and exquisitely polite behavior. The price paid for such decorum is that the worshipers must leave the most problematic part of themselves outside the

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über Frazers Golden Bough/Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, German and English on facing pages, ed. Rush Rees, trans. A. C. Miles (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1979), 8. See Chapter 7.

> temple, to reclaim it when the service is over and to live with it unencumbered by sanctification. Religion ought not to demand such a dismemberment of [*the human being*].[3]

Here endeth the reading from Wyschogrod. I note that it defends Second Temple Judaism from Christian supersessionism not by mishnaic means but according to the modern pattern of aligning sacrifice with solidarity rather than sin. I return to it in Chapters 3 and 7. Here I only hope it makes blood strange.

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In referring to Wittgenstein's "deep and sinister," I do not mean to agree with what you might call the vulgar Girardian theory that sees violence all the way down. That would be hamartiocentric, sin-centered. Theology knows a protology before sin and an eschatology after it; the sin-story receives a frame and cannot stand in for the whole. The frame makes donation or offering broader than "sacrifice" – and it makes blood, the life-giver, wider than sacrifice too. Sacrifice does not go all the way down, but marks a subset of life-giving: life-giving under conditions of sin. Sarah Coakley's work in *Sacrifice Regained*, I think, seeks to restore sacrifice to that frame, to connect the Garden at the beginning to the Feast at the end.[4]

In any case, I work here on another front. I want to recover the strangeness of blood and then, perhaps, its even stranger logic. Part of the strangeness I want to recover is that of quantity. Why so much? Why not less? My target is not those for whom violence goes all the way down but those who would so familiarize the language of blood as to domesticate or evade it. My inquiry *relies* on the sin-free frame but now and then takes place within it, where sin gains enough reality to need remitting, and that sometimes in terms of blood.

Within the frame, we – as human or at least religious beings – can admit our solidarity both with Aztecs, who seem actually to have practiced human sacrifice (Chapter 7), as well as with any who would restore animal sacrifice in a Third Temple. I'm not in favor of either, but I want to understand what

[3] Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 18–19. In several editions from different publishers, the subtitle varies but the text remains the same. For ease of reading I have cut words without using ellipses.

[4] Sarah Coakley, *Sacrifice Regained: Evolution, Cooperation and God*, Gifford Lectures (Edinburgh, 2012), esp. lectures 1 and 6 at www.giffordlectures.org/lectures/sacrifice-regained-evolution-cooperation-and-god.

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they tell us about what it means to be human, to admit that their deep and sinister thing is our thing, too.

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CONSIDER THE LOGIC OF THE CLAIM "WITHOUT THE SHEDDING OF blood there is no remission of sin" (Heb. 9:22). The sentence makes blood instrumental to the remission of sin, but it's a queer sort of instrumentality. Nancy Jay suggests a thought experiment. Replace the words about blood with words about wood, and compare:

> "Without the cutting of trees, there is no building of clapboard houses."
> Surely that's sensible enough. But this:–?
> "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."[5]

The substitution has the virtue of estranging the obvious question: How then do we use blood? To remit sin? Blood does not work like wood after all. Nor does the blood of Christ reduce to the wood of his cross (Chapters 4 and 8).

Elsewhere I warn about grandiose theory. I confess it here; later comes the part where I take it back. Emile Durkheim, Mary Douglas, Nancy Jay, and Bettina Bildhauer can help us think about the structures that blood makes in Christianity and other social groups, that cause the body individual or the body sacrificed to represent the body social.

Mary Douglas takes as axiomatic that anomalies generate pollution, taboo, and sacredness: purity and danger. But what's the *mechanism*? It's the image of the boundary. Not the boundary "itself," but its socially available *image*, its appearing in socially constructed space. The image of the boundary is the boundary salient, the boundary seen. It is first of all, for Douglas, a social boundary: a force field that society both makes and feels. But the bound that society makes, and that makes society, recruits individual bodies to represent that society in small. The business of boundedness makes both society and individual a "body," a self-enclosed unit of humanity.

As Bettina Bildhauer notes, the *Oxford English Dictionary* collects hundreds of uses of the word "body" and sums them up like this: "the material frame of man." The definition, Bildhauer comments, "singles out materiality and humanness as main features, with the word 'frame' suggesting a bound entity, carrying and unifying the human being. But this idea of a body as a material, bounded entity," she concludes, "is far from self-evident." The body takes in

[5] Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

food, water, air, and expels waste. "Far from providing a smooth envelope, skins constantly receive and emit fluids through pores and cells, so that it is impossible to determine which atom, say, is still part of the epidermis and the intestinal lining and which is not, and which pork molecule has turned into a human molecule. Even the 'inside' of a body is full of skins, opening up many surfaces. . . . We live 'as much in processes across and through skins as in processes "within" skins.' . . . Despite the usefulness of the . . . body as a separate, enclosed unit, . . . this view is not at all obvious, and *instead needs a lot of cultural work to be upheld*."[6]

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For a generation, humanities scholars have imagined "the body" bounded as an envelope, not seeping with a fluid to alarm its orifices. In Bynum, Biale, Bildhauer, and Anidjar, "the body" has yielded to blood. Historians like Bynum confine blood-talk to the past; critics like Anidjar would ban it altogether. Historians or critics, those scholars hardly address the anthropological problem that blood *persists*. Strategies that only confine or sanitize are designed to fail. Blood persists because it provides a fluid to think with, a key to the scriptures, and a language in which to disagree. Internal and external critics of Christianity have protested for half a century and more that Christian blood-signaling is dangerous.[7] Yes, it is dangerous, but the protest has been anthropologically naïve. I intervene in their critique to say that Christian blood-signaling is not going away, and that the options are not exhausted by repristinating it, on the one hand, or deploring it, on the other. A third option remains: to repeat blood's language subversively, to free it from contexts of oppression or violence. This option reclaims or "mobilizes the signifier for an alternative production."[8]

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Only the body's unremarked boundary is that of skin. Its *salient, defended, or fertile* boundary is that of blood. When something foreign penetrates the skin, or when it "leaks" (verbs I interrogate later), the envelope

[6] Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 1–3, my italics, quoting Shannon Sullivan, *Living across and through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism, and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), x.

[7] An example I taught for years: Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), 1–30.

[8] Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations," in Seyla Benhabib, et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 35–57; here, 51–2.

turns red. Blood trickles, flows, or floods, prompting self and others to react with more or less alarm. Blood attracts attention – or society attends to blood – on the skin: the boundary of skin becomes salient with blood. The vigor with which society marks its boundaries is the vigor with which the body reacts to blood.

Moderns, medievals, and ancients all pictured the body as a sack of blood. When the sack leaked, or something punctured it, what had been inside emerged to coat the exterior. If this coating is sweat, it may draw little notice. Spittle doesn't draw much notice either, at least in a baby; more in someone older. Tears call forth concern. The leakage of sexual fluids we hide under clothes or behind doors. But blood reliably brings alarm. Unlike sweat, spit, or tears, blood is not clear. Blood's color makes it useful. Blood marks both society's investment in the individual and the individual's in society, blazes that relationship in red.

Blood is red because iron compounds transport oxygen. But society has recruited its bright, saturated color to rubricate the body and interpret life and death in terms of blood. It is not just that blood loss can lead to death. It is not just that society must care about its members. Many things share those qualities without becoming to the same extent as blood a fluid to think with. We also care about breathing and dialysis – but they do not define society as blood does. Breath is not visible. Dialysis is not natural. The importance of blood is that it combines life and death with the marks of enclosure and breach: its color and its tendency to flag the body's bounds in red when something penetrates the body, or leaves its bounds, give blood an imaging function that little else can match. "[T]he dominant medieval view of the body, as today, was that of a closed container," but "the awareness that this model could not always be upheld caused more anxiety than enthusiasm. . . . Both affirmation and challenges to the dominant view of the body . . . played out, crucially, through blood."[9]

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WE SEE ANOTHER PATTERN OF AFFIRMATION AND CHALLENGE PLAY out in terms of blood when liberals contest evangelical models of atonement. Evangelicals insist that "blood" in the New Testament means "death," because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" or, in vulgar Anselmian terms, because they regard the blood of Jesus as a death that pays a

[9] Bildhauer, 7.

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debt for sin. Liberals insist that blood means "life," citing cross-cultural studies as well as Gen. 9:4, Lev. 17:11, 14, and Dt. 12:23.[10] Indeed, Lev. 17:11 says *both* that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" *and* that "as life, it is blood that makes atonement" – complicating the claim that, in sacrifice, what makes atonement is death. Part of blood's power is to represent opposites: life *and* death, health *and* disease, kin *and* alien, treasure *and* waste. A historian lets the paradox stand: "Blood is, both physiologically and symbolically, more complex and labile because [why?] finally contradictory. Blood is life and death."[11] That is, as far as descriptive data lead – to the productive contradiction.

An anthropologist and a theologian will, however, both want to know more – more than the descriptive historian may think quite decent. *Why* does blood represent life and death? Especially when "humans much more frequently experience non-lethal blood-loss and non-bloody deaths"?[12] What is the underlying social necessity to locate the productive contradiction *here*? Why not (as an anonymous reviewer noted) in water? Or (in Vedic sacrifice) breath? Neither is red like blood. According to Bildhauer, the underlying social necessity is to uphold the body as stable. If the individual or social body is fraught with orifices, leaks, penetrations, and transfusions, they cry out to be stanched or stabilized by social *work:* society casts the complexity and instability onto "blood." The pairs of opposites always "rely on and enforce the concept of the bounded body," creating, sociologically, an "inside" and "outside" for blood to be on; "instead of seeing blood to be [intrinsically] 'more complex,'" Bildhauer contends, "the seeming complexity of blood depends on the seeming stability of the body, and vice versa. Blood was only separated into matter 'inside' and 'outside' the body because its movement was crucial" to maintaining the body as a stable sack across the boundary of which blood could move, "and the body appeared as a closed container because one location of blood is perceived to be outside and another inside."[13] Those opposites prove neither intrinsic nor innocent. Rather society invests in them all. Society creates the opposites to define, stabilize, establish something that society and individual find of high importance: their picture of themselves – their picture of themselves as bounded – as "this" and not "that," "us" and not

[10] Alan M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word Blood in Scripture*, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford: Tyndale Press, 1963).

[11] Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages," *Church History* 71 (2002): 685–714; here, 706–7. See extensively *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[12] Bildhauer, 6.

[13] Bildhauer, 6.

"them." *Much religious creativity consists in enlarging this boundary, so that those formerly "them" are now "us," and out of death comes life, so that "death is swallowed up in victory"* (1 Cor. 15:57) – *that is, finds itself enclosed within a larger body.* (See Chapter 3.)

With larger bodies we do not exactly get beyond that picture, but we can extend it productively to sublate itself. We can never leap right out of the society in which we think, but we can often use its categories in novel ways to reach beyond themselves. Judith Butler (in a passage I have quoted before, and will quote again) puts it like this:

> *To deconstruct [a pair of opposites] is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power. Here it is of course necessary to state quite plainly that the options for theory are not exhausted by presuming [for example, the concept of the body], on the one hand, and negating it, on the other. It is my purpose to do precisely neither of these. . . . [My procedure] does not freeze, banish, render useless, or deplete of meaning the usage of the term; on the contrary, it provides the conditions to mobilize the signifier in the service of an alternative production.*[14]

That's what Jesus does at the Last Supper. He takes the language of violent execution and turns it to a peaceful feast. "This is my body, broken for you." "This is my blood, poured out for many." He mobilizes the signifier for an alternative production. But the right mobilization and the right alternative for the signifier are hard to predict. How do we do that again?

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BLOOD MAY BE RED BECAUSE IRON COMPOUNDS MAKE IT SO, BUT *societies draft its material qualities, its color and stickiness, for multiple purposes of their own. I would say it in every chapter if I could. We imagine individual, social, and animal bodies as securely bounded. Inside, blood carries life. Outside, blood marks the body fertile or at risk. According to Bildhauer, society's work to maintain bodily integrity thus takes place in blood. It's the body's permeability that leaves us bloody-minded; it's in blood's terms that society makes a body. The body becomes a membrane to pass when it breathes, eats, perspires, eliminates, menstruates, ejaculates, conceives, or bleeds. Only bleeding evokes so swift and public a response: blood brings mother to child, bystander to victim,*

[14] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 51–2, paragraph boundary elided.

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ambulance to patient, soldier to comrade, midwife to mother, defender to border. If society is a body, society's integrity is blood's work.

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WHEN I WRITE, NEW IDEAS RARELY SPRING FROM NOTHING. THEY bud on old growth. I want to include the budding matrix, even when several branches spread from there. I don't mind the repetitions, I like them: I call them refrains. Like refrains in hymns, I print them in italics. You can skip them once you know how they go. Or, if you like them, you can sing along.

To modify the metaphor, this chapter, like an overture, plays for the first time the principal tunes, to make them recognizable them when they come back.

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I JUST WROTE THAT "IT'S THE BODY'S PERMEABILITY THAT LEAVES US bloody-minded." But we'll see in Chapter 4 that permeability, however often feared, isn't always bad. Jeff Stout, in a chapter called "Blood and Harmony," contrasts two organizations with different initiations into purity and permeability. One is a gang that requires new members to qualify by having killed someone different from themselves. Another trains organizers by requiring them to join two by two in mixed-race pairs. In that case, "the group was inculcating a habit of bridge-building, so that the identity-conferring boundary around the group was already rendered permeable in the very act of defining it."[15]

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READERS OF GRANT PROPOSALS WANTED TO KNOW, ARE WE TALKING about "real" or "symbolic" blood? The short answer is, we're talking about any version of blood that carries social meaning. A distinction between "real" and "symbolic" blood only comes up once social meaning is in play: the two arise together. Consider some examples in which symbolic blood competes with physical blood for the compliment of being treated as the most "real."

In the *Dauerwunder* of late medieval Germany,[16] pilgrims regarded the substance in certain reliquaries as real, human blood miraculously kept fluid

[15] Jeffrey Stout, "Blood and Harmony," in *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 181–5; here, 182–3.

[16] For this paragraph: Caroline Bynum, *Wonderful Blood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

and red. Reliquary blood, liquid and bright, came to rival the wine consecrated by a priest and controlled by the hierarchy. Which was the *true* blood, the blood that bound the community together "for real"? Was it the reliquary blood, with apparently greater claims to physicality, which bound the pilgrims ecstatically with a common experience of wonder? Or was it the institutional blood, with the acknowledged accidents of wine, which bound the church into a hierarchy with priest, bishop, pope, and even dissenter or reformer? Bynum's *Wonderful Blood* details the conflict precisely where instances of reliquary blood, with greater claims to being physical, to having once flowed in human veins, gave up, albeit with excruciating slowness, the claim to be more real than sacramental blood. Eventually the hierarchy won, and the blood that maintained the deepest connections with the *social* body retained the title "true" – the blood that best connected the individual and society, the human being and God, the brothers and the Father, the body of Christ and the Body of Christ. It is of high importance that the metaphorical blood of the Eucharist became no less real in its conflict with putatively biological blood, but finally more. The exception of reliquary blood proves the rule that symbolic blood – so far from contrasting with "real" blood – instead controls what counts as real. Social power makes symbolic blood more real than physical blood, much as it makes paper money a matter of life and death. Robert Parker, writing on Greek religion, states a general principle: the "commandeering of the natural processes by society through ritual is so effective that when ritual and physical facts conflict, physical status yields to ritual."[17] In drag culture, "realness" applies to those queering gender.

If we today regard physical blood as more real, that's because of a powerful social practice called medicine. If we have learned that only a transfusion of biological blood will heal us – and certainly not red wine – medieval Christians learned the opposite: that only the drinking (or, if communion was offered in one kind, the mere sight or proximity) of consecrated wine could save them – and certainly not biological human blood.

Or consider the blood of martyrs in Ignatius of Antioch. Here too the symbol recruits the physical. Ignatius writes, "I desire the drink of God, namely his blood, which is . . . eternal life." While the "drink of God, namely his blood" refers to eucharistic wine, it also refers to Ignatius's desire, under circumstances he cannot escape, for martyrdom: "Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of

[17] Robert C. T. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 63.

the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ."[18] The commonplace is to trace the Eucharist to a real sacrifice (Christ's), but Ignatius boldly does the reverse: He traces a real sacrifice (his) to the Eucharist. In Ignatius, the Eucharist does not so much represent a martyr (Jesus), as a martyr (Ignatius) represents the Eucharist. The Eucharist represents, for him, so powerful a symbol that it reaches out to coopt, absorb, requisition physical realities to represent *it*. The call to *become Eucharist* so overtakes Ignatius that he warns others to resist it, for this Eucharist recruits even martyrs to represent and replicate itself. What it replicates is self-sacrifice. The paradox makes sense as eucharistic blood becomes more real than the martyr's blood.

The consecrated wine receives the high designation "the drink of God" because it alone flows with the *community's* blood, the *social* blood, which is at the same time the blood of God. Why? Because, in Durkheim's terms, that's what a totem does: identify the society with its cosmology and its god – or because, in Christian terms, that's what analogy does (*analogia sanguinis*): establish a multilevel hierarchy whereby God elevates human beings, gift upon gift, into participation in God's own life.

Social blood is more powerful, more real, more substantial than physical blood, because social blood alone conveys meaning. When the voluntary shedding of physical blood changes society, it's because social meaning changes in the process. Only when physical blood conflows with social blood does it mean; only when social blood changes does physical blood take effect. This is not to refuse the offerings of physical blood, make them vain, or deprive them of meaning, but to name their power precisely as one to change social meanings: not only to revive or resist, but also to vary, divert, re-channel, dissipate, or exhaust them. Blood's social reality becomes clear when Ignatius warns: "Be careful, therefore, to take part only in the one Eucharist; for there is only one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to unite us with his blood."[19] This blood carries the force of union, the social principle *par excellence*. "For drink I crave his blood, which is love that cannot perish":[20] this blood carries love, the social relation stronger than death.

[18] Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, chapters (i.e., paragraphs) 4 and 7 in Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight at www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm.

[19] Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 4, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight at www.newadvent.org/fathers/0108.htm.

[20] Ignatius, *Romans* 7:3.

The social practice called the Eucharist, communion, or the sacrament of the Lord's Supper brings the group to itself as a community, to know itself as a body, to see its blood as its own. Eucharistic disputes create and conserve ways of speaking that reveal the community's blood-sense. They work at the level of social conflict and self-definition, because both disputes about and appeals to "blood" mark the community's coming to see itself by looking at its blood.

Consider a possible exception: Catholic communion for laypeople only "in one kind," bread alone without wine. Prohibiting blood to the laity makes it no less valuable, but much more, if only the priests partake it. Fear of spilling it makes blood more precious, elevates the status of those who convey it – and shows the body porous and vulnerable all over again. And whatever you think of transubstantiation as a theory, it reveals blood's social reality as substantial, even cosmological.

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SINCE DURKHEIM, STUDENTS OF RELIGION HAVE CALLED THE TOTEM *"The elementary form of the religious life." Since Maximus the Confessor, and reaching a high point in Thomas Aquinas, theologians have insisted on working by "analogy." In Christian theology, "analogy" has little to do with literary devices, still less with unlikely comparisons on standardized tests. In theology, "analogy" names the largest repeating structures that hold the symbol system together.*[21] *We need not quarrel over terms. "Analogy" is just the theological word for "totemism." Aquinas and Durkheim would agree that Christianity paints a pattern according to which the historical body of Jesus is the body of Christ; the church is the body of Christ; the bread of the Eucharist is the body of Christ; the believer makes up the body of Christ; the crucifix around her neck displays the body of Christ; and the body of Christ is the body of God. No Christianity exists without some version of this pattern, which theology calls "analogy" and Durkheim "totemism."*

Closely allied to the body of Christ is his blood, which the New Testament cites three times as often as his "cross" and five times as often as his "death."[22] *This is my analogy or undersong: The blood from the cross is the blood of Christ; the wine of the Eucharist is the blood of Christ; the means of atonement is the blood of Christ; the unity of the church is the blood of Christ; the kinship of believers is the blood of Christ; the cup of salvation is the blood of Christ; icons ooze out the blood of Christ; and the blood of Christ is the blood of God.*

[21] In Rom. 12:6, *analogia tes pisteos* names the (dis)proportionality of faith. In the twentieth century, theologians disputed among the analogy of being, the analogy of faith, the analogy of beauty, and so on.

[22] Stibbs, 1.

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"The blood of Christ" works analogically in Christian theology and totemically in Christian practice. It names a large-scale structure that holds together cosmology, fictive kinship, gender roles, ritual practices, atonement for sin, solidarity in suffering, and recruits history and geography to illustrate its purposes. When conflict reveals the body as penetrable, we glimpse that the body does not define itself, but society uses its bleeding to redline its borders. Lately issues as diverse as atonement, evolution, women's leadership, and same-sex marriage seem to some Christians to threaten, and to others to revive, the symbol system that the blood of Christ structures, cleanses, and unites. In theology and anthropology, blood outside the body is matter out of place: Abel's blood cries out from the ground. But menstruation and childbirth make gendered exceptions – or engender new beginnings – where outside blood promises new life. Exegetes argue whether the blood of Christ means life or death, but blood provides the language within which they disagree.

That's how blood becomes natural for Christians to think with. How could it be otherwise? What resists analysis in terms of Christ's blood proves either irrelevant to the relations among the community, its God and its world – or a body too foreign for the system to metabolize: something that Christ's body could not digest, that Christ's blood could not cure. Such an exception could only threaten the whole system, would call up Durkheimian effervescence or outrage. Does evolution "impugn the blood of Christ"?

Natural science now seems to some Christians to threaten, to others to revive the whole analogical system by which Christianity rests on the incarnation of Christ and lives by his blood. Evolution seems to creationists to threaten the creation of humans in God's image and to relativize complementary gender roles that appeal to creation "male and female." (Chapters 6 and 9.) Sociologists of religion like Durkheim, Mary Douglas, and Nancy Jay show why the outrage of the detractors tends to the language of blood as well as why defenders seek both to avoid that language and to reclaim it.

***

AN EPISCOPAL CHURCH COMMITTEE DISPUTES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN terms of blood:

> "The trouble with liberals is, they can't talk about the atonement."
> "You mean, liberals talk about Abelardian atonement. You're claiming liberals can't talk about *Anselmian* atonement."
> "That's right: Liberals can't talk about bloody atonement."
> "If we talk about blood a lot, you'll like it better?"
> So we did.[23]

[23] See Chapter 5. Conversation between myself and Grant LeMarquand, on the panel "Theology of Same-Sex Marriage," convened by the U.S. Episcopal House of Bishops, Pasadena, California, 2009. The "liberal" document talks about blood a lot – more than the conservative one. "A Theology of Marriage Including Same-Sex Couples," by Deirdre Good, Willis Jenkins, Cynthia Kittredge, and Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Anglican Theological*

The assumption on both sides – that Anselm talks about blood, and Abelard does not – is false. Abelard does talk about blood. He frames his argument in terms of blood. His famous atonement theory, rival to Anselm's, apparently unbloody and based on love, arises in the midst of his commentary on Romans. It forms a *quaestio* or excursus on Rom. 3:25–26, where Paul writes about "Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood." Abelard states his *quaestio*, his quest, in terms of blood: he seeks to know "what that redemption of ours through the death of Christ may be, and in what way the apostle declares that we are justified by his blood."[24] He answers that "we have been justified by the blood of Christ . . . in that [he] has taken upon himself our nature and persevered therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death . . . [so] that . . . true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him. . . . Wherefore, our redemption through Christ's suffering is that deeper affection in us . . . so that we do all things out of love rather than fear – love to him who has shown us such grace that no greater can be found, as he himself asserts, saying, 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"[25] As for Abel, so for Abelard: this blood cries out.

If Anselm's own theory is bloodier than Abelard's, it is so not only in the way that Protestants remember it. While his theory does "free [the soul] from servitude" by "the blood of God" as debt-payment for insulted honor, Anselm goes on to connect the blood of the cross with that of the Eucharist: "Chew this, bite it, suck it, let your heart swallow it, when your mouth receives the body and blood of your Redeemer, for through this and not otherwise than through this will you remain in Christ and Christ in you." Today Protestant Anselmians "accept Christ" into their minds by faith: but the original Anselm accepts Christ in the Latin sense of *accipere,* "to receive in or on a part of the body," as into the belly (Cicero) or onto the lap (Vergil).[26] Anselm accepts Christ by taking him into his mouth.[27]

Review 93 (Winter 2011): 51–87. The authors are alphabetical. This article, with its companion piece by our conservative interlocutors, replies to both, and seven responses from other scholars worldwide occupies the entire issue except for book reviews.

[24] Peter Abelard, *Commentary on Romans*, in *A Scholastic Miscellany*, ed. and trans. Eugene Fairweather, Library of Christian Classics 10 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 280.

[25] Abelard, 283–4.

[26] *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, ed. J. R. V. Marchant and Joseph F. Charles, rev. ed. (New York and London: Funk & Wagnall's, 1904–58), s.v. "accipio."

[27] Anselm of Canterbury, *Meditation on Human Redemption*, in *Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin, 1973), 230–7; here, 230, lines 1–7.

It is hardly blood that distinguishes Anselm and Abelard; blood just gives them *a language in which to disagree*. Anselm holds up the blood of a debtor, Abelard the blood of a friend. For Anselm, Christ's blood reappears in the Eucharist, while for Abelard it reappears in thanksgiving. Which are the same word.

***

LOCAL THEORY. THIS IS THE PART WHERE I TAKE THE GLOBAL THEORY back. Stan Stowers is right that "sacrifice" names no single thing, but a congeries of local practices with different purposes and social locations.[28] That goes for blood discourses – local, various, socially constructed. The global theory and the local theory may seem to be at odds: but both are helpful. Some examples may fit oddly or not at all with the theory that blood constructs the body, but I don't mind. Later, Wittgenstein will tell us why we don't have to.

***

IN THE LEVITICAL MATERIAL (CHAPTER 3), BLOOD REPAIRS ruptures in social structure (sins), which also correspond to ruptures in cosmological structure, where the articulated architecture of creation breaks down and miasma or chaos sinks in. Levitical sacrifice chimes with both Genesis 1, where God creates order by separation, and the Noachide narratives, where the separations break down and the waters above the earth leak in. I ask whether the cut animal can represent the ruptured society, and the Temple can re-enclose blood poured out, to make it interior to a new and larger whole, a new social body to reunite a separated people. William Cowper's famous hymn paints the Christian picture:

> There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
> Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains,
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.[29]

The trouble is that levitically there's not nearly enough blood for that. For an atonement offering, the priest only "daubs" (נָתַן) "some of the blood" on the

[28] Stanley Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion," in *The Social World of the Earliest Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. M. White and O. L. Yarborough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 293–333.

[29] First published as "Praise for the Fountain Opened," in William Cowper and John Newton, *Olney Hymns* (London: various publishers, 1779).

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horns of the altar "with his finger" (Lev. 4:30, 4:34, 8:15, 9:9; see also 4:7, 4:18, 4:25, 16:18 and Ex. 29:12, 30:10). It works like a cleaner on a terminal or a conductant on an electrode: a little dab'll do ya. The picture in Hebrews of an altar flooded with blood is far more than a finger's worth; it is a Christian fantasy. Is there any interesting way in which Levitical sacrifice – or its representation in Hebrews – reflects the Durkheim/Douglas/Bildhauer structure?

I think there is. If meaning inheres in social practices, then material understanding puts matter into place, and matter *out* of place gains power to destroy or restore. Genesis has *God* make meanings that way. God first creates meaning by *separation,* moving matter in and out of place: God separates the light from the darkness, the waters under the earth from the waters above the earth. Aquinas has God make separations to diversify creatures, so that what one lacks to represent God's understanding, another can supply. God makes a world where we need material difference to understand.

Blood sacrifice too works by separation: a knife parts an animal and generates blood. (Mira Balberg argues, *in order* to generate blood.[30]) Does that separation rehearse God's creation to represent understanding and restore goodness? For Mary Douglas, parting the animal shows society's division into parties, a material way to see the breach. For Nancy Jay, sacrifice "does birth better," where bloodletting exaggerates childbirth's bleeding to create a new lineage, innocent as a child.

Sacrifice, like creation, is meant as gift, this time almost unimaginably, perhaps immorally costly. When material understanding uses the costliest signaling, it takes place in blood. Blood is meaning made costly, meaning with bodies on the line. For that reason both "without shedding blood there is no forgiveness" and suicide bombings continue. Humans do use humans to think with, themselves and others – nations, sexes, animals, victims. Must we? At least we must recover and critique the ways we understand by means of blood, lest they exercise their baleful influence (in a phrase Sarah Coakley has used elsewhere) out of conscious sight.

***

THE BINDING OF ISAAC REPRESENTS A STORY WHERE BLOOD SEEPS in although the biblical narrative never mentions it. (See the next chapter.) Blood's absence tests my focus. If blood matters as much to Christian thinking as I suppose, there ought hardly to be important places where it goes missing. I claim the binding of Isaac proves the rule: There, where blood is missing from the text, Christian and (perhaps for that reason) also rabbinic

[30] Mira Balberg, *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

traditions can't help themselves from reading it in. In a few rabbinic accounts it's the blood of Isaac that, at the Passover in Egypt, wards off the angel of death. In the story's Christian transformation, the beloved son of the father does die, pictured with plenty of blood.[31] *You might grant that Christian and Jewish traditions both read blood into the Isaac story, where it does not seem to belong, and argue – like Gil Anidjar – that this seepage marks a pathology rather than a feature. I think a pathology does afflict the story, but not in the blood. The pathology lies in a failure to detect the irony in God's command. Thus a sub-thesis: blood-talk is unavoidable, but irony counts.*

The sacrifice of Isaac is not the only case in which blood seeps in where it seems not to belong. Another is the crucifixion itself. Christian images cover it in blood. From Mel Brooks to Mel Gibson, the crucifixion seems to be all about blood. In the fourteenth-century painting of the Vision of St. Bernhard that graces the cover of Bildhauer's book, the crucified is swallowed up in blood. In Raphael and other painters, the crucifixion takes place to enable the collection of blood in cups (including the cover by Jacob Cornelisz). *But blood is at most incidental to crucifixion. My positivist students remind me that blood is not the cause of death. Suffocation is. You can even lash a victim to a cross so that not even hands and feet need bleed. Christ's side-wound occurs after death and would ooze coagulating gore, not frank blood. It's the picture of sacrifice – of sacrifice in blood – that colonizes the crucifixion (as the stations of the cross elaborate). Crucifixion is an unbloody death read as bloody for sacrificial interpretations. "What makes us so bloody-minded?" A social system (our own) where blood carries meaning. This system seeks to make the crucifixion, and in minority traditions also the binding of Isaac, meaningful in terms of blood, even when the story needs little or none. No blood, no meaning. The meaning of the crucifixion summons the blood. Here again, the exception proves the rule.*

***

OR CONSIDER THE FAMOUS BILLIE HOLIDAY SONG:

> Southern trees bear strange fruit
> Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
> Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
> Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

"Strange Fruit" is about lynching. Lynching is extrajudicial hanging, usually from a tree. "Strange Fruit" too "adds blood to another (usually)

[31] See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 192–7.

bloodless form of death in order to identify it with the cross."[32] And yet blood-language is not strictly necessary to identify "hanging from a tree" with killing on a cross. The New Testament five times identifies hanging from a tree with hanging on a cross without ever invoking blood (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; troping Dt. 21:23). The strange thing is that we see the blood even when it goes without saying. The blood is not overkill, it's naturalized. Mediterranean sacrifice remains incomplete without invoking blood.

***

THAT WAS ONE TEST: WHY DOES BLOOD INFILTRATE TEXTS WHERE IT GOES unmentioned? Here is a different test: There must be some cases where blood-language goes wrong. Modern creationism supplies one. (See Chapter 6.) There, blood-language makes visceral the objection to evolution. Creationists such as Ken Ham think a good God could not establish a system that runs on death not accidentally, but in principle. For them, only conscious human sin – in the Fall – could have caused the predation, extinction, and death we now observe. The limitation of that atonement theory is to cure only sin. It does not help mutability – creatures' defining ability to undergo change, whether for the good, in growth, or for ill, in falling.

The Analogy of Blood (my private title) uses Irenaeus to diagnose creationism as a softer Gnosticism, Aquinas to defend evolution as a part of providence, and sociology of religion to show why evolution's detractors tend to the language of blood – as well as why its defenders should reclaim the same language. On the way I venture a primatology of the incarnation, a sacramentology of gratitude, and recover from Maximus a cosmic theory of redemption.

In Against Heresies IV.4, Irenaeus might have been complaining about creationism when he wrote of Gnostics, "People who do not appreciate the period of growth are completely unreasonable. At the outset they refuse to be what they were made: humans who share passions with animals. They override the law of nature; they already want to be like God the Creator before they even become human. Thus they are dumber than the dumb beasts. The beasts do not blame God for not making them human! We, however, complain that instead of being made gods from the beginning, we are first human and then divine."[33]

[32] I quote the analysis and the lyrics from personal correspondence with Gregory S. Williams, March 1, 2019. The poem was first published as "Bitter Fruit" under the name Lewis Allan, pseudonym of Abel Meeropol, in *The New York Teacher* (1937).

[33] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* IV.4 in Patout Burns, ed. and trans., *Theological Anthropology* (Sources of Early Christian Thought) (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 25, modified.

On Irenaeus's theory, God is perfect already; *the experiment with creatures is to see whether they can reach perfection by growing. God is stable, and creatures change. Mutability is meant for good, for growth, but turns bad, or runs down. Growth becomes suffering. What Christ comes to fix is not in the first instance sin, but flesh, what suffers and rots. On his theory, the moral running down that is sin is corollary to the physical running down that ends in death. Christ returns flesh to the way of growth.*

The biblical word joining humans to the "dumb beasts" and all flesh is "blood." Their life, like ours, "is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11, 14). The word joining humans to God is likewise blood, "the blood of Christ." Irenaeus concludes that blood is what Gnostics really want to escape (V.2), which brings the creature first growth and then salvation.

***

AS BLOOD EMERGES TO TRACE THE BODY IN RED WHEN SOMETHING penetrates it, so society sees red when new ideas threaten it. When evolution penetrates Christianity, it seems to threaten traditional cosmology, gender roles, explanations for sin. Evolution opens a social wound that bleeds with talk of blood – blood of apes and humans, blood of Christ and atonement, blood of communion and culture-war. Blood matters to Christians not only as biology. They use blood in ways too parabiological, quasibiological, pseudobiological for it to count as biology alone. Rather, blood matters to Christian theology also as a cultural symbol, a fluid to think with. Christians use blood to think with not because theologians correctly understand its biology, but because they viscerally encounter its power – its socio-conceptual power to contain opposites. Sociologically, blood means life and death, kinship and enmity, purity and contagion, vulnerability and enclosure. Whether Christians believe in evolution or not, they talk as if blood sets them at one with and apart from the "dumb beasts." In disputes with one another they invoke the blood of Christ to name what sticks them together and what cuts them apart. Those who disagree "impugn the blood of Christ" or make his body "bleed." I will repeat: This sociology of blood rubricates the community's bounds in red. *For Christianity gives blood more to mean even than the protean containment of opposites. It can surpass their binaries. In the central story of Christ's blood, Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, did not avoid the deep and sinister means of human bloodletting, but used his blood to overcome them, as if to say, you cannot bleed me out; here, I pour my blood out for you. At what other wedding feast, suggests Jacob of Serugh, did the groom give his blood to drink in place of other wine? Theology must recover the power in the blood to turn enemies into kin and purity into vulnerability, not only*

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for communicants but for all the creatures of the earth. If the evidence for evolution leaves creationists unmoved – if the evolutionary mysticism of Teilhard was condemned, and the evolutionary Christology of Rahner forgotten[34] *– that is because no one connected them as the Bible did to the bloody particulars of taste and sacrifice by which humans think in their gut.*

***

WHAT DOES "THINKING" MEAN, WHEN I SAY CHRISTIANS "USE blood to think with"? In Religious Studies, "thinking" does not, primarily, refer to a private, individual mental state. You might want to study private mental states, but that's not what Religious Studies does; like sociology and anthropology, it studies groups. In Religious Studies, "thinking" encompasses public, communal practices of using language, images, and ritual. Even silent prayer or private headaches participate in the vocabulary and imagery learned and practiced among others. Christians use blood to think with when they publically "plead the blood" in prayer, praise Christ's blood in hymns, invoke the blood of atonement in theology, or accuse others of impugning that blood in disputes. Similarly, Christians use blood to think with when they drink Christ's blood in communion, venerate relics of blood in flasks, shed blood in martyrdom, or (in some traditions) prohibit menstruating women from the sacristy – as well as when their stomachs clench over those things.

***

"PLEADING THE BLOOD" IS A WAY OF IMPLORING FORGIVENESS FOR sin. It is the positive opposite of "impugning the blood," discussed in Chapter 5. When you plead the blood successfully, you are forgiven and "covered in the blood." The language of being "covered in the blood" moved, perhaps illicitly, to describe protection from misfortune as well as forgiveness for sin and rose to prominence in news reports during the COVID-19 pandemic as a protection against the virus, especially in church.[35] The application covered from COVID is odd since the blood of Jesus failed to protect Jesus himself from suffering and death; rather it resembles the suggestion of Satan that Jesus rejected, that he cast himself down from the top of the Temple (Luke 4:9). Perhaps a better application to COVID of blood's logic is that of the church responsible for an

[34] Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," trans. Karl-H. Kruger, in *Theological Investigations* 5 (New York: Crossroad, 1983 [1966]), 158–92.

[35] www.cnn.com/videos/us/2020/04/04/ohio-church-service-covid-19-pandemic-tuchman-pkg-ac360-vpx.cnn.

outbreak of over five thousand cases, some 42 percent of the total in South Korea: they donated their plasma for the recovery of others.[36]

***

I last cared about Teilhard de Chardin, paleontologist and priest, in the dinosaur phase of childhood. There is now one place where I find Teilhard helpful: the place where he descends to blood. It comes in his Mass "On the World."[37] *Teilhard is working as a paleontologist, digging in China, crossing the Gobi by horse or camel, riding for days at a time. He is a priest; he has to say mass every day. He says mass, therefore, in his head, or under his breath, as he rides. He practices the asceticism of the paleontologist in the field; he fills his pack with picks and brushes, no altar stones, wafers, cups, or wine. How can he celebrate? His mass is "on" the world, because he takes the crust of the earth as his altar stone, its fossils as his relics. In persona Christi, Teilhard channels Paul's notion of building up Christ's body, thinks of evolution's increasing complexity, and says, "This is my body." He thinks of Christ's sacrifice, of evolution's predation, extinction, and death, and says, "This is my blood."*

This division of body and blood allows Teilhard to keep blood with expiation and frees up the body to mean solidarity and upbuilding. Can he do that? Don't body and blood do the same work in the mass? Isn't the body also broken, just as the blood is poured out? Doesn't blood build up, with healing and nourishment, just as the body does?

It depends on what your liturgy says. Greek and Protestant rites say the body is "broken"; Catholic eucharists say the body is "given." What did 1 Corinthians say? In Greek it had no verb at all. "This is my body for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). Which liturgists variously filled in. (See Chapter 6.)

Whatever the result, the "broken" translation tends to confine the body to remedy for sin. The "given" translation, however, opens the body to more than one purpose – not just remedy for sin, but also for building up the church, which suits other bits of Paul. At first I preferred "broken," but now I favor "given." It's less sin-centered and gives God more space. Even if the human being had never sinned, God could still have become incarnate to elevate humans from Eden to heaven. The body of Christ could still be the bread of heaven, even if his blood were not the cup of salvation. Teilhard suggests a felix culpa *theology of evolution: O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer. It is a theology of dramatic irony: God chose just this place – our*

[36] www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-southkorea/south-korea-church-hit-by-covid-19-says-members-to-give-plasma-for-research-idUSKBN23U1QA.

[37] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "The Mass on the World," in *The Heart of Matter* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 119–34.

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blood – to do what God always intended. Creationism, on the other hand, allows no happy fault, brooks no predation and death in the divine comedy.

Leviticus and Romans both assert that blood is "given" for the remission of sins. Their assertion turns out to be more than a tautology, because the provision of the gift explodes the occasion. In Leviticus 17:11 we read the standard "For the life (*nefesh,* person, soul) of the flesh is in the blood"; but then it continues, "and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, *by reason of the life*" (RSV, *ba nefesh*). The word for "given" (נָתַתִּי) is the same as in Genesis 1:29, where God had given (נָתַתִּי) the human being every herb bearing seed to eat. The phrases are parallel – Given to eat: given to make atonement.

The parallelism in the phrasing opens the possibility of parallelism in the giving. Is atonement, according to expansive interpretations of Lev. 17:11, given already in creation itself? Especially if "atonement" means first of all making one, before it means making up for? That version of gift would tend to clinch the case that blood is good in the Garden before it repairs for sin; that blood is intended for communion before it is needed for sacrifice; that it can sanctify without any victims. Rabbis make a similar case, when they declare that God provided the ram for Isaac before the foundation of the world (Pirkei Avot 5:6).

Several New Testament passages *associate* the blood of Christ with the repair for sin and *deny* that repair exhausts its meaning, because they also assert that its provision precedes its need – precedes not only sin, but creation itself. The blood of Christ, therefore, is given first for communion, for solidarity, which becomes sacrifice only later, under conditions of sin. They have been read this way at least since Origen.[38] Romans says "they are justified by [God's] grace as a gift [δωρεάν], through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward [προέθετο, also "predetermined"] as an expiation by his blood" (3:24–25). This προέθετο reappears in Ephesians, where the aorist of the verb refers not recently to the crucifixion but protologically to God's offering of blood "before the foundation of the world" (1:4, 9). Similarly, 1 Peter "destines" the "precious blood of Christ . . .

[38] Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lecture 3, section 8, The Fathers of the Church, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 216ff.

before the foundation of the world" (1:19–20), while Revelation calls Christ "slain" then (13:8).

We must separate, with Teilhard, in order to reunite. In both Leviticus and Romans, blood is given before it is needed. It is given, therefore, also beyond, without, or apart from need. It flows with life before it spills in death. If the remission of sin provides the ironic *occasion* for making this clear, that is just what 1 Peter spells out: the blood "indeed was destined before the foundation of the world, but was manifest at the end of times for your sake" (1:19–20). Which is to say, it's *because* the blood of God already meant kinship, communion, solidarity, love, that the shedding of blood both made sense and showed relationship. Blood was sacred before it was sacrifice.

As the incarnation makes clear, the blood of Emmanuel is the blood of God with us, the blood of one in whom all things sum up (Eph. 1:10, ASV). But Leviticus had drawn the conclusion already: all blood belongs to God. If all blood is the blood of God, the blood of my neighbor and the blood of my beast, then all blood is God with us. What if we acted that way?

***

IN THIS BOOK I DO NOT HAVE A THESIS. THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY for that. Rather I have broken out in theses. Centuries of theses. The theses may not even follow; rather they coagulate.

Or again, it is a book of bloody fragments. No book about blood could cover everything. So much is missing. There is too little about martyrdom and one remark about blood libel. I describe rather than solve the issue of eating meat, and my chapter on war ends up treating other things. I address menstruation, though it is hardly my place. I could issue more trigger warnings and quote more critics of blood-talk's dangers. There is nothing about AIDS or blood-donation or the one-drop rule or vampires or devotion to the sacred heart. Colleagues send me books about blood all the time, and everyone has a favorite anecdote. They sum up my book in a word: So you're writing a book about race. About public health. About AIDS. About haemophilia. About violence. About menstruation. About kinship. About ancestry. About atonement. About sacrifice. About communion. About the sale of plasma. All those things are reductive. Blood is not about any one of them. The point is, blood is about all of them, and more. It generates more than opposites, more than binaries, to break out into

spots and drops and seepages – into patterns and into the escape from patterns. And that's also why blood makes a good metaphor for the infinite and the uncontained.

***

I CLAIM THAT BLOOD-TALK IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED, AND I REPEAT that it's not going away: but perhaps, contrary to my assumption, if it's socially constructed, it *can* go away? I think about blood here as I think about gender. Any number of conservatives might have said, in any number of centuries, that "male and female are not going away." And of course in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries male and female have been changing nonstop. I don't mean that blood language is perennial and changeless. I mean that blood, like gender, is something in terms of which things change. My comparison is with Judith Butler properly understood. There is a third option beyond repristinating the terms and ignoring their power: that is to repeat the terms subversively, to queer them, to bend them like a blue note, to remove them from conditions of violence, and to mobilize them – how? – as Jesus does in the Last Supper (which is a present and a future supper).

I hope it is no flaw to raise more questions than I answer. And I hope absences of treatment and even logic will bring others to write more.

***

MANY HUMANISTS AND GRANTING AGENCIES WANT TO KNOW "what period" I'm working in. A theologian would ask a different question: what locus? This book uses history ad hoc, but it is not history. It stands, as I have said, where theology and anthropology overlap. Theology and anthropology have in common (with some other disciplines, including psychology, and parts of philosophy and literature) that they think in patterns rather than periods. Normative impulses in anthropology and theology share a tendency to reach back to claim stories of origin. They both try to outflank history by reaching back "before" it for "nature." Their reach is not overreach, if we see it as a desire to recognize the patterns that vary. Mary Douglas describes the desire for pattern as a kind of reasoning in which "the final answer refers to the way in which the planets are fixed in the sky or the way that . . . humans or animals naturally behave."[39]

I am offering, as Lauren Winner has written in a different context, "theologically motivated juxtapositions." "I am juxtaposing theological

[39] Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press), 46.

questions," she writes, "with social and liturgical practices with the aim of showing not causal connections, but rather affinities – affinities that illuminate both [ancient and medieval practices], and our own."[40] My interest lies in patterns that persist, neither apart from history, nor perennially, but across and through their permutations. If we stick to period, we lose the conversation between Aquinas and Bulgakov, along with its impediments. If you prefer to distinguish than to assimilate the patterns, we will be the richer for another book.

Wittgenstein has thought about this at some length, precisely in connection with such bloody topics as sacrifice:

> Historical elucidation – an elucidation in terms of historical development, is only *one* way of bringing the data together, of seeing the data together. It is just as possible to see the data in their connectedness to one another and to integrate them into a wider picture without doing so in the form of a hypothesis about their temporal development. . . . I *could* portray this idea in the form of a developmental hypothesis – or also in the pattern of a religious ceremony. . .[41]
>
> We can only say: where that practice and these views go together, the practice does not spring from the view, but both of them are simply there. . . . We can only *describe* and say, human life is like that. . . . One would like to say: This is what took place here; laugh, if you can. . . . The principle according to which these practices are ordered is a much more general one . . . provided in our own soul. . . . Frazer's explanations would be no explanations at all if finally they did not appeal to an inclination within ourselves. . . .
>
> We could almost say, the human being is a ceremonious animal. . . .
>
> What I want to say is: The sinister, deep thing lies not in the fact that is how the history of this practice went, for perhaps it did not go that way; nor in the fact that perhaps or probably it was like that; but in whatever prompted me to suppose it. No, this deep and sinister thing is not self-evident when we are just told the story of the performance, but it is *we* who recognize it, out of a knowledge within ourselves. . . . And if someone asked, How do you know that? I could only say, it is what my experience

[40] Lauren Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 34.

[41] My translation of the following: "Die historische Erklärung, die Erklärung als eine Hypothese der Entwicklung, ist nur *eine* Art der Zusammenfassung der Daten – ihrer Synopsis. Es ist ebensowohl möglich, die Daten in ihrer Beziehung zu einander zu sehen und in ein allgemeines Bild zusammenzufassen, ohne es in Form einer Hyphothese überdie zeitliche Entwicklung zu machen. . . . [D]iese Idee, *kann* ich durch eine Entwicklungshypothese darstellen oder auch . . . durch das Schema einer religiösen Zeremonie" (Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen,* 3, 8, 16).

> with human beings teaches me. . . . What I see in those stories is something they acquire, after all, from the evidence, including such evidence as does not seem immediately connected with them – from thinking about human beings and their past, about the strangeness of what I see in myself and others, the strangeness of what I have seen and heard.[42]

***

CONSIDER WHAT ROBERT BRANDOM CALLS A DE RE, IN CONTRAST with a *de dicto*, interpretation.[43] "*De dicto* interpretation aims to say what parts of a tradition have said, and is therefore constrained to prioritize those partial traditions' own ancillary commitments and cultural context." In my attempts to unearth and exhibit – in archeological fashion – robust blood-language of the past, I prioritize some of the oddities of blood's previous cultural context, for example, the medieval context of menstruation, in order to explore its significance.

"A *de re* interpretation aims to say what follows from (some of) a tradition's commitments when they are placed into the setting of the *interpreter's* ancillary commitments and cultural context." That is what I try to do when I move the unearthed blood language into a modern theological context – for example, one in which disparate treatment of women is *prima facie* unjust, and interpretations of Jesus gender his blood more female as a source of fertility and rebirth.

I also want to combine a *de re* interpretation of blood traditions (not of blood biology) with "a certain amount of internal critique, as a way of using some of the tradition's actual commitments to put critical pressure on some of its other actual commitments." For example, the traditions of thinking about blood have had actual commitments to thinking both that the blood of Jesus saves and that the blood of women defiles. I want to use the commitment to the blood of Jesus to move the language of defilement away from women's fertility and against racist thinking. In another example, I want to favor the blood of Jesus as solidarity over the blood of Jesus as satisfaction. In a third example, I want to describe two sorts of commitments to blood's logic with respect to eating meat (while leaving readers to develop the logics exposed, rather than myself choosing between them): thus I distinguish a logic in which *ascetic* commitments lead to avoidance of meat-eating, and a logic in

[42] Wittgenstein, 3, 8, 16.

[43] These paragraphs are in dialogue with an anonymous reader for an earlier manuscript (the one that became *Aquinas and the Supreme Court*). The material in quotation marks belongs, lightly edited, to that reader. I adapt them here to the current book. I believe the anonymous reader was Jeffrey Stout.

which *sacrificial* commitments commend laypeople to eat meat at certain times of the liturgical year (such as Easter). What does it mean if we now organize our commitments differently: no longer according to *time*, so that vegetables are prescribed during Lent and lamb at Easter, but now by *personal identity*, so that laypeople adopt vegetarianism as an identity or adhere to "Paleolithic" eating as a movement?

***

NEITHER IS MY TOPIC ETHICS. RATHER I DESCRIBE SOME SHAPES, chosen for their oddity and tellingness. Changing them, if necessary, is too unpredictable for rules or habits. Like Jesus at the Last Supper they require the intervention of religious genius or special charism: the kaleidoscopic gifts of the unexpected (like prophecy or speaking in tongues) that shake a pattern into a new shape.

***

IF, ACCORDING TO WITTGENSTEIN, MEANING INHERES IN THE USE of a word, how does it inhere in the use of a substance? "Sacrifice" and "blood" work like "meaning." They are categories to which societies recur, things to think with, when the social body sees a threat or makes thanksgiving. "Blood" like "meaning" does very large-scale cultural work. *Blood is meaning made palpable, meaning made with bodies on the line*. Blood, in a phrase, is the costliest signaling. That's why global and local theories both can help, because it's the need for costly signaling that brings up blood in such different contexts, even where it doesn't seem to belong.

Of course, "societies" do not really think; people do. The social is a cooperative enterprise, like driving on the left or speaking English. But among those decisions assemblages emerge and seem to act on their own. Our blood discourse, therefore, is a social achievement, a way in which we cooperate with one another. We can hardly avoid, but we can expand or contract it. Anselmian blood discourses contract the incarnation to those who can sin. Athanasian blood discourses expand the incarnation to those who can suffer. We cannot escape a bloody atonement. But we can expand it, lest blood come to mean too little.

***

MOSTLY I TALK IN TERMS OF SOCIAL THEORY. BUT BLOOD IS MY protagonist. Blood retains its physical qualities in our experience and in our

heads. Blood is not the same as water. It's thicker and redder and leaves gore when it dries.

Blood (like bleeding) is not entirely under our control. It resists, inspires, and escapes us. Not only that: *we are conflicted about blood, and we express our conflicts in blood's terms. Blood conflicts and escapes us also because we contend among ourselves who counts as "us," and use blood-language to express and enact our cross-purposes. We use blood-language the way we use other tools like knives: to nourish, defend, and define ourselves. This makes clear that blood itself, like other tools that draw blood, turns back on the agent with an agentic capacity of its own.*[44]

While social construction illuminates the way I look at blood, a critic might observe that the social constructive and structuralist anthropological approaches – which identify humans individual and collective as the agents of blood's work – are foreign and anachronistic to many of the Christian texts, images, and attitudes I treat. In those sources, blood itself does things. Blood becomes itself the agent. A recent movement in anthropology, philosophy, and politics – "thing theory" – may prove truer to those sources. It may do more justice to another preoccupation of this book: blood's uncanny ability to persist across periods, to reappear when repressed, to seep in where it seems not to belong. Thing theory seeks to recover the agency of things, to query the anthropocentrism in which only humans act in their lordly isolation.

Jane Bennett's approach both resembles and resists the re-enchantment movement of conservative and romantic legal theories, theories that seek to evade the responsibilities with which constructivist approaches, in their constant search for hidden human agency, would burden them. Bennett encourages us to think, not only about the history of the tool's construction and the responsibility of those who made or wield it, but also about the tool itself, its side effects, its externalities: how it proves recalcitrant and ill-suited; how it resists us; how it proves clumsy – and beyond those negative or passive determinations, how the tool enables and opens things up, so easily as to unveil an agency of its own. The efficacy of objects can exceed the designs they serve (20).

"An actant," Bennett writes, "never really acts alone." It "depends on the collaboration . . . or interference of many bodies and forces. A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonoms but as vital materialities" (21). Bodies – both ours and those of our tools, from stone hand axes to sacramental blood to concepts like race, take their power from the heterogeneous assemblages from which they also

[44] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 35. I thank Virginia Burrus for directing me to this book.

first emerge (23–4) – in this case, a welter of humans, blood, wine, bread, cups, congregations, liturgies, priests, hierarchies, practices, warfare, menstruation, birth, violence, ramifying on and on in useful and life-giving, death-dealing and dangerous ways.

Bennett is agnostic about agency. "No one really knows what human agency is, or what humans are doing when they are said to perform as agents. In the face of every analysis, human agency remains something of a mystery. If we do not know just how it is that human agency operates, how can we be so sure that the processes through which nonhumans make their mark are qualitatively different?" (34).

Bennett admits to "anthropomorphizing" things. But she will not admit to religion. To me, thing theory seems animist at minimum. At maximum, what? Christological? Things have *rationes seminales*. They have *logoi*. I don't see how thing theory isn't religious, and thing theorists might as well say which religious ideas seem to animate their things. Otherwise theologians will make them Christological.

***

BECAUSE CHRISTIANS WORSHIP THE LOGOS INCARNATE, GOD'S OWN understanding made flesh, they have always rendered understanding material. With "My Lord and my God," Doubting Thomas used his fingers to make metaphysics palpable. Material understanding sustains the sacraments, where Christians find metaphysics and morals, grace and gratitude in bread and wine. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8), calling the faithful to communion, proclaims the throatiest of material understandings, where God made God's understanding known in the blood of the executed Word.

This variety of understanding finds it natural to claim (with Heb. 9:22) that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." I want to recover the strangeness of the appeal to blood. It sounds quite unlike "without the cutting of trees there are no wooden houses." To answer such questions, I take the best of anthropology as irritant and stimulus.

***

HOW DO THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEOLOGY RELATE? A GRACE OF creation underlies anything true, including anthropology, to the extent that it's true. It's not a foundation, heavy and rigid, but a hammock, light and supple, which surrounds, suspends, and elevates.

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This network of grace is knotted out in an idea of Maximus the Confessor: the idea that the Logos of God goes all the way down and rises all the way up, uplifting the hearts of things, to become their multiple principles or *logoi*. It is through those *logoi* that the Logos of God seeks "always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment."[45] The *logoi* lie deep in the heart of things to elevate them from within and anticipate Christ's incarnation.

To put it in nuptial, not Maximian terms, God took on a body as gift, gift of God's self, in a marital mystery. "This is my body, given for you." Where sin is possible, that gift becomes an offering, a willingness; where sin is actual, the offering becomes a sacrifice. God took on a body to be with creatures, so that they could be with God; but God took the occasion to do so also as remedy for sin: God took on a body in part to do sacrifice.

Maximus makes bold to place the intelligibility of things under Christ's blood. (See Chapter 9.) This is a sacramental or even eucharistic intelligibility, one based on things' destiny in God's embodiment. If Jesus Christ becomes himself in the bread and the wine, then that is just a special case of what he seeks to do always and in all things. For Maximus, therefore, the blood of Jesus is the blood of all things: they are intelligible as they live, or build up toward God's embodiment; and in case of need, their sacrifice – perhaps! – becomes intelligible in the light of God's.

The intelligibility of the *logoi*, which is the blood of the Logos, is indeed a mystery. In the first place it means their life. But under the fallen conditions in which the Word of God suffered and died, it suggests that all things also have a share of his suffering and death. This suggestion is useful, since the suffering and death of all things is something we can observe. It expands to all things Paul's remark that "we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). By including all things in one all-embracing mysterion or eucharist, it also expands baptism to all things: it extends to all things the remark that those who are buried with the Logos are also raised with him (Rom. 8:6, Col. 2:12). Maximus's reference to Christ's blood, which is the life of all things, also makes "intelligible" their suffering and death, in the sense that it reads them into his story. It does not make their suffering negligible or intelligible, but legible: legible through his.

Christ's blood, we may infer, includes the possibility of sacrifice that every thing has to offer. Christ's blood as the blood of all things implies that all things are capable of sacrifice at need, in that all things share his life. It is Christ's blood,

[45] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, translated as *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers* by Nicholas Constas, English and Greek text on facing pages (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Press, 2014–15), cited by Migne number. Here 1084C-D.

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on a Maximian account, that makes cooperation, procreation, evolution, and redemption all thinkable. The idea that the blood is the life, and the life belongs to God, implies that the possibility of repair remains, however much concrete sacrifices are also corrupted by sin, since there is also undoubtedly manipulated, manipulative, misguided, or just plain bad sacrifice. But it is because he regards all things as participating in a eucharistic economy of sacrifice and gratitude that Maximus puts all things under the sign of Christ's blood.

I hasten to repeat that this is no Girardian, kenotic, or sin-centered structure. Because blood first of all means life, it keeps abundance and gift at the center, and therefore the ability to deal with the rest. Girardian, kenotic, and even locally hamartiocentric structures deserve charity. But their pictures are hyperbolic. They exaggerate. Sacrifice does not mean self-immolation: it means the persistence of intention in the face of resistance. It is not the submission of the battered wife, but the free persistence of Gandhi or King – not the lack of agency, but a plenary, superlative, supererogatory agency. This plenipotentiary sacrifice emerges not from an original emptiness, but from an original abundance, the fullness of the Triune God, who is not nothing, but creates out of nothing. True sacrifice relies on God's self-offering and shares in God's fullness. This self-offering, which becomes sacrifice only when life persists against obstacles, is called God's blood. Such a part-share in the mystery of God's embodiment is not straightforward, but it roots a creature's legibility as deeply as the story allows.

Sacrifice in the Mediterranean may always be bloody, but blood is not always sacrificial. Before blood is sacrifice it is communion, the gift of life: and the blood of God is the gift of life and fellowship with God, of being born "not from the blood of human beings" but from above as a child of God (John 1:13). Thus in Leviticus blood is "the life" – and in John the divine intimacy.

***

THIS STANDS DURKHEIM ON HIS HEAD AND VINDICATES FEUERBACH: GOD and society *are* alike in that blood begins to make visible the ways of both society and God. They reflect each other in a ruddy mirror not because God is "really" society writ large, but because (theologians should say) God funds society's capacity for sacrifice and checks its misuse. That is so, trinitarians will add, because God is a Three of whom one makes offer, one vindicates the offering, and one celebrates, guarantees, and magnifies the offering (an offer that is gift before it is sacrifice). The doctrine of the social Trinity has been put to facile uses,[46] but the classic doctrine tells us Feuerbach and Durkheim are

[46] See Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432–45.

on to something: if God is fit for social projection, that's because the life of the Trinity is a community to join.

Those are some of the reasons why Mary Douglas and Thomas Aquinas, Barth and Feuerbach, Durkheim and Maximus, might meet in a single book. Not because theology and social theory, as Milbank would have it, are enemies; nor because, as Tillich might have it, they correlate on neutral ground; but rather because God created and, in giving God's own blood for human society, re-befriended them both.

***

SIMILAR CONFLUENCES OF BLOOD RECUR IN THE EARLIEST HISTORY of the little, loaded English word "bless," which derives, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, "from Old English *blóedsian,* 'to mark . . . with blood . . .; to consecrate.'" For better or worse, that was the word Christianizers chose, the *OED* continues, to translate "Latin *benedīcere*, and Greek *εὐλογεῖν*, . . . 'speak well of or eulogize, praise,' . . . themselves influenced by being chosen to translate Hebrew *brk*, primarily 'to bend,' hence 'to bend the knee, worship, praise, bless God, invoke blessings on, bless as a deity.'" To thicken things further, "At a very early date the popular etymological consciousness began to associate this verb with *bliss,* 'benignity, blitheness, joy, happiness,'"[47] so that the same word comes to coagulate bliss and blessing with marking by blood.

***

IN THE MOST AUSTERE OF THE FINE ARTS, YOU CAN REDUCE AN EQUATION TO simpler terms even without knowing what the variables mean. You may recognize the terms, but their import dazzles. $e^{i\pi} = -1$. Theology works similarly. Some biblical or credal statements work like operators. Theologians can apply them without (yet?) knowing what they mean; they enable theologians to generate new statements that they presume to be true, even without understanding their import. For instance, "Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God." Theologians don't know what the terms "full humanity," "full divinity," or "Jesus Christ" mean, but they use the sentence, which they hold true, to generate other sentences to be held true. Blood seems to be such an operator in Christian thought.

For Genesis (9:4–5), Leviticus (17:11, 14), Deuteronomy (12:23), Psalms (72:14), and Ezekiel (33:5), the life is in the blood.[48] In all those places, the

[47] *OED,* s.v. "bless." I thank Adam Tietje for alerting me to this connection.
[48] See also 1 Sam. 26:20.

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Hebrew has *nephesh*, the Septuagint *psyche*, the Vulgate *anima*, and the Lutherbibel (except in Ezekiel) *Seele* – so that outside the English tradition, it is more metaphysically the *soul* that lives in the blood. For John, blood is the life of the divine intimacy: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them" (John 6:56). That consensus[49] implies a further thesis. The blood of the creature, like its life, belongs to the Lord. Let us venture a generalization. In the Hebrew Bible, all blood belongs to God. For Christians, then, a corollary: all blood belongs to Christ.[50] That is just a special case of appropriating the structure of creation to the Logos, or calling the participation of all things in Christ "the *logoi* in the Logos." All blood, that is, participates in Christ's. The seas and salty water that preceded blood participate also. "One blood all nations" (Acts 17:26) is just a special case of one blood all creation.[51]

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IN THESE PAGES I REFER FROM TIME TO TIME TO REPAIRING THE LANGUAGES AND practices of blood. Sometimes I know what I mean, and sometimes I gesture into an unknown. But whether I understand it or not, to "repair" means to follow the pattern of Jesus. Jesus is no function of some abstract notion of repair, but repair is a notion whose contours Christians learn by discerning the recreative way of God become this creature. They can participate in God's repair of blood, because all blood belongs to God, and thus to Christ. They can participate in God's making all blood logical, that is, of the Logos. "Logical" is not simply opposed to blood, as the phrase "bloodless" or "logical" sacrifice would suggest; nor is it simply the same as blood, as if all sacrifice involved blood. Rather, "logical" is the use of blood that the Logos makes, as one who both creates and possesses blood, who gives and sheds it. That is why Irenaeus refers, in another context, to Christ's "rational blood" (*Adv. Haer.* 5.9.3).

That principle – or mystery – is less clear than we might like. For example, the logical use of blood in the crucifixion and the logical use of blood in the Eucharist are not the same, they are *ana*logical. The transition reflects a reality ungraspable in this life. The right reparative, logical, or Christoform use of blood will be mysterious, recreative, and unpredictable in advance, for all that it will look like

[49] William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), brackets the remark "the blood is the life" in an attempt to understand Levitical ritual from its descriptions alone: but that is not the job of either rabbinics or theology.

[50] I worked out this insight in conversation with Chuck Mathewes.

[51] The word "blood" is missing from the Vulgate but present in the Greek Majority Text as well as the Syriac and the Vetus Latina (pre-Vulgate Latin text). See my review of Gil Anidjar in the Appendix.

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Jesus in retrospect. The pattern of crucifixion and resurrection is not for others to follow, although God can create that pattern in them. Martyrs follow Christ, to be sure, and in exemplary fashion, but not as seeking martyrdom.

Rather, crucifixion and resurrection are for patterning the sense in senselessness, discerning a "logic" in deepest unlogic, love running over in the presence of its enemies. Where King and Gandhi fall, Christians see the pattern of Jesus. They "persevered," as Abelard wrote of Jesus, "teaching by word and example, even unto death." More mysterious still are the deaths of those who were not persevering in anything except an ordinary life. When Michael Brown, Jr., fell, and the Spirit gathered a community of witnesses called Black Lives Matter for justice and new life, dare we see a pattern of crucifixion and resurrection there?[52] (See Chapter 3.) When nameless women are snuffed out, like the concubine of Judges 19, or unnamed species go extinct, can we rightly see the pattern of Jesus – not to make their deaths any less lamentable, but to shape a lament on Good Friday?[53] Can we say that God in Christ suffers with and in them, takes their suffering up, remembers it in his hands, and memorializes it in his blood? Can we hold them in mind and repeat with Teilhard the words of Jesus, "This is my blood"? Amid so many abuses – for gaining and retaining power – is blood still apt for proper use? So used, blood would be for repair and rebirth, and for that beginning of repair in weakness which is making sense. That is why Maximus says that blood is logical.

***

"CONCIPIO, TO TAKE TOGETHER, HOLD TOGETHER . . . A. LIT. I, OF fluids, *to take in, draw in;* [of water, *concipio aquas;* of tears, *concipio lacrimas;* of air, *concipio anima*]. . . . B. . . . 4. *To comprehend, grasp.*"[54] The conception of a child or of a thought is each a special case of taking in a fluid.

How do we conceive blood, take and hold its images and usages together? Christians conceive it by taking it in. In so doing they hope to imitate Mary and conceive Jesus. But to grasp Jesus is to comprehend his blood. And to imitate Mary is to attend to women. (See Chapter 4.)

The question of this book is one of *concipimus*: how do we draw the usages of blood together, how do we draw the conceptual boundaries, the lines? And can we change them? How can we, without conceiving the Inconceivable, rechannel this dangerous fluid?

[52] Stephen G. Ray, Jr. "Black Lives Matter as Theology," in *Enfleshing Theology: Embodiment, Discipleship, and Politics in the Work of M. Shawn Copeland*, ed. Robert J. Rivera and Michele Saracino (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), 83–93.

[53] I owe the last phrases to a conversation with Lauren Winner.

[54] *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "concipio."