330 Blood (*Sanguis*)

The blood of Jesus was forbidden by the Jews in sign and detestation of the spilling of human blood which is cruel. Wherefore naturally seeing blood is horrifying, just as is evident sometimes concerning the owl which in minds and by cries when blood is found, but because one does not abhor the spilling of evil blood, it is a sign of nature that is hardened in fact and in evil, Eccli. 8[:19]: “for blood is as nothing in his sight.” From the effusion of human blood three things ought to be taken back: contumely of the creator, evidence of crying out, and strict vengeance. About which Christ indissolubly with a great price and labor coupled himself to human nature, 1 Pet. 1[:18-19]: “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers, but with the precious blood of a lamb unspotted.

¶ Therefore he who illicitly dissipates the work which the Father created, which the Son assumed and redeemed, and which the Holy Spirit inhabited, with merit he will have in the end against him the angels of the Lord and men testifying against him.

¶ Second, it is said the evidence of the outcry is to be retracted, for it is a sin to cry out to many when it cannot be hidden as homicide, Gen. 4[:10]: “The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth.” Or when the sin is vile as in Gen. 18[:20-21]: “The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah ... is come to me.”

Again, the detention of wages, James, the last chapter [5:4]: “Behold the hire of your laborers, which by fraud has been kept back by you, cries.” Eccli. 34[:25, 27]: “The bread of the needy, is the life of the poor: he that defrauds them thereof, is a man of blood.”

Again, the same place, “He that sheds blood, and he that defrauds the laborer of his hire, are brothers.”

¶ Third, withdrawing is vengeance of hardness because it said the shedder of blood is evil to God and even the earth receiving the blood, Gen. 4[:11]: “Cursed shall you be upon the earth, which has opened her mouth and received the blood of your brother.” Jude 1[:11]: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain.” Adam sinned but was not so cursed and the earth similarly and a third more than before. Therefore, the first penalty of homicide is the curse of God.

Second, the brevity of this life, Psal. [54:24]: “Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.” And Gen. [9:6]: “Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed.”

Third, vengeance is a complicated exaggeration of a penalty. Wherefore it is said to David because you have killed one [2 Kings 12:10]: “The sword shall never depart from your house” and your children. Therefore, for the life of man evilly slain it cannot thus be satisfied sufficiently because the sin is not dismissed, taken away, nor restitution made. But life cut short cannot be restored before the day of judgment. Therefore, properly speaking blood in one way may be said to be a red humor in the body in which according to the philosophers consist the seat of the soul in another way, but more inappropriately, it may be summed by red liquid as is said in 1 Mach. [6:34]: “They showed the elephants the blood of grapes, and mulberries. Sometimes it is placed for wine as when it is said blood makes blood and wine causes blood. Sometimes in similitude and metaphorically it is assumed for sin, as in Psal. [50:16]: “Deliver me from blood.” But among these the blood of Christ is great of strength and efficacy because it is in remedy of sinners, in refuge of penitents, and in aid of the laboring and struggling.

Concerning the first, the blood of Christ as much as it is moving sinners to the anguish of contrition, to the shame of confession, and to the labor of satisfaction because three models are at work.

¶ Concerning the first, Bernard,[[1]](#endnote-1) having seen the passion of Christ, who is so luxurious that he does not abstain, so wrathful that he does not allow, and so malicious that he does not surrender.

¶ The example in nature of the diamond[[2]](#endnote-2) to be softened and split by the blood of a goat, but much more the human heart at the remembrance of the blood of Christ, particularly when all other creatures agree to the passion of Christ. For the sun was obscured, the rocks were split, the earth quaked, the curtain was torn, tombs were opened, the dead arose, but only man was not prepared for when Christ alone died.

¶ If therefore the spilling of human blood moves God, Gen. 4[:10], why ought not the spilling of the blood of Christ move man. Wherefore Bernard, *Super Cantica*,[[3]](#endnote-3) above all things you have made yourself loveable to me, O good Jesus, the work of our redemption. Nothing attracts more pleasingly, nothing binds more forcefully, and nothing completes more vehemently.

¶ Again, an example in the limbs that an effusion of blood cures us. The arm of the man is bound tightly and abated so that the whole body may be healed. So, Christ who is the arm of the Father is abated by blood so that the whole body which is the Church may be healed.

Again, through the example of the figure, Heb. 9[:22]: “Almost all things are cleansed with blood: and without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sins.

¶ If therefore they were cleansed by the blood of animals and without spilling blood there is no remission of sins. If therefore they were cleansed by the blood of animals symbolically and figuratively much more has been signified of figures, they were cleansed better by the spilling of blood, Apo. 1[:5]: “He has loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Wherefore Augustine *Contra quinque hereses,* c. 10, at the end,[[4]](#endnote-4) the blood of the physician poured out, and it was made into a medication for mad men, Heb. 9[:14]: “The blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanses our conscience from dead works.” Often it was seen that the nurse satisfied the boy in her milk, but Christ washed us in his blood which was not in his excess, but of the substance of his life, Rom. 5[:6]: “When as yet we were weak, Christ died for us.” Much more now justified in his blood we will be saved from wrath. For example, in nature according to James of Vitry in his book *De mirabilibus orientis*,[[5]](#endnote-5)the pelican bird by the effusion of its blood upon its chicks revivifies them killed from the poison of the serpent. So, the chicks of Christ are called into paradise from the serpent devil by the blood of Christ and are revivified, Colo. 1[:14]: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins.” And Zachar. 9[:11]: “You also by the blood of your testament have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit.”

Second, the blood of Christ is for the penitents as a refuge and this because of three reasons. For the penitents are accustomed to despair because of the gravity of the offense, just as Cain, Gen. 4[:11]. Sometimes because of fear they are almost disabled, like Saul when he saw the Philistines approaching, he killed himself despairing that he could escape, 1 Kings last chapter [31:4]. Sometimes for the enormity of the fault, as is evident concerning Judas, but against these is the blood of Christ as a refuge, because to one he gives the guilt, that he may reconcile the offence, and pay the penalty.

Concerning the first, Apo. 1[:5]: “He has loved us, and washed us,” as it was said above. Therefore, he washed us in his blood just like a mother in her milk warmed by love, but Christ more than a mother who bathes us in his blood. The example concerning Constantine[[6]](#endnote-6) who wanted to be bathed in the blood of boys.

Concerning the second, Colo. 1[:20]: “Making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven.” Before him no one could pacify the discord, which was between God and man, as angel and man, but he revivified the diverse natures and made both one. And just as sometimes happens between people quarreling as if a mediator takes his death while the parties are unscathed, just so Christ the mediator underwent death so that the parties may make peace, Isai. 53[:8]: “For the wickedness of my people have I struck him.”

Concerning the third, because he himself paid the penalty, because he removed the eternity, and mitigated the acerbity, changing the eternal into the temporal, Psal. [102:4]: “Who redeems your life from destruction.” When therefore he says 1 Pet. 1[:18]: “Not [redeemed] with corruptible things as gold or silver,” etc. It is not necessary to reckon with anyone concerning the penalty except with Christ himself, or with his vicar the priest because he alone pays because God the Father cannot demand more. Certainly, he in God gave everything to his son because he so dearly redeemed us because the wound could take away or shatter.

¶ Third, the blood of Christ is in aid for those working and fighting. For it lessens the attacking, comforts the sustainers, and strengthen those triumphing.

Concerning the first, Mach. 6[:34]: “They showed the elephants the blood of grapes, and mulberries.” To sharpen them, in Psal. [139:4]. And 1 Pet. 4[:1]: “Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.”

Concerning the second, Heb. 12[:3]: “Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself.” Note here [Gen. 37:23] that the dyed tunic of Joseph. And how the Roman soldiers on the day before the battle put on red tunics. Christ himself put on his died tunic in our sight to warn us. Wherefore Bernard,[[7]](#endnote-7) if the passion of Christ is recalled, no one is so hard, that it could be tolerated with equanimity.

Concerning the third, [Apo.] 12[:10]: “The accuser of our brethren is cast forth.” For the devil greatly fears the sign of the cross.

Again, the blood of Christ calls us forth to follow and shows us the way, just as the blood of a wounded animal excites the dog with a means for following, 1 Pet. 2[:22]: “Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.” And Apo. 19[:13-14]: “He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood. The armies that are in heaven followed him.”

¶ Again, according to laws and according to natural equity an object found ought to be restored if one has lost it. Therefore, since Christ by his passion recouped our lost heredity, he ought to restore it and to his sons, Psal. [15:5]: “It is you that will restore my inheritance to me.” But alas because celestial heredity is accustomed to being little appreciated, Psal. [105:24]: “They set at naught the desirable land.”

1. Bernard, *Sermo de Tempore* In feria iv Hebdomadae Sanctae 1 (PL 1183:263): Quis enim tam irreligiosus, qui non compungatur? quis tam insolens, ut non humilietur? quis tam iracundus, ut non indulgeat? [Col.0263B] quis tam deliciosus, ut non abstineat? quis tam flagitiosus, ut non contineat? quis tam malitiosus, ut non poeniteat his diebus? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 21.4.4 (PL 41:713): Adamantem lapidem multi apud nos habent, et maxime aurifices insignitoresque gemmarum, qui lapis nec ferro, nec igni, nec alia vi ulla, perhibetur praeter hircino sanguine vinci. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, *In Cantica canticorum* 20.2 (PL 183:867): Super omnia, inquam, reddit amabilem te mihi, Jesu bone, calix quem bibisti, opus nostrae redemptionis. Hoc omnino amorem nostrum facile vindicat totum sibi. Hoc, inquam, est quod nostram devotionem et blandius allicit, et justius exigit, et arctius stringit, et afficit vehementius. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustinus, *Adversus quinque haereses* 7.9 (PL 42:1114): fusus est sanguis medici, et factus est medicamentum phrenetici. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Orientalis* cap. 90 (Duaci: Balthzaris, 1596), (p. 191): Pellicanus dicitur pellem canam habens. Haecauis fertur occidere pullos suos: eosque per triduum lugens seipsam nostro proprio vulnerat, et sic pullos occiosos proprii sanguinis aspersione viuificat.

<https://archive.org/details/IacobiDeVitriacoCardinalisLibriDuo1596/page/n243>

Cf. Jessalynn Bird, “Far Be It from Me to Glory Save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14): Crusade Preaching and Sermons for Good Friday and Holy Week,” pp.129-165 in *Crusading in Art, Thought and Will* ed, Matthew E. Parker, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), (p. 142 and n. 42): Following medieval bestiary tradition, James claimed that similar to the pelican, Christ shed his own blood to revive his slain and rebellious spiritual offspring. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Karistina Sessa, “Constantine and Silvester in the *actus Silvestri,*” pp. 77-91 in *The Life and Legacy of Constantine: Traditions through the Ages*, ed. M. Shane Bjornlie (London: Routledge, 2017; p. 82-83): the idea that Constantine contracted leprosy and was healed through baptism in Rome arose in the East as a response to more cynical portrayals of the emperor’s conversion, notably that he was a murder who sought Christianity only as a last resort. In the *Actus [Silvestri,* 1.510*],* Constantine’s leprosy is depicted as a form of divine punishment, meted out by God because of his baleful persecution of Christians. According to the text, the emperor initially seeks a remedy for his ailment from pagan experst including the ‘Capitoline pontiffs’ (*pontifices capitolii*), who prescribe a grotesque cure: Constantine is to bathe on the Capitolium in a pool filled with the blood of young boys. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Bernard, cf. *Liber de vitiorum virtutumque conflictu, ad Simplicianum* 9 (PL 17:1063): Si passio Redemptoris ad memoriam reducatur, nihil tam durum, quod non aequo animo toleretur. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)