Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

228 Blood in the scriptures (*Sanguis in scriptura*)

Blood in the scriptures is assumed variously. One way is called the red humor in the body. And it said according to Isidore, book 4 of *The Etymologies*,[[1]](#endnote-1) blood (*sanguis*) is as if sweet (*suauis*) therefore people who are dominated by blood are naturally pleasant. In this blood it is said[[2]](#endnote-2) to be the seat of the soul, those of the Jews [Deut. 12:16]: are prohibited to eat flesh with the blood as a sign of unholiness. So, it was also forbidden to them [Deut. 14:8] the flesh of pork for encountering because the life and condition of pork is to be detested, that is, pleasure, gluttony, lust, and sloth. Thus, the eating of blood is forbidden in detestation of the shedding of blood which is a rebuke of cruelty and wickedness. Wherefore also the Lord naturally gave that condition to blood so that looking at it one would be horrified as is evident when goats meet and roar at the discovery of blood. But because some are not horrified at this sign it is because by their nature, they are infected by the old customary wickedness just as one who is feverish indicates sweet to be bitter. In rejection of which it is said, Eccli. 8[:19]: “For blood is as nothing in his sight.” Therefore, not being horror stricken by the spilling of blood he has more the condition of a wild beast than of a man.

¶ From this sin they ought to retract three things, affronts to superiors, evidence of an outcry, vengeance for rigidity. For by the spilling of blood is inferred contempt for God and the angels and human nature. By which natural things nothing is more noble. That the violent spiller of blood sins against nature is evident by the precept of the law of nature by which it is said [Matt. 7:12], You should not do to another what you do not wish to be done to you. That his sins against the angels is evident by example in art. If one beats another who has a soldier of the king assigned to his custody,

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they have greatly offended both the king and the soldier. But every Christian has an angel of God assigned to him, Psal. [90:11]: “He has given his angels charge over you, to keep,” etc. Again when some great one marries a maiden much loved, an affront carried to that maiden rebounds onto her husband, but Christ indissolubly and with a great price and laboriously 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, but with the precious blood.

¶ Therefore he who illicitly dissipates the work which the Father created, which the Son assumed and bought, and which the Holy Spirit inhabited, with merit he will have in the end against him God, angels and men aligned 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, has 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 is a man of blood.” Again, oppression of the victors, Exod. 3[:9]: “The cry of the children of Israel is come to me.”

¶ Third, withdrawing is vengeance of hardness because by the mouth of God he is cursed for shedding blood and in 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,” etc. If you kill a man, you kill your brother. Again, the canonical Jude 1[:11]: “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain.” Adam sinned but was not so cursed but [only] the earth. Cain sinned, but he was cursed and also the earth. Again, and more than before. Concerning the seven pains of Cain, his greed is not expressed. In truth, however thus it can be drawn out. First when he envied his brother, he burned with fire. Second, when the Lord rebuked him, he was terrified. Third, when he was exposed for false negation without excuse, he was ashamed. Fourth the curse like an excommunication on him, he fulminated. Fifth sterility on account of his demerits was inflicted upon the earth. Sixth as if a vagrant and chilled he rambled about. Seventh

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trembling of the head clung to him.

¶ However there is first, the vindication of homicide by the curse of God. Second the brevity of this life, Psal. [54:24]: “Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,” namely, for such is the judgment of God, so that by what you will measure, it will be measured unto you, and who will be pierced by the sword. And Gen. [9:6]: “Whosoever shall shed man’s blood, his blood shall be shed. Third, there is the vindication of the heaping up of many pains, on account of which it is [said] to David because he killed Uriah, [2 Reg. 12:10]: “The sword shall never depart from your house.” And the life of man thus hindered cannot in this life be satisfied sufficiently. For his sin is not dismissed unless it is restored what was taken away. But the life of man killed cannot be restored before the day of judgment. Therefore, etc.

¶ Again concerning this blood three things ought to be addressed, of which the first is that no one ought to spill it indiscriminately. Second that man ought to expend it as a sacrifice to Christ. Wherefore Bernard,[[3]](#endnote-3) Woe to those who give the flower of youth to the devil and the feces of old age to God. Third is that man ought to hold of little value the nobility of this blood. Wherefore Bernard in his *Meditationes*,[[4]](#endnote-4) you have this from the blood of my parents which before they made me were damned than born.

¶ Second blood by similarity and metaphorically is assumed for sin as Psal. [50:16]: “Deliver me from blood.” Third more improperly it is assumed for some kind of red liquid. Wherefore it is said in [1 Mach. 6:34], “They showed the elephants the blood of mulberries.” Fourth it is assumed vulgarly for wine as when it is said blood makes blood, that is, wine makes blood.

¶ And note that noting more efficaciously softens the human heart than blood. The example in nature diamonds are softened by the blood of a goat. But much more the human heart by the blood of Christ, especially when all other things are compacted to Christ dying. For the sun was obscured, rocks split, the earth shook, the veil was divided, the sepulchers were opened, the dead arose, but only man did not feel it for whom alone Christ died. Again, through heaven in the citadel demons who in other adjurations cared little, it was heard and obeyed the confederacy of the blood of Christ. If therefore the spilling of human blood moves God as is evident in Gen. 4[:10]: “The voice of your brother’s blood cries to

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me.” Much more the spilling of the blood of Christ ought to move man. Wherefore Bernard, *Super Cantica*,[[5]](#endnote-5) 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. This can be narrated about him in whose face Christ cast some of his blood in sign of obduracy.

1. Isidore, *Etymologiae,* 4.5.6 :  Sanguis Latine vocatus quod suavis sit, unde et homines, quibus dominatur sanguis, dulces et blandi sunt.

Isidore, *The Etymologies* 4.5.6 (Barney p. 109b): Blood (*sanguis*) is so called in Latin because it is sweet (*suavis*); hence people who are dominated by blood are sweet-tempered and pleasant. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Glossa ordinaria* on Deut. 12:17 : ABSQUE  ESU etc. Homicidium prohibet sanguis pro anima ponitur, quia sedes anime, id est humane vite in sanguine est. [Glossae Scripturae Sacrae-electronicae (Gloss-e) (cnrs.fr)](https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?id=liber&numLivre=07&chapitre=07_12) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bernard, cf. Innocent III, *Libellus de eleemosyna* (PL 217:760): Si obtulisti florem juventutis diabolo, saltem faeces senectutis immola Deo tuo. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Bernard, see Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (2014),(p. 166 note 76): De parentibus venio qui prius fecerunt dampnatum quam natum quia peccatores in peccato suo peccatorem genuerunt, miseri miserum in hanc lucis miseriam induxerunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. 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-5)